# Starting Points for Monitoring

The toughest thing with military air monitoring is just getting started. There are a number of good books on the subject, and websites full of frequencies. We'll work here as if you are totally on your own.

**At or Near a Base:**

**Tower and Ground Control Frequencies:** These can be a good place to start. Although resident aircraft might talk about frequencies in terms of preset channel numbers, visiting aircraft will provide you with plenty of frequencies to jot down. If you have no idea where to start, try scanning 121-122 MHz in case ground control is simulast on VHF. This could give you your quickest payoff. If you have some memory capacity, then try and remember some of these standard freqs. These are not the case everywhere, but are in pretty common use. If the base you're monitoring is at least 100 miles from the next closest base, the likelihood of finding these frequencies in use is pretty good.

| Frequency | Use |
|---|---|
| **275.8** | **USAF Ground Control** |
| **336.4** | **USN/USMC Ground Control** |
| **229.4** | **US Army Ground Control** |
| **348.6** | **Ground Control @ FAA Airports** |
| **253.5** | **USAF Towers** |
| **255.6** | **USAF Towers** |
| | **USAF Towers** |
| **340.2** | **USN/USMC Towers** |
| **360.2** | **USN/USMC Towers** |
| **241.0** | **US Army Towers** |
| **257.8** | **Towers @ FAA Airports** |
| **126.2** | **Military Towers** |

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|---|---|
| | **(Civilian Advisory)** |
| **255.4** | **FAA Flight Service Stations** |
| **134.1** | **Army Common Radar Approach** |
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**Anywhere:**

**Approach Control Frequencies:** These are available on any NOAA Sectional Aeronautical Chart and are particularly useful for military situations. An aircraft will will into approach control as it approaches Class C or D airspace, but often will switch to a special *Ground Controlled Approach* (GCA) frequency to be guided individually to the runway. A flight of 4 fighters might be coming in, but chances are that each will be lined up for landing on a separate frequency. You will not find GCA frequencies in NOAA publications, but you will hear the aircraft read back the frequency as it is assigned. I've seen many cases where an aircraft switches from approach to GCA and never contacts that tower itself. It will land, and then contact Ground Control.

**Air Traffic Control Frequencies:** Many of these are available on Low Altitude and High Altitude Enroute charts from NOAA. These are great for following an aircraft across the sky, and could possibly lead to some other frequencies being read off.

**Tactical Frequencies:** This varies with the type of aircraft. The easiest ones to find are on VHF. Search 138-144 initially. If FM is a possibility, start with 40-42 MHz, followed by 38-39, 36-37 and then the others. On UHF, it's a serious challenge, but much info is shared via the Internet.

**Frequencies with 'cute' numerical patterns:** It's no coincidence that most Army and National Guard helicopters use 242.4 and most search & rescue ops use 282.8. Just like commercial pilots using 123.45, these folks have found easy-to-remember frequencies on which to operate. So, 234.5, 345.6, etc. are all well worth watching. F-16s have been heard using 125.125 and 127.275.

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