

## **MILITARY RADIO TRAFFIC SLANG IN NATO AF**

Military slang is a set of colloquial terms which are unique to or which originated with military personnel. They are often abbreviations or derivatives of the NATO Phonetic Alphabet, or otherwise incorporating aspects of formal military concepts and terms. Military slang is also used to reinforce the (usually friendly) interservice rivalries. Some of these terms have been considered gregarious to varying degrees and attempts have been made to eliminate them.

For the purposes of this paper, "military slang" includes slang used by any English-speaking armed forces (armies, navies, air forces). The invention of portable radio transmitters has made it possible to coordinate the actions of army units even at long distances. Later the transmitters became small and simple, and quite cheap, thus making it possible to equip not only every unit, but every soldier with it. That resulted in working out strict rules of carrying out radio traffic to avoid the distortion of important information, especially under the conditions of warfare.

Quite gradually, the radio traffic slang began to penetrate into the civil communication. One can make across with it in any genre, even in school comedies for girls. In one of them, the main character, a girl, is going to make advances to an attractive boy, and her friends standing by are trying to comment on the process. "Target locked...Engaging... three... two... one... a – a – and we have contact". One more example can be taken from the children's computer game "The Ice Age". The opossums find themselves in the plane crash on the pterodactyl which is being shut down. They are crying: "May day! June day! July day!", which was translated as "SOS–save our ears!"

### **General rules**

**Rule 1.** The tactical radio traffic must contain very short phrases. First, this can be the symbol of immediate actions life depends on. Second, the channel must be released for other messages as soon as possible. Hence, the translation has to sound short and clear as a telegram.

**Rule 2.** Any message has to be built according to the corresponding scheme:

- 1)Who is the message addressed to?
- 2)Who is sending the message?
- 3)The text of the message;
- 4)The concluding part: if the answer is expected the word **over** is on air (it means "Handing over to you!"). If the conversation is over, "out" is used meaning the channel is free. If the call-sign is accompanied by the word "actual", it means that the unit commander whose call-sign is used is in contact.

### **An example of the broadcast:**

"Foxtrot-6, this is Lima-1 – actual, come in, over". With respect to simplifying the message and economizing on time, typical, frequently repeated situations are described by auxiliary words which testify to the importance of the message. For example:

ROUTINE (traditional), IMMEDIATE (urgent message), FLASH (express-message) – extremely important message (extraordinary). The signal of its transmission is repeated 3 times: FLASH-FLASH-FLASH (attention express-message).

**Hazard levels:**

Code green (safe), yellow (hazard is not confirmed), red (dangerous).

**Introducing changes, or checking up the message corrections:**

CORRECT/CORRECTION/I AM MAKING CORRECTIONS, that means literally: “There was a mistake in the message, and I am repeating what I said, having changed the erroneous info.” Example: “Disregard this transmission” – The transmission is erroneous. It is cancelled. “Read back” – Repeat the message you get to be checked up.

**Confirmation:**

To confirm that the message is accepted, the words COPY or ROGER (“I got you”) are used. There are cases when ROGER is translated as “SIR”. But that is not true. ROGER is just used to confirm that the message is accepted. “Yes, Sir”, “Sir” the translation are interpreted as WILCO (“will comply” or “will do”).

Why ROGER? In fact, beginning from 1927 up to 1957 ROGER stood from the letter R (before that it was “Rush”, and now “Romeo”). It means that the message is received.

**The message recurrence:**

The key information of the message (for example, the coordinated or the number of the enemies) can be repeated. In this case the words “I REPEAT, I SAY AGAIN” are used and the core of the message is repeated (though without call-signs).

**A short literary digression:**

When doing a literature review the only expression I came across was “I repeat”. As it turned out when artillery is used, the expression “I say again” is on air. If on the background of interference the word “REPEAT” is used, it can be perceived as a signal of a repeated artillery strike against the enemy positions.

**The phonetic ABC:**

Under the conditions of the weak signal or due to interference, the information can be misheard. With this in view, the key words can be spelt and every letter can stand for a separate word. It is so-called phonetic ABC.

**Radio transmission abbreviations**

The phonetic ABC can be used not only for spelling certain names, but also for broadcasting coded information. The so-called Alpha-code which can be confidential and change day by day, there are standard, non-confidential ones.

Romeo Tango Bravo – return to base;

Romeo Papa Alpha – Rally at Point A;

Hotel Alpha – Haul ass (move quickly in the direction specified);

Hotel Echo – High Explosives.

**Mind the abbreviations**

AA – Anti Aircraft;

AAA – Anti Aircraft Artillery;

AAR – After Action Report;

AB – Ambush;

AO – Area of Operation;

HE – High Explosive;

HQ – Head Quarters;

KIA – Killed in Action.

Military slang is an array of colloquial terminology used commonly by military personnel, including slang which is unique to or originates with the armed forces. In English-speaking countries, it often takes the form of abbreviations/acronyms or derivations of the NATO Phonetic Alphabet, or otherwise incorporates aspects of formal military terms and concepts. Military slang is often used to reinforce or reflect (usually friendly and humorous) interservice rivalries.

### **REFERENCES**

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