

2015 HIWC Radar Flight Campaign

- Radar Datasets

Purpose

This document provides a basic description the radar datasets collected by NASA during the 2015 HIWC Radar Flight Campaign, which is now archived and served to the research community by NCAR. The radar measurements contained in this dataset have been processed to remove the instrument properties from the airborne radar data and thereby produce the best scientific measure of the atmosphere and the High Ice Water Concentration (HIWC) environment.

Users of this radar dataset should also make use of datasets from the other instruments installed on the aircraft and archived by NCAR as part of the 2015 HIWC Radar Flight Campaign. This document is intended to assist users of the 2015 NASA HIWC Radar Flight Campaign datasets by providing general descriptions, data format, and instructions on how to read the radar dataset.

Background info

High Ice Water Content (HIWC) is a hazard to modern commercial aircraft and it is characterized by high concentrations of ice crystals often distributed over a horizontal scale of tens to hundreds of kilometers. The flight campaign was conducted in August 2015, used the NASA AFRC DC-8 aircraft, and was based at Ft. Lauderdale International Airport (FLL). The aircraft flew into and measured HIWC atmospheric conditions associated with coastal and oceanic mesoscale convection systems and tropical storms. The NASA DC-8 was equipped with a variety of instruments needed to measure ice concentrations, particle size, and atmospheric conditions in which the aircraft flew. In addition to these aforementioned in situ instruments, remotely sensed measurements were recorded using a modified commercial, airborne, Doppler weather radar mounted in the nose of the DC-8 aircraft.

Radar Data Collected

The instrumented NASA AFRC DC-8 aircraft conducted the HIWC flight campaign during three weeks in August 2015. The aircraft was based at Fort Lauderdale, Florida and traversed areas over the Atlantic Ocean, Gulf of Mexico, and Caribbean Sea, including Atlantic and Gulf Coastal areas, as well as the Caribbean Islands (see Figure 1). The airborne radar used for this flight campaign was a Honeywell RDR-4000 and had been modified to allow recording of In-phase/Quadrature-voltage measurements while the DC-8 aircraft was in flight. Additional instruments were installed on the aircraft to measure cloud physics data, water content, hydrometeor particle spectra, and temperature. The instruments included a pitot probe, a Total Air Temperature (TAT) probe and an ICD/Robust probe on the nose of the aircraft and four other probes that were installed on wing pods. The probe instruments on the wing pods were a precipitation imaging probe (PIP), an optical imaging (2D-S) probe, a cloud droplet probe (CDP) and an Iso-kinetic probe (IKP). The aircraft state variables were also recorded and are available from the archive. Several video cameras were installed and recorded during the flight but the video is too large (500GB) for NCAR's archive – however requests for short time segments will be entertained and should be requested using the contact info at the end of this document. This document only describes the data related to the radar instrument.

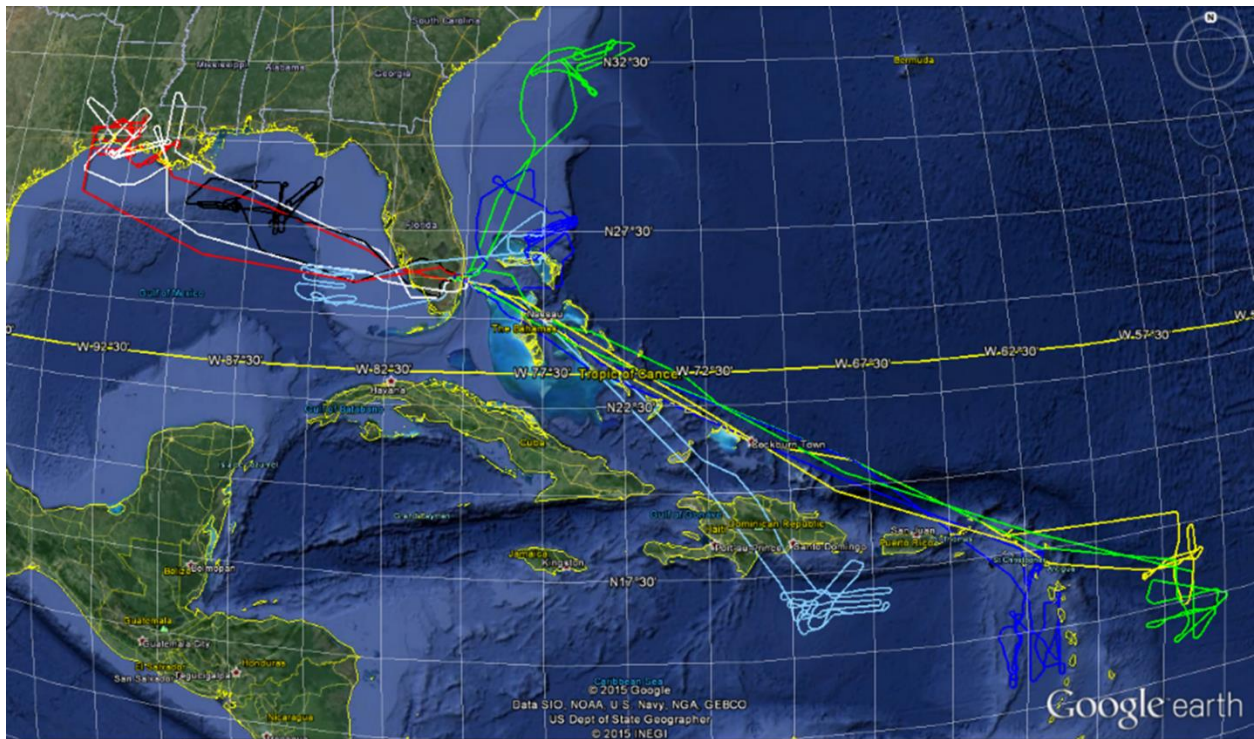


Figure 1: Flight tracks from the NASA 2015 HIWC Radar Flight Campaign

Flight Summary

The Figure above shows a graphical summary of the flights and the Table below indicates the date, general location, and (approximate) start and stop times for each flight recording.

| Track Color | Flight Number | Date | Radar Data UTC Times (hh:mm) | | General Description |
|-----------------|---------------|-----------|------------------------------|-------|----------------------------|
| | | | Start | Stop | |
| Green | 1039 | 8/12/2015 | 14:29 | 19:14 | Off costal Carolinas |
| Blue | 1040 | 8/13/2015 | 14:51 | 19:31 | Coastal Florida (Atlantic) |
| Light Blue | 1041 | 8/14/2015 | 13:03 | 18:40 | Coastal Florida (Gulf) |
| Black | 1042 | 8/16/2015 | 13:18 | 20:28 | Central Gulf of Mexico |
| White | 1043 | 8/19/2015 | 12:08 | 19:27 | Southern Louisiana coast |
| Red | 1044 | 8/21/2015 | 13:59 | 21:03 | Southern Louisiana coast |
| Yellow | 1045 | 8/23/2015 | 11:21 | 19:41 | Tropical Storm Danny |
| Light Green | 1046 | 8/26/2015 | 11:09 | 20:55 | Tropical Storm Erika |
| Dark Blue | 1047 | 8/27/2015 | 12:46 | 22:00 | Tropical Storm Erika |
| Very Light Blue | 1048 | 8/28/2015 | 13:22 | 21:07 | Tropical Storm Erika |

Data Processing

In-phase and quadrature voltage measurements were recorded during the flight. During post-flight analysis, and in order to produce the accompanying datasets, a suite of signal and data processing algorithms/techniques were used to reduce spurious signals and de-aliasing artifacts. This dataset represents a consistent, scientific measure of the atmosphere within 80 nautical miles of the aircraft, $\pm 60^\circ$ of heading, and from the surface up to approximately 45,000 feet. The data in this dataset includes radar reflectivity factor (RRF), Index of Dispersion for RRF measures, Doppler velocity, spectral width, and radar estimated ice water content (RIWC) for regions above about 0dBZ RRF. The velocity and spectral width measurements were obtained using pulse pair processing techniques. The sign convention used for radial velocity defines positive velocities along increasing range (i.e. away from the radar antenna)

Available Data

There are several types of files containing radar measurements in this dataset, specifically:

- *List* – contains specific *RadProd* values associated with IKP measurement locations,
- *RadProd* – contains all the radar products – bin-by-bin for each azimuth/vertical orientation,
- *bitmap* – contains captured PPI images for each *RadProd* for several temperature altitudes,
- *KMZ* – contains aircraft and radar data/imagery suitable for visualization using Google Earth.

The balance of this section describes each of these files types in more detail along with information relevant to electronic reading and utilization of that data.

List files

As Ice-Water-Content (IWC) is the metric for comparison, and given that the IWC measurements were formed from 5-second running average of the IKP instrument, the radar team decided to produce radar products that were representative of the same location and spatial extent as those embodied in the IKP measurements. The List files provide that tabularized data along with the aircraft state measurements. The following table specifies the measurements and column order for this ASCII file.

A single, Comma Separated Variable (csv), file is provided for each flight (day) with filenames that conform to the following:

summary_YYYYMMDD_####.csv

where YYYYMMDD are the year month day characters and #### are the numerical characters for that particular flight (redundant information to date that allows either nomenclature to be used).

The source of the data items in blue are from the IKP, in green from the AC_systems, and in red from the radar. These files provide the variables at a 1 Hertz sample rate and are synchronized using recorded GPS time. Previous tests allowed validation of these times as a common reference. It should also be noted that two airspeed are provided: the original (containing anomalies during HIWC encounters) and fixed (restored estimates based upon several inputs).

| Measurements Name: |
|------------------------------|
| Time |
| AC Latitude |
| AC Longitude |
| AC Altitude |
| AC Heading |
| AC Airspeed (original) |
| AC Airspeed (fixed) |
| AC Groundspeed |
| AC Vertical Velocity |
| Wind Speed |
| Wind Direction |
| Vertical Winds |
| Normal Acceleration |
| Normal Acceleration (stddev) |
| RRF |
| Index of Dispersion |
| Velocity |
| Spectral Width |
| RIWC |
| SAT |

RadProd files

A single binary file is provided for each flight (day) with filenames that conform to the following:

YYYYMMDD_####.prd

where YYYYMMDD are the year month day characters and #### are the numerical characters for that particular flight (redundant information to date that allows either nomenclature to be used).

These files were created by processing the radar data collected during the flight campaign. Note: some prd files contain time gaps due to stopping and restarting the recording; these gaps may be: small (eg, 1-5 seconds) due to a change in radar/recorder configuration, or large gaps (10's of minutes) due to long transits in clear air without any observable clouds. The time parameter will exhibit this gap and the KMZ graphics shows it pictorially.

Figure 2 graphically shows the format of a prd file and is produced for each Coherent Processing Interval (CPI) of radar data. It consists of 32 bytes of Header, then 225 bytes of Reflectivity (1 byte per range bin, for each 225 range bins), then 225 bytes of Index of Dispersion, then 225 bytes of Velocity, then 225 bytes of Spectral Width (ie, measure of turbulence), and 225 bytes of Radar estimated IWC.

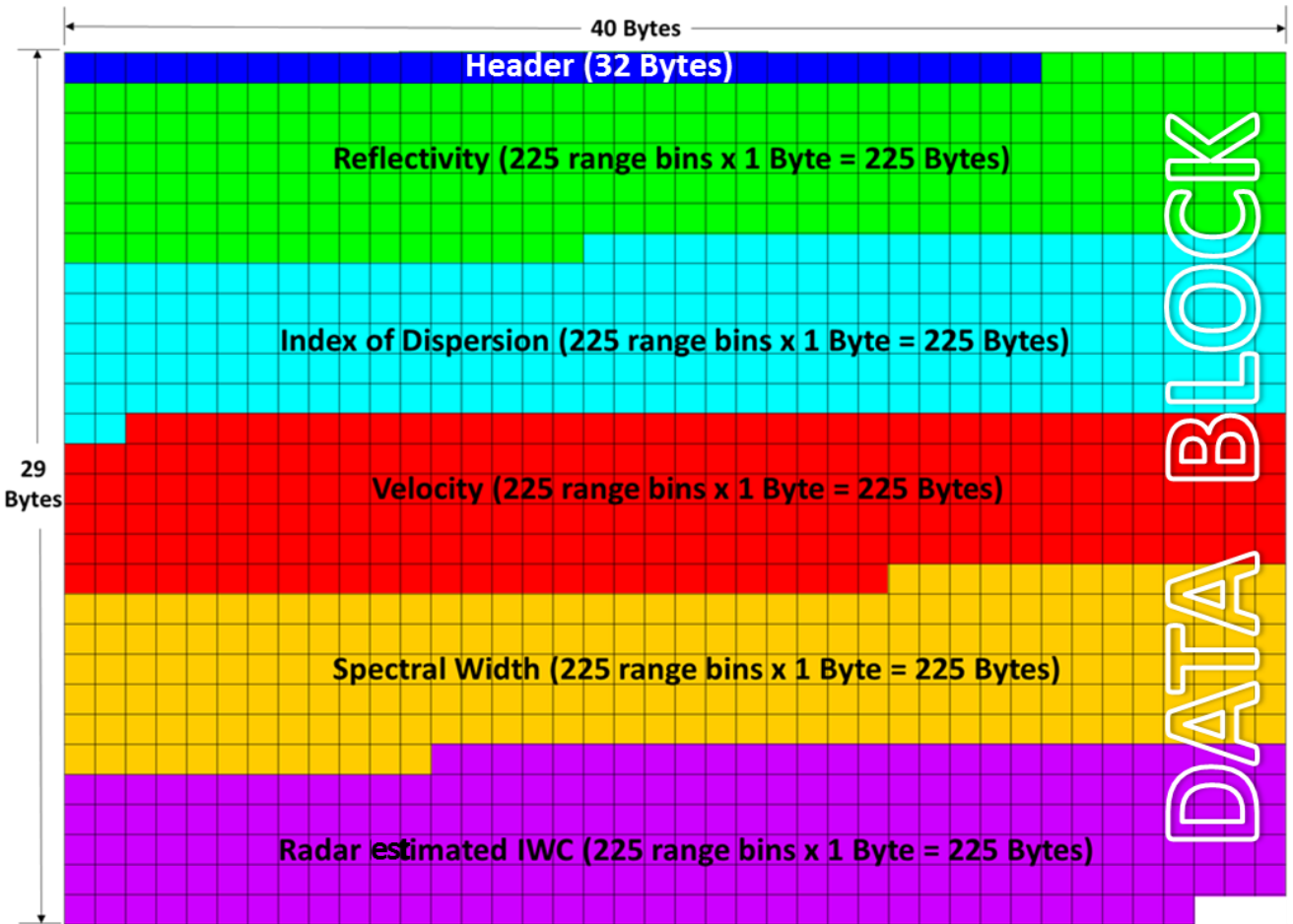


Figure 2: Graphical Representation of the prd format consisting of one CPI of data

Header Block – The header block of each CPI contains 12 variables, each variable has been scaled to allow integer representation within this file. The following table defines the variables contained in the Header, their order, the scaling applied, and the number of bytes that are used to convey this value. The subsequent graphic also conveys the same formatting information.

Table of Header information/format

| # | Variable Name and description | Units | Bytes |
|----|-------------------------------|------------------------|-------|
| 1 | Time (coarse) | Seconds since midnight | 4 |
| 2 | Time (fine) | 10^{-4} seconds | 2 |
| 3 | Latitude | 10^{-4} degrees | 4 |
| 4 | Longitude | 10^{-4} degrees | 4 |
| 5 | Altitude | meters | 4 |
| 6 | Heading | 10^{-2} degree | 2 |
| 7 | Groundspeed | 10^{-2} meter/second | 2 |
| 8 | True Air Speed | 10^{-2} meter/second | 2 |
| 9 | Antenna Azimuth | 10^{-2} degrees | 2 |
| 10 | Antenna Elevation | 10^{-2} degrees | 2 |
| 11 | Resolution size of bin | meters | 2 |
| 12 | Number of range bins | # | 2 |



Figure 3: Depiction of Header - each square represents 1 Byte (8 bits)

Data Block – (As previously depicted in

Figure 2) After the header, the radar products for each of the 225 range bins are represented by 1-byte signed integers with valid data in the range of ± 127 . If no valid measurement was made, “no data” is represented as a value of -128. Reflectivity values are provided in units of dBZ, Index of Dispersion for RRF measures are provided in units of one-quarter dBZ with an offset of 12 dBZ (i.e. $ID = X/4 + 12$ where X is the 1-byte signed integer value), velocity values are provided in units of meters per second (m/s), spectral width values are provided in units of meters per second (m/s), and radar estimated IWC values are provided in units of one-tenth gram per cubic meter ($1/10 \text{ g/m}^3$) (i.e. $RIWC = X/10$ where X is the 1-byte signed integer value).

Bitmap files

Periodic images of the radar scans (ie, Plan Position Indicator (PPI)) were captured and are provided as a quick view of the radar observations. These images were captured approximately every minute and without any annotation, so it is important to know that each image is 80Nmi (vertical image dimension) by 160Nmi (horizontal image dimension); the aircraft is positioned at the center of the bottom edge of the image; and the image center-vertical is oriented according to the aircraft heading (true) reported at the time of the image. Where no radar measurements were made, the image pixels are set to transparent (alpha channel value of zero), so the full 80x160Nmi extent may not be visible depending on how the image is viewed.

At each of these aircraft positions, PPI images for four radar products (eg, RRF(dBZ), Radial Velocity(m/s), spectral width(m/s), and RIWC (g/m^3)) were captured at each of the following altitudes: current FL, FL330 (representative of -50°C), FL230 (-30°C), FL130 (-10°C), & FL050 ($+5^\circ\text{C}$). These images are produced as a composite of multiple scans, at multiple elevation angles, and multiple aircraft positions, so a variety of radar and sampling artifacts may be present; consequently, these images should be used for qualitative assessments of the storm and measurements collected. Detailed analyses including all quantitative results should be produced from the *RadProd* files rather than this imagery.

In order to facilitate the widest possible compatibility, these images are stored as bitmaps and should be readily accessible/viewable by all users and on all computing platforms. The *bmp* directory has subdirectories for each day containing zip archives of *bmp* image files in the following format:

YYYYMMDD_####_alt_type.zip

- where YYYY is the year,
- MM is the month,
- DD is the day,
- #### is flight number,
- alt is the altitude of the measurements (MSL in ft OR FL for ownship altitude),

type is the type of radar data (eg, reflectivity (RRF), Velocity (Vel), spectral width (SW), and radar estimated IWC (RIWC)).

Each zip archive contains multiple bmp image files with file names in the following format:

type_altHHMMSS.bmp

where **type** is the type of radar data (eg, reflectivity (RRF), Velocity (Vel), spectral width (SW), and radar estimated IWC (RIWC)),

alt is the altitude of the measurements (MSL in ft OR FL for ownship altitude),

HHMMSS is UTC time (HH is hours, MM is minutes, and SS is seconds).

Google™ Earth files (aka KMZ files)

Analyzing HIWC data is challenging, as radar measurements are made in front of the aircraft and all other instruments measure in situ. Efforts were made to synchronize time recorded in these files; however, even with this synchronization it is often difficult to “see” the spatial correlation of these records.

To facilitate this process we have adapted our output files into a set of KMZ formatted files that enable rendering of the data within the Google™ Earth application (freely obtainable at <https://www.google.com/earth/>). This process enables video-like rendering of multiple, independent, spatio-temporal datasets from multiple sources into a single visualization space/tool. For details on how to operate Google™ Earth (in general) consult their help page(s) (<https://support.google.com/earth>) found within Google™ Earth – for help with the video rendering process search their help page(s) for “time slider”.

Within this *KMZ* archive, there are two sets of files: PPI and Satellite images. In order to render these files all that needs to occur is to open them with Google™ Earth (in Windows environments with Google™ Earth already installed this may accomplished by simply double-clicking the KMZ file icon).

PPI Images

The *PPI_Images* contained in these *KMZ* files are the same ones depicted in the bitmap files (as previously described) with the addition of meta-data to support it’s rendering within Google™ Earth.

The *KMZ* directory has subdirectories for each day. The filenames in the *PPI_Images* directory are in the following format:

YYYYMMDD_####_alt_type.kmz

where **YYYY** is the year

MM is the month

DD is the day

is flight number

alt is the altitude of the measurements (MSL in ft OR FL for ownship altitude)

type is the type of radar data (eg, reflectivity (RRF), Velocity (Vel), spectral width (SW) , and radar estimated IWC (RIWC))

Satellite Imagery

The second directory of *KMZ* files contains satellite imagery that can be displayed in a similar manner as the previous described for *PPI_Images* directory *KMZ* files within Google™ Earth. All *KMZ* files are self-contained and include all necessary imagery, therefore the files can get reasonable large. The *SatelliteImagery* directory has, for the most part, one file for each day. The filenames in the *SatelliteImagery* directory are in the following format:

YYYYMMDD_####.kmz

where **YYYY** is the year

MM is the month

DD is the day

is flight number

The satellite imagery comes from GOES-13 high resolution information sourced from:

<https://satcorps.larc.nasa.gov/cgi-bin/site/showdoc?docid=4&cmd=field-experiment-homepage&exp=HIWC-PR-2015>

Two sets of images are available: one centered on Florida and the other centered on Puerto Rico. The last few flights of the DC-8 were flown down into the Caribbean and out of the range of the Florida images and into the range of the Puerto Rico images, so there are two sets of satellite imagery for those days as indicated by “FL” or “PR” in the file name.

Support

Any questions regarding the 2015 HIWC Flight Campaign or the radar dataset should be addressed to:

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