Aerodrome Flight Information Service (AFIS)

Introduction to AFIS

Aerodrome Flight Information Service (AFIS) is the provision of flight information service to aircraft in the vicinity of an aerodrome. This includes traffic information, weather information, aerodrome conditions, hazards & obstructions, and any other information which may be relevant to the safe navigation of a flight.

Generally, an AFIS unit will have either the callsign "Information" (in Iceland) or "AFIS" (in Greenland and EKVG.)

> There are two regulatory environments in which AFIS is provided beneath the Reykjavik CTA: **Iceland**, which is managed by Iceland's ANSP *Isavia*, and **Greenland/Faroe Islands** (abbreviated **"GLFI"** in this guide), which are managed by Denmark's ANSP *Naviair.*
>
> These two regulatory environments are similar, but have occasional differences. Where relevant, the procedures below will distinguish between Iceland and GLFI operating procedures.

> There are a lot of regulatory differences in the provision of AFIS across the various countries that provide it around the world. E.g., in some countries, AFIS does not direct *any* ground traffic or set an active runway, whereas they do in Iceland & GLFI (see below).

> The information in this guide is therefore not a *universal* guide to AFIS, but how it is uniquely provisioned in Iceland & GLFI.

Area of Responsibility

Most AFIS aerodromes have an associated **FIZ** (Flight Information Zone – the term used in GLFI) or **ATZ** (Aerodrome Traffic Zone – the term used in Iceland.) Aircraft must be in two-way radio communication with the AFIS unit within the FIZ or ATZ.

Some Icelandic AFIS aerodromes do not have an ATZ. In such cases, aircraft must be in two-way radio communication with the AFIS unit when in the "vicinity of the aerodrome." This is defined as being within, entering, or leaving the traffic circuit.

Differences from Controlled Aerodromes (Summary)

> **NOTE:** The following procedures have recently been revised, to reflect that AFIS units in *both* Iceland and Greenland have ground movement authority outside of runways.

AFIS is not air traffic control. AFIS units may not issue clearances or other instructions to airborne aircraft, or aircraft on runways. AFIS units may, however, provide some limited instructions to aircraft on the ground.

The table below briefly summarizes the key differences between controlled aerodromes and AFIS. For those unfamiliar with AFIS, keep reading — these differences will be discussed in more detail.

Controlled Aerodromes	AFIS
"Cleared to…"	**"Reykjavik Control clears you to…"** Clearance is not issued by AFIS but by an overlying ACC unit.

"Information [letter] is current/correct..."	**The same, at the few AFIS aerodromes with an ATIS** (e.g., BGGH.) **Most AFIS aerodromes do not have an ATIS.** In those cases, pilots should be offered the latest weather upon readback of their clearance, or first contact for VFR.
“Runway in use..."	**The same;** AFIS sets active runways.
“Startup approved” / “Push and start approved”	**The same.** Pilots must contact AFIS before startup, and AFIS may direct ground movements outside of runways.
“Taxi to... via...”	**Partially the same; AFIS may direct ground movements *outside* of runways.** AFIS may also refuse aircraft permission to enter runways (e.g., “hold short" or "remain clear of runway XX.”)
“Cleared for takeoff”	**“No reported traffic runway [XX]”** AFIS does not issue takeoff/landing clearances. AFIS only reports on the status of the runway and relevant traffic.
“Cleared to land”	
“Line up and wait”	**“Runway [XX] is occupied, traffic is...”** See above.
“Hold short runway [XX]” / “Hold position”	
“After departure leave the control zone...” *(VFR departure instructions)*	**No equivalent.** AFIS does not issue VFR clearances/instructions for airborne aircraft.

IFR Clearances

IFR aircraft request clearance via the local AFIS unit, following the steps below.

1. **The IFR aircraft requests clearance to the local AFIS unit, who shall then relay the clearance request to Reykjavik ACC.**
   - This can be done via any means of verbal coordination (e.g., Discord VC, VATSIM PMs, etc.)

- *For Iceland & the Faroe Islands:* The lowest sector of Reykjavik Control overlying the aerodrome shall issue the clearance.
- *For Greenland:*
  - Iceland Radio is first preference to issue the clearance.
  - If Iceland Radio is offline, and the airport underlies the West sector, then the lowest West sector controller of Reykjavik Control shall issue the clearance.
  - If the airport does not underlie the West sector, and Iceland Radio is offline, then no clearance shall be issued and the aircraft shall be instructed to depart at its discretion.

2. **Reykjavik ACC shall issue the clearance to the AFIS unit.**
   1. Clearances may be issued via a SID if available, in which case the aircraft must enter controlled airspace following the SID.
   2. Alternatively, the clearance may issued without departure instructions – i.e., "*cleared to [DEST] via flight planned route.*" In which case the aircraft may manuever at its own discretion on departure, and shall enter controlled airspace tracking towards the first waypoint of its flight plan.
3. **The AFIS unit relays the clearance to the pilot, and verifies the pilot's readback.**
   - When relaying the clearance, AFIS units shall relay the clearance exactly as provided by Reykjavik ACC, **except** that they shall use the phrase "Reykjavik Control clears you to..." instead of "Cleared to..."
     - This indicates that the clearance was issued under the authority of Reykjavik ACC, not the AFIS unit.
     - This is true even if Iceland Radio issued the clearance, because Iceland Radio is part of Reykjavik ACC.

If there is no overlying ATC, or if the aircraft will not enter controlled airspace at all during its flight (e.g., domestic Greenland traffic remaining below FL195 the entire flight), then the aircraft shall be told to depart at its discretion.

> There is no AFIS equivalent to VFR departure, arrival, or circuit clearances. VFR aircraft simply depart and arrive at their discretion.

Weather Information

AFIS aerodromes do not typically have an ATIS broadcast. Therefore, AFIS shall offer all aircraft the latest weather (met) information – for departures, after readback of their clearance, and for arrivals, on first contact. This shall always include the winds and QNH, and may also include other significant meteorological information (SIGMET, turbulence, etc.) The full met report shall be provided upon request.

(Note: Pilots may have also have obtained the METAR from their own sources. If a pilot does not require the weather, the AFIS unit does not need to provide the full met report, but ***must still provide the latest QNH.)***

> At some aerodromes, AFIS uses a **Turbulence Weather Indicator (TWI)** to predict expected turbulence on departure/arrival based on local winds.
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> For EKVG, one of our controllers, Ollie Killean, has created a simulated TWI webpage using data pulled from the Faroese AIP, available here:
>
> https://vats.im/twi
>
> Suggested phraseology is "*[Light/moderate/severe] turbulence indicated for [departure/arrival] runway [XX].*"
>
> Thanks to Ollie for creating this!

Runway in Use

AFIS units determine an active runway for their airport. See the Tower SOP for how to select an active runway.

AFIS units shall notify the overlying Reykjavik ACC controller, as well as Nuuk Information (BGGL_FSS) for Greenlandic airports, of their chosen active runway.

> **At EKVG:** If turbulence is indicated as **severe** for any runway by the TWI, then EKVG AFIS shall **close that runway** for departures and/or arrivals (whichever has severe turbulence indicated.) EKVG AFIS shall also notify the overlying Reykjavik ACC controller accordingly.
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> Suggested phraseology is: "*Runway [XX] closed for [departure/arrival], severe*

> *turbulence indicated.*"

Ground Movements

In Iceland and GLFI, AFIS units are generally authorized by airport management to direct ground movements *outside of runways*, and have the authority to refuse the entry of aircraft onto runways.

This means that aircraft will call AFIS for startup, pushback, and taxi. AFIS shall provide startup clearance. For ground pushback & taxi, aircraft may navigate at their discretion, but if AFIS sees any conflicting traffic, AFIS may instruct aircraft to hold position, take an alternative route, etc.

Note that while AFIS can instruct an aircraft to hold short of/remain clear of the runway, AFIS lacks any authority over what the aircraft does once it is on the runway (crossing, backtracking, lining up, etc.)

Takeoff & Landing

AFIS units shall **not** issue takeoff or landing clearances. If the runway is clear of traffic, then the AFIS unit shall inform departing or arriving aircraft that there is **“no reported traffic runway XX.”** (simply "no reported traffic on the runway" is acceptable at a single runway airport.)

Aircraft, when told this, may line up, depart, or land on the runway at their own discretion.

For example:

> “FLI402, winds 130 degrees 4 knots, no reported traffic runway 12.

If there **is** traffic blocking the runway in any way, then the AFIS unit shall inform departing aircraft **“runway XX occupied,”** provide traffic information, and ask for the aircraft’s intentions. For example:

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> FLI402, runway is occupied, traffic is a company A320 backtracking to vacate the runway, report intentions.

> **NOTE:** Even if the runway is occupied, aircraft may still use that runway at their discretion. They are only obligated by the rules of the air not to hinder other traffic.
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> E.g., if one aircraft is vacating at one end of the runway, another aircraft may reasonably line up on the *opposite* end of the runway, if doing so would not obstruct the vacating aircraft.

Traffic/Flow Management Strategies

Generally speaking, the inability of AFIS to control when aircraft choose to depart poses a significant limitation on AFIS's ability to control the flow of inbound/outbound traffic. This may be remedied using two strategies.

- Firstly, AFIS may provide traffic management **suggestions** to pilot.
  - E.g., "traffic are two aircraft, one on initial approach and one on short final, suggest you remain in the hold for spacing," or "traffic is a Boeing 757 departed 1 minute ago, suggest you delay departure by 2 minutes for wake turbulence and route separation"
- Secondly, AFIS may coordinate with the overlying ACC unit to issue **"valid at"** clearances (e.g., "clearance valid at time 1234z").
  - While this is not strictly speaking a prohibition on an aircraft's ability to take off, a clearance not being valid means the aircraft would not be able to proceed on its planned flight, so it is practically speaking required to wait until its clearance is valid before commencing its departure roll.

Airborne Traffic

AFIS units shall proactively offer traffic, weather, and aerodrome information to aircraft in their area of responsibility, in order to facilitate their safe navigation.

Traffic information should be provided using procedural methods, since AFIS units generally do not have radar. Thus, AFIS units may ask aircraft to provide position reports, such as:

- Waypoints/fixes on their route, or on published SIDs, STARs, and approach procedures which the aircraft intends to fly
- Positions relative to the airport or a waypoint/fix (e.g., abeam the airport, 5 NM from XX NDB, etc.)
- Phases of approach (e.g., final, established on the ILS, etc.)
- Legs of the traffic circuit (e.g., downwind, final, etc.)

Aircraft arriving an aerodrome (entering the ATZ/FIZ or traffic circuit) shall be told the active runway as well as any relevant traffic information.

At certain aerodromes (e.g., BGGH), there may be mandatory reporting points for aircraft. Refer to the SOP for those airports for clarification.

Aircraft do not require the AFIS unit's approval to leave the frequency once they are outside of the ATZ/FIZ/vicinity of the aerodrome. However, if the aircraft will be entering controlled airspace, AFIS should advise them to contact the relevant ATC unit.

- E.g., at EKVG, aircraft should be advised to contact Reykjavik Control approaching 7500ft.

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