

The Air Traffic CONTROLLER

March 1999, Vol. 13, Issue 2

Open season provides union opportunity to garner members

The National Executive Board declared March 1-30 as NATCA's *March of Freedom* or "open season."

Anyone eligible to become a member may join the union without paying the traditional initiation fee. With NATCA membership hovering at just below 13,000 strong, NATCA has the singular distinction as the federal sector union with the highest percentage of eligible employees as members. This is one of the union's greatest achievements.

Non-members have a one-time opportunity to make a mid-flight attitude correction by seizing this unique opportunity to join the one organization that time after time has proven its monetary worth to members. And because during March, no burdensome initiation fees apply, what could provide a more compelling reason to make the leap of logic to NATCA?

"NATCA staff and volunteers concluded a hard fought negotiating process for all members, which will help ensure a better future for everyone," remarked NATCA Organizing Team Lead Lew Zietz.

But here's the dilemma. Members know first-hand what NATCA has accomplished on

behalf of the profession, especially during this last year. Unfortunately, many eligible controllers still have not joined the ranks. And as many people readily appreciate, NATCA's effectiveness is directly tied to its numerical strength. In a nutshell, membership in NATCA is an investment in an individual's personal and professional future.

Not unexpectedly, the best sales people for NATCA have come from its rank and file. To this end, during March, the National Organizing Committee asks each member to sponsor a member. And he or she will be rewarded for his or her effort and hard work!

NATCA needs its members to help spread the word about the union! No one can expect to create and maintain a better working environment without first investing in their future.

As an additional incentive for our spon-

soring individuals – and this includes any active NATCA member – the union is offering the following incentives.

Sponsor one person and earn a NATCA spill proof mug. Garner two individuals and also take home a commemorative NATCA baseball hat. Add a third and also earn a NATCA embroidered golf shirt to the bounty. This is truly a "win-win" proposition for both current and prospective members.

Over the next month, facilities will hear more about this new recruitment blitz, and will see posters, buttons and letters reinforcing it. Educating our fellow non-member co-workers is the real key.

That's what *March of Freedom* is all about.



The Organizing Committee gathers at the national office to discuss the upcoming March of Freedom.

(above l to r) Organizing Team Lead Lew Zietz talks with Committee Members Carol Poole, Kevin Chirsty and Jim D'Agati.

(top right l to r) Committee Members Joe Hennessey and Alan Neace listen to others' points of view.

(bottom right l to r sitting) Committee Members Kevin Christy and Jim D'Agati examine documents with Alan Neace (standing).

March

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In his own words...

NATCA President
Michael McNally



Garnering members vital to union's livelihood

Dear Friends and Members:

Becoming a part of NATCA has always been, and always will be, a personal decision made within the privacy of one's own conscience. When someone in your facility chooses not to become a member, that's their right. Why they don't is the question.

I take it personally when someone rejects my invitation to become part of NATCA. I can never accept their rationale for taking and not giving back. I am speaking to the choir but take a moment, reflect upon your union and what it means to you.

Is NATCA perfect? No. Can we take credit for everything positive happening in aviation today? No. So why did more than 92 percent of our members vote to ratify the most recently negotiated bargaining agreement? When someone declines an invitation to join, I keep on thinking, maybe no one has taken the time to explain and review what membership really is about.

What might you say to such a person? How about, "Investing in NATCA is the right thing to do! If air traffic control is your profession - your life's work, then you need to invest in your professional future."

And if wishes could come true, I would wish for two things. First, I would be able to personally talk with each eligible non-member and review with that person all NATCA does on their behalf. Second, I would wish each non-member could understand first-hand the time and effort put forth on behalf of all bargaining unit members, whether they pay their fair share investment or not!

Let's face it folks, the days of coffee cup negotiations are over, if not permanently, then for a very long time. We changed the law. NATCA and only NATCA has the authority to negotiate your pay raises from now on.

We will negotiate in the future "number of hours of work," "amount of annual leave," "number of sick days," "holiday pay," "staffing," "equipment we will work

with," "duties we will perform," "management practices we will work under," "whether or not we receive FAM training." If we increase our strength and viability we will succeed in improving retirement and medical benefits legislatively.

What does it take to increase our strength and viability? It's the same thing that makes or breaks any non-profit organization's effectiveness, MONEY! More dues paying members equates to more money, which equates to more funding for projects and activities that build the knowledge of activists. I cannot believe any non-member could blindly believe no matter what, the FAA will take care of us and our families.

Don't forget it was the FAA in 1995 that wanted to take away your ops differential, your right to form a union and give you personnel reform: none of it designed to benefit you and your facility. It was NATCA and only NATCA that stopped it.

It is not the FAA specifically I distrust, it's the bureaucracy of and within it. Within it are good and bad managers, staff, supervisors and even NATCA reps. It's the enormous external forces that guide and shape it.

It is simply unacceptable to use the argument the FAA for which you work, with all its internal and external forces, would in fact do what is right and good for the profession and your personal future. Things don't work that way. They never have. They never will. Some argue a

union is unnecessary. I wish life could be as simple as that. It is the height of naivete to suggest our employers will always look out for the best interests of the profession and needs of your family.

I need to ask all of you who are dues paying members to share this or the message itself with all non-members. The rationale or reasoning, not to invest in the only organization with the authority and responsibility to negotiate on your financial, personal and professional well being and future *no longer logically flows*.

The days of, "I'm protected under Title V of the United States Code" and that "I get what all federal workers get, whether I pay dues or not" are over. Now the only thing standing between a secure and increasingly brighter financial, personal and professional future or wage freezes, concessions, give backs and privatized, segmentation of the ATC system and work force is NATCA.

"A person alone on the battlefield is a whimper to extinction, but with a thousand voices can roar to live on."

In solidarity,

Michael McNally
President

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How to reach The Air Traffic Controller	Feedback All letters must include an address and phone number. NATCA reserves the right to edit letters for clarity and space.	Editor Courtney Barron	
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		NATCA National Office 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 701 Washington, DC 20036 202/223-2900 (p) 202/659-3991 (f) www.natca.org	

Fac rep survey will reveal status of communication at facility level

Communication at the facility level is critical. To garner a handle on how bad or good the current situation is, input from the members is needed. Please take the time to fill out the survey below and either email answers to cbarron@natcadc.org or mail it to Courtney Barron's attention at the national office.

1 How do you receive your information at the facility about NATCA?

- a. information posted on facility bulletin board
- b. local meetings
- c. NATCA Alert
- d. NATCA website
- e. fac rep bulletin

2 How does your fac rep help you stay informed about NATCA?

- a. posts information
- b. discusses and elaborates on what is in fac rep mailing
- c. holds meetings
- d. distributes handouts and other pertinent materials
- e. other: _____

3 What does your fac rep need to do to assist you in staying up-to-date?

- a. hold more meetings
- b. post more information
- c. discuss things more with members
- d. other: _____

4 Does your fac rep post the biweekly fac rep bulletin and attachments?

- a. always
- b. sometimes
- c. never

5 Do you read the fac rep bulletin posted on NATCA's website?

- a. yes
- b. no
- c. no, because don't know where it is located

6 Should an electronic fac rep bulletin replace the current paper one?

- a. totally replace
- b. electronic bulletin along with paper bulletin
- c. only hard copy

7 Would you electronically access a fac rep bulletin?

- a. yes
- b. no



viewpoint

Member



We want to hear from YOU!

8 Estimate the percentage of your facility's membership with email.

- a. 80 percent
- b. 50 percent
- c. 30 percent
- d. 10 percent

9 Do you believe your fac rep would access the fac rep bulletin on line, print and post it?

- a. yes
- b. no
- c. maybe

10 What is your facility identifier? (optional)

What do you think of the newsletter's new look? Do you like the changes?

Mail
Courtney Barron
at the national office
Email
cbarron@natcadc.org
Fax
202/659-3991

March 25
Respond Today!
Selected answers will appear in future issues.

Deadline

Organizing aspires to create an environment for member growth

The potential growth of NATCA's membership created the demand for an Organizing Team lead last year. Lew Zietz filled these shoes, and recently sat down with *The Air Traffic Controller* to reflect on the last 12 months.

The Air Traffic Controller: What prompted your interest in union organizing and in particular, the challenges of NATCA organizing?

Zietz: I believe in the "product" and the type of issues highlighted by NATCA. My expertise is membership and affinity marketing within the association framework. I sincerely believe in fairness, equality and justice for all workers, no matter what their economic status or social position. I also have an extensive background in business. This helps me to better grasp the issues involved in "private tower" organizing and how best to assist others in organizing, recruiting and retaining their co-workers.

The Air Traffic Controller: What are your responsibilities as Organizing Team lead?

Zietz: My primary responsibility is to serve as the key liaison for the Organizing Committee and the "point person" for all current and future organizing (both external and internal) campaigns. I also assist in communicating and marketing NATCA products and services to potential members. Currently, we are targeting a half dozen selected prospective groups, including Department of Defense civilian controllers, private contract tower controllers, NATCA engineers and traffic management coordinators nationwide.

I coordinate the distribution of NATCA organizing information, respond to inquiries, develop marketing literature, communicate with leadership and help determine future organizing pushes. The Organizing Team is continually challenged to create new organizing goals and successes. Volunteers assisting in this effort work hand-in-hand with national and local organizers in order to achieve success on behalf of all NATCA members.

In addition, I file National Labor Relations Board and Federal Labor Relations Authority certification petitions on behalf of petitioning air traffic controllers. I also act as NATCA's representative and con-

tact with fellow AFL-CIO union organizing directors. The Organizing Committee, although not a standing committee, is considered important for the future growth of NATCA. It is comprised currently of 17 member volunteers and has the overall responsibility of planning, motivating, administering, budgeting and monitoring all NATCA organizing campaigns.

The Air Traffic Controller: What types of services does the Organizing Team provide the members? Why should they contact you?

Zietz: Much of our time we field inquiries from prospects who want to know if NATCA can represent them. We supply correct information and answers to their questions. We can identify both risks and benefits. Educational literature and recruitment information is supplied. We can provide the conduit for those asking to be represented. And we can be the center of a network of experiences and assistance. On time, accurate and unbiased information can be given to those prospective members and groups who anticipate assistance.

The Air Traffic Controller: How can members assist the Organizing Team?

Zietz: Every member counts, and their assistance is vital if NATCA's organizing efforts are to be successful. We need the help of all members. They can help us during our recruiting efforts, such as "open season" or simply helping to educate non-members concerning member benefits, activities and services. On an "as needed" basis, we stand ready to provide assistance, both formally and informally, to all active members. Without fail, the best organizing efforts come from informed, motivated members.

The Air Traffic Controller: What are your goals as Organizing Team lead? Where would you like to take NATCA?

Zietz: The team would like to explore those areas of organizing which may have been under represented in the past. It is also important to work within individual facilities (internal campaigning) and help create an environment for member growth where none had been previously. We need to make greater use of the



Some of the Organizing Team Members (l to r standing) Carol Poole, Alan Neace, Trish Gilbert, Kevin Christy and Lew Zietz (l to r sitting) Joe Hennessey, Tony Masters, Chuck Zapf and Jim D'Agati gather for a photo during a meeting.

member controller community for assistance, and, at the same time, always be available to talk with or meet with anyone willing to help the cause. It is absolutely imperative we are responsive to anyone and everyone.

The Air Traffic Controller: What projects are you currently working on? Where do you see this team long term?

Zietz: We are trying to organize approximately 600 Department of Defense civilian controllers and around 300 traffic management coordinators nationwide. We are continuing to work with private tower controllers. And we are also focusing internally on FAA controllers as well. We especially should be aware of that period in time when members have the opportunity to re-evaluate their commitment to NATCA. Bottom line – we don't want to lose members for any reason. We also need to look out for groups that could eventually fall under the umbrella of NATCA but they don't know where to turn for assistance.

We must place additional focus on corporate and associate memberships. Part of my responsibilities includes recruiting, retaining and strategizing all non-member corporate prospects. NATCA has to set goals, and create, update and distribute promotional corporate materials. We should increase the number of corporate members from our current 15 to around 50. The Organizing Team needs to sell membership through telephone, in-person visits, correspondence and presentations to allied and counterpart groups and firms. Most companies just haven't been asked, and don't know we offer this type of membership.

The deadline for nominations for the engineers & architects vice president position for the National Executive Board has been extended to March 15. The candidates nominated so far are Tom Bayone, Jim D'Agati, Pete Healy, Doug Hintz, Curt Howe and James "Ajax" Kidd.

The election timetable has been modified to ensure all members in good standing have the opportunity to consider their options and ensure all requirements of NATCA's constitution and the Department of Labor are adhered to. The new schedule is as follows:

March 31 - Deadline for acceptance of nominations.

May 31 - Ballots mailed to engineer and architect members.

July 31 - Deadline for return of ballots.

August 2 - Ballots counted.

Preparations for engineer contract begin

*Doug Hintz
Southern Region engineer local president*

The engineers and architects' contract team held their first meeting with the Federal Aviation Administration management team in January. The purpose was to receive joint training in the Interest Based Bargaining method.

For those of you who are contract pros, this will be old news, but for the rest of you, this will be new territory.

The FAA, having been through NATCA controllers' contract process, was very receptive to Internal Director and Lead Negotiator Bob Taylor's suggestion to use the IBB method with us to write our first contract. Taylor was very instrumental in getting this in place. After discussing it with the engineers, we all agreed to give it a try.

The principles of IBB are very fundamental, but difficult to apply. The basis of the process is for both sides to come to the table with a list of concerns and issues they would like to address with some sort of agreement. Neither side presents a position, which sets the forum that both parties will be more open to several dif-

Engineers seek to restore role in agency

*Curtis Howe, PE
Northwest Mountain Region engineer local president*

Recently an article entitled, "Threat to the Public and the Profession," co-authored by two retired U.S. Army Corps of Engineers professional engineers ran in *Civil Engineering* magazine. It detailed how the USACOE scrapped a long-standing practice of filling project and program manager positions with engineers by opening these positions to non-engineers, and also how it removed the requirement for professional licensure of its engineers...another blow to the science of engineering. The USACOE has basically taken great steps toward diminishing the role of professional engineering in their agency.

Its leadership has stated management skills are more necessary than the successful execution of engineering projects. In a similar and popular case, there once was an engineer who pointed out problems with some O-ring seals to his non-technical supervisors, but to no avail. The result? Seven brave Americans perished on the space shuttle Challenger.

Sound familiar? I thought so. It was as if I had just read an article about 'Foxtrot-Alpha-Alpha. While I have no knowledge (yet) of non-engineers supervising engineers and their work, engineers are very close to this same misfortune in Airway Facilities and other FAA directorates. Right now, professional licensure is not a requirement for engineers and architects within the agency, and it probably never was, but we need to take steps to make it so, where it makes sense, and we need to recognize those individuals who achieve this certification. While not always applicable to electronics engineering, professional licensure is available to all disciplines of engineering and to architects.

In one's state of residence it provides an extra margin of awareness, networking and the respect that favors the public's interest. After a recent outage at Seattle Center (ZSE), the newspapers reported it occurred due to a battery failure while engineers performed maintenance...or some such nonsense. In my local, we have no engineers at ZSE. Clearly the agency wishes the public to believe their national airspace system is being constantly monitored and maintained by professional controllers and engineers. I would offer for engineers, this is not the case.

To correct this problem and hopefully many related issues, engineers struck out to gain a voice. We will always remember and remain indebted to NATCA for its support as we successfully affiliated with the premier federal union in November 1997. With a voice and an overwhelming level of support from the 1998 convention, we have the momentum we need to invoke change within the FAA. We ask every controller's support in helping us stop the contracting-out of our work and to restore our positions taken by the agency.

To such an end, we have also affiliated with a group of 12 other professional unions who joined together to form the Council of Engineers and Scientists Organization and have started our contract bargaining. It is time for us all to bring a spotlight onto the FAA to help it retake its role as a world leader in aviation.

ferent alternatives, and focus on real concerns. Each issue stands on its own merit and is solved by consensus agreement. For the process to garner success, it is critical everyone share their true opinions. This way, both parties are more likely to support the decision and have a similar interpretation.

I don't have to tell you how important this is when you consider all the time and effort expended to resolve the language in the contract. I don't want to give the impression I think this will be easy. On

the contrary, I believe it will be difficult to not get caught up in the traditional process. I do believe the potential benefits will make it worth the work.

After the first session was complete, the NATCA team came away with the belief the management team is as committed to the process as we are, and we are optimistic we will be successful. I look forward to providing you with a detailed report on how our process worked after negotiations are over.

Union's involvement produces results in oceanic modernization

No. 2 lead and grease pencils, tissue, and plexiglas plotting boards

What do these three things have in common? They are the primary tools U.S. oceanic controllers utilize to separate aircraft.

Considering these individuals work without surveillance equipment, navigational aids and direct pilot communication, it is a wonder how planes are safely guided across bodies of water. In today's high tech world, these controllers' hourly position reports are handwritten on paper flight strips, sometimes extending upwards to seven feet.

This process consumes 70 percent of controllers' work load, and is at the heart of what limits U.S. oceanic air traffic control. The issues plaguing these controllers are no mystery. Inadequate numbers of trained staff, inferior equipment and a long, drawn-out modernization process are all outpacing the Federal Aviation Administration's ability to provide reliable, functional service. If airlines could feed jets into this airspace at a faster rate and maintain at least the current level of safety, the entire aviation community would benefit. Recent pressure by all of these groups motivated the agency to pick up the pace in 1999 and devise a strategy to reach a solution.

Background

The FAA's initial step in a long term modernization program for three U.S. centers, Anchorage, New York and Oakland, began in the early 1990s. The continuing evolution of improvements, known as the oceanic automation system, was to occur through a series of builds, eventually providing controllers the necessary infrastructure upon which other options could be added. After going three times over budget, this plan was halted in January 1998 when the contractor's contract was terminated.

Over the course of the next year, NATCA catalyzed its lobbying efforts. National Oceanic Representative Kevin Chamness worked with the national office to storm the halls on Capitol Hill to demand assistance in modernizing this system. After all, Congress needed to do something since it zeroed out the oceanic program's funding in Fiscal Year



The U.S. oceanic system is located at three air route traffic control centers: ZAN, ZOA and ZNY.

1999 because it saw the FAA taking money out of this area all along, so it assumed it was unnecessary.

NATCA also wrote letters to others in the industry, including aviation associations and airlines. This issue quickly caught the attention of commercial airlines since international flights compose 25 percent of their revenue. And they are not making as much money as they could because of the inefficiencies in the airspace. Today's system is rigid and limits the number of planes able to fly through this space. Controllers are also too busy focusing their attention on the flight strips to handle more aircraft. But with improved equipment, this could all change.

Global Market Survey

The added momentum provided by other aviation groups prompted FAA Administrator Jane Garvey to request a global market survey to determine what non-developmental equipment was available. Time could not be wasted creating a whole new system. The agency would have to institute equipment that was already up and running. A team, the FAA Oceanic Program, formed and scoured the world looking at systems.

Integrated Product Team

The agency soon realized it could not afford to buy new oceanic equipment without reprioritizing its agenda, so it wanted to explore hiring a company to lease the automation as a service. This

would inevitably cost the FAA the same amount in the long run, but lower its initial expenses. The contracted company would pay all the beginning costs and the agency's expenses are spread out over a longer time period.

To further explore this option, the FAA and NATCA put together an integrated product team and will start the bidding process. A contract should be awarded by the end of the year. "We're putting together small groups of NATCA subject matter experts from the field to be part of a larger team at headquarters. NATCA's involvement in this program will be tremendous," remarked Chamness.

NATCA's Future Involvement

The union helped put together a team to do work traditionally carried about by FAA staff. It will establish procedures and develop requirements. NATCA will be fully involved in risk mitigation to help avoid potential problems, by conducting a thorough series of tests on the equipment to ensure it is operationally suitable.

"What makes this attractive to NATCA is we can test a system in an operational environment using our airspace and our traffic before the FAA commits a penny. Then the NATCA teams will, based on the selected system, develop concepts, procedures and training materials. Our goal is to keep the core teams intact throughout the process to ensure a unified vision and direction for oceanic air traffic control," concluded Chamness.

Kink in satellite navigation system delays commissioning date

A kink in a garden hose prevents the water from flowing.

A kink in one's neck inhibits a restful night of sleep.

So what does a kink in developing critical software for the Federal Aviation Administration's new satellite navigation system cause?

The result is a delay in the commissioning date for the first phase of the Wide Area Augmentation System, part of the agency's modernization effort of the air traffic control system. Originally set for July 1999, now the estimated time period is the end of 2000.

The WAAS was developed to improve the accuracy, integrity and continuity of the basic Global Positioning System. GPS, a constellation of 24 satellites circling the earth, provides all weather positioning information worldwide, but has limitations and does not meet the high standards required for civil aviation, except in limited applications. The WAAS was designed to correct these limitations by monitoring, processing and providing corrections to the basic GPS signals. It presents opportunities to enhance safety, capacity and service flexibility. WAAS has the potential to transition navigation and landing from a ground-based to a satellite-based system using signals from the Defense Department's GPS.

The agency attributed the extension to the complex software module being "a much greater challenge than originally anticipated. We will not commission Phase One of WAAS until we are satisfied this technical challenge has been resolved," commented FAA Associate Administrator for Research and Acquisition Steve Zaidman in *Aviation Daily*.

Raytheon, the prime contractor on the

project, argued only an 11-week delay was necessary, and six of the 11 weeks resulted from the FAA's decision to divert resources away from the software. And it does not anticipate any obstacles to delivery of WAAS and its signal.

This system is projected to provide numerous benefits, including creating routes that will give users better service and flexibility and assisting places unable to have an extensive ground-based navigation, such as remote areas. WAAS will also provide category one precision approaches, when weather reports are at 200-foot ceiling and a half mile of visibility, to selected airports.

"If implemented correctly, an advantage to air traffic control is airplanes can go where they haven't gone before. Instrument departures, arrival procedures and airways will be developed completely independent of land based navigation system constraints," offered GPS Representative Jon Riley.

But there is still much skepticism lingering around. "A serious concern is whether WAAS can be a sole means navigation system. What will act as the backup in the event of a system failure or interference?," remarked Safety and Technology Team Lead Bill Blackmer.

"One of NATCA's concerns lies in whether the air traffic control system can recover from a large scale GPS outage caused by system failure or interference. It is imperative the FAA conduct the analysis and modeling necessary to answer this question prior to pursuing any sole or primary means of navigation system," concluded Riley.

The General Accounting Office explained many questions remain as to whether WAAS "can perform as originally intended—that is, provide the sole means

of navigation, so that it allows aircraft to meet all performance requirements for the navigation system for a given operation or phase of flight." Because of its problems, complexity, size and significant cost, rising from \$500 million in 1994 to over \$2 billion in 1998, Congress has refused to fund the program beyond Phase One.

At a recent hearing on the FAA reauthorization bill, the GAO noted under this legislation, the agency would have to report to two authorizing panels, the Senate Commerce and House transportation committees, on implementation plans and the timetable for WAAS' network of ground stations and geostationary communication satellites. It would also require the FAA to supply certification of the equipment's capabilities and a backup system until it determines WAAS should be the only means of navigation. These stipulations would ensure the agency "does not repeat past problems with major modernization systems."

Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory recently assessed the potential of using the satellite navigation system as the sole or primary means system and reported with some improvements, augmented GPS can be "the only navigation system installed in the aircraft and the only navigation service provided by the FAA."

FAA Administrator Jane Garvey thanked the Hopkins team for "identifying necessary improvements and for helping layout a plan for implementing them." But she cautioned a "significant amount of cooperative effort with the aviation community, including the Department of Defense and additional investments will be required to make the needed changes."

NATCA Membership Benefits

questions?
call NATCA Field Services
202/223-2900

A SAMPLE OF A FEW OF THE UNION'S PERKS

Union Driver and Traveler Discontinued

Cross Country Motor Club informed Union Privilege it can no longer provide the current Union Driver and Traveler benefit program because of a very high current-enrollee claims expense. Effective Jan. 1, members who inquire are told the existing program is not available while Union Privilege establishes a replacement program. It is currently considering auto discount programs from several providers, and expects to choose one shortly. Meanwhile, those who currently participate in the program will continue to receive services through Cross County until their membership expires. Participants who are paid through the end of 1998 will keep their membership for 11 months following the date of renewal. Those with membership expiration dates approaching will receive non-renewal notices for the existing program one month prior to termination. For more information contact NATCA Field Services at 202/223-2900.

Communication problems between Alaska and Russia still linger

As teenagers, many often tested their luck to see how many of their friends they could pile into their car and still drive in a remotely safe way. Could they see out their rear view mirror, was the rear window blocked? These are factors often taken into consideration before shifting the automobile into drive. *The basics, right?*

The Federal Aviation Administration is partaking in a similar situation in Alaska, but it is not weighing the risks or considering whether safety is jeopardized. Rather, it is squeezing as many flights between Anchorage Center and the Russian Far East facilities to satisfy the desires of airlines, despite concerns of air traffic controllers. Not only did the agency relax flow restrictions between the two areas, but it is also relaxing accuracy of coordinating estimates from three to 10 minutes.

HOW Busy IS THIS ZONE?

Traffic levels are on the rise because cost savings for the airlines are substantial when using these routes. United Airlines indicated it could save up to an hour and 20 minutes per flight in a B 747-400, compared to the previously used North Pacific routes. With a significant elevation in flights to China, Korea, Malaysia and Thailand, these routes are becoming even more in demand.

Specifically, when routine operations initially opened in July 1993, 18 aircraft per month entered the boundaries between Alaska and Russia. Today, over 500 airplanes per month fly in this area. Industry experts predict this number could further sky rocket to over 1,200 a month in coming years.

IS THE Equipment ADEQUATE?

Anchorage Center currently has marginal communications with two Russian "centers," Anadyr and Petropalovsk (P-K). "While the current communications are substandard and unacceptable to us, they are comparable with other situations throughout Asia," wrote Anchorage Center Manager Steve Creamer in a recent letter to his facility.

"We also exchange flights with four other Russian facilities, which adds further complications. For instance, transfers with Norilsk are made by telephone, and it may take two minutes just to connect. Or flight routing through Myschmidta is passed to Anadyr who will then forward the data to Myschmidta. If there is a problem with the transfer, the information will have to go backwards through the chain to Anchorage," elaborated former Anchorage Center Facility Representative Steve Munroe. "Things can become rather messy."

Efforts to improve communication have been slow. In 1996, the agency entered into an agreement with AT&T Alascom to provide dedicated circuits at both P-K and Anadyr. The Russian Air Traffic Control Authority was unable to pay for its share of this service (50 percent), but due to the importance of the lines, the agency agreed to pay 100 percent of the installation and operation costs for this service for five years. It is unknown what will happen in 2001.

DO THE NEW Communication LINES WORK?

The installation of the first new circuit at P-K in February 1998 was the beginning of the long road to improve communications. Initially, there were a lot of problems. A local hubbing arrangement was established to allow P-K and Anadyr to interact internally using this service. In March, concern was expressed for AT&T to expedite their work at Anadyr, but it cited difficulties with the Russian government and asked for the United States' assistance.

"Pressure from the United States is necessary to motivate Russia to move forward," commented Munroe.

WHAT ARE THE Problems WITH IT?

The most problematic issue for controllers with this system is its high failure rate. "In March 1998, P-K and Anadyr's circuits were out of service, and 52 aircraft were track loaded in the afternoon rush, sending havoc throughout the facility," stated Munroe. "The Anadyr line has been logged out of service in excess of 100

days from mid July 1998 to mid January."

The backup method, the teletype system, is even more complex than utilizing phone lines. Anchorage sends a message to the Russian facility, which must be acknowledged, but the acknowledgement is usually not received. If it is not garnered, controllers are supposed to reroute the flight unless the pilot insists he or she is going to press on.

Rerouting causes additional problems because flights may have to refuel, which is costly for the airlines. Additional issues arise because of political circumstances. Recently for instance, a Chinese airline could not accept a reroute that would take it through Korean airspace. The added task of having to determine a politically correct route is not something busy sectors have time for.

Adding to the everyday complexity is all traffic crossing the boundary in either direction is required to be at a metric altitude, which adds to controllers' workload. They must refer to conversion charts and compare meters and feet, which sometimes results in the loss of some altitudes available in normal operations.

WHAT HAS THE Agency DONE TO HELP?

In January, the agency relaxed the accuracy of coordinated times from three to 10 minutes. It claims this would reduce the number of revised transfers when aircraft estimates change, which would decrease the number of acknowledgements required. "This does not fix the problem of poor communications or the lack of timely acknowledgements to transfer information," expressed Anchorage Center Controller Duane McQuillan.

Also, effective July 1, 1998, the FAA imposed a unilateral flow restriction, which would control the amount of west-bound flights entering RFE airspace to two aircraft per hour on one track, and one per hour on another track. It did so because it was concerned with controller workload in sectors handling domestic and oceanic transitions along with the "Russian Roulette" situation. But due to pressure from airlines, the agency has relaxed these restrictions to accommodate additional flights.

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Controllers participate in community service recognition program

"Because of NATCA, I have the income and job security that allows me to more freely help others in our community," remarked Controller Ed Locke, a participant in NATCA's recent holiday community service recognition program.

NATCA members are quick to support another, but the general public benefits from their generosity and kindness as well. To identify some community service stars, the union sponsored this event from Nov. 20 to Dec. 31, 1998. Five judges, former NATCA President Barry Krasner, Engineers and Architects Vice President Pete Healy, National Office Manager Adell Humphreys, Controller Ruth Marlin and Communications and Legislative Assistant Katie Wittig, reviewed each entry. They examined every project's primary objectives, who benefited, involvement of others in the facility or town, the percentage of NATCA members taking part and publicity gathered for the event. Each was given recognition of Galaxy (unsurpassed), Supernova (superior) or Stellar (excellent). "It was a tough decision," concluded Healy. The results follow:

Jayne Blasier and Tom Hatton

MKE

Blasier collects money for food baskets, and Hatton donates an incredible amount of toys for underprivileged families each year. At least 50 percent of NATCA members at Milwaukee/Mitchell Tower helped them distribute what they collected.



Dayton Approach Control

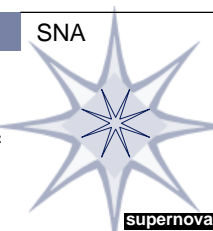
For the last six years, this facility has sponsored families during the holidays. All controllers help by purchasing gifts and the NATCA local donates from \$500 to \$1,200 each year. One hundred percent of NATCA members participate, along with facility management and other air traffic employees.



Dennice Emge

SNA

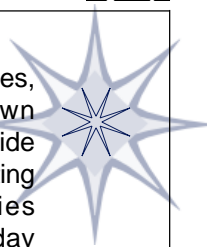
Emge started Families Forward, a food drive for a local community shelter, which led to the collection of 500 pounds of canned and dry food items.



Pedro Garcia and Mark Johnson

CPR

Garcia began a food drive feeding three families, and it has grown into an airport-wide effort, now assisting over 26 families during the holiday season.



Steve Haller

ZMA

Haller headed up a NATCA Charity Golf Tournament which contributed \$8,400 to the Marty Lyons Foundation to help make terminally ill children's wishes come true.



Ed Locke

ZID

For the last three years, Locke has volunteered at the Indiana State Museum as a photographer/Santa's helper and Christmas train conductor. He also participated in a program at Kohl's department store, where money he made while working was donated to a children's school.



Miami Ctr. Commun. Involv. Com.

Formed in 1997, with approximately 70 percent NATCA membership, the MCCIC starts up donation drives for needy families during the holiday season.



galaxy

NATCA Charitable Foundation

A family of nine and two families of five were "adopted" for Christmas through donations made to this foundation.



Alan Neace

ZFW

Neace serves on the Parks and Recreation Board coordinating and acting as master of ceremonies for the Fall Annual Senior Citizens' Dinner, which honors seniors' contributions to the community.



Mike Styer

DFW

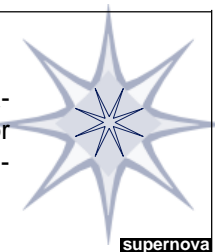
Styer has acted as air traffic liaison for Fly the Kids, Inc., since 1994 "establishing safe flying routes and procedures" for the wish lists of children with special needs.



galaxy

Pontiac Tower

The entire facility became involved with Operation Good Cheer by loading gifts on airplanes for 3,078 foster children in homes and residential facilities throughout Michigan.



Don't be left out of the crowd. Contact your regional legislative chair for information on *NATCA in Washington '99, The Next Step*. The event will take place May 10-12 at the Hyatt on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. Lobby topics and issue briefings will cover maintaining the "Liaison and Familiarization Training" program, 20-year retirement, access to the Merit Systems Protection Board and saving Social Security. A "First Timers' Break Out Session" will be open to new participants to provide the information they need to get up to speed.

NATCA and Federal Aviation Administration officials gathered in Seattle, Wash., on Jan. 20 to celebrate their collaborative partnership on Display System Replacement.

NATCA Executive Vice President Randy Schwitz recognized the union's representatives on the joint DSR "Tiger Team" Bill Blackmer, Mike Dunhom, Mike Naiman and Sterling Swann for their hard work on making the equipment viable.

"It (DSR) is the first piece of equipment the agency and controllers have teamed up on to bring it to a point of implementation – within projected timelines and budget. In the process of working closely together, we learned valuable lessons. By that, I mean we've learned what to do for successful delivery of technology, as well as in some cases what not to do," Schwitz concluded.



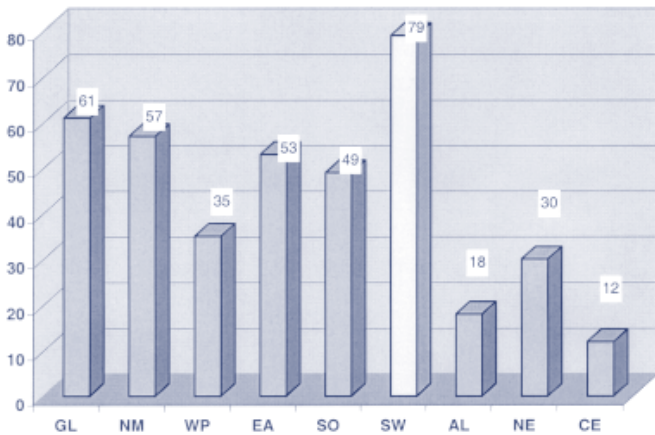
EVP Randy Schwitz speaks at the ceremony.

Applications and instructions for NATCA scholarships were mailed to each facility representative the beginning of March. The Seattle convention body voted to change the award from five \$2,000 scholarships to 10 \$1,000 scholarships. The scholarship fund is established for the children, stepchildren and legally adopted children of active, retired and deceased NATCA members with continuous membership in good standing of at least two years. The scholarships, awarded to full-time students at accredited colleges and universities in the United States, are based on a lottery system. Applications are due May 1. For more information, please contact the Field Services Team.

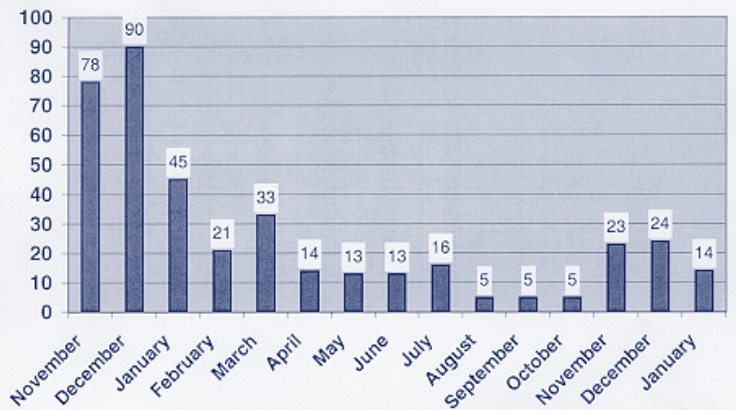
Please remember to return seniority surveys to the national office.

On Jan. 20, two Robinson Van-Vuren private contract facilities in Kissimmee, Fla., and Ithaca, N.Y., voted overwhelmingly in favor of NATCA representation.

ENGINEERS BY REGION



Engineers - Recruitment By Month



NATCA engineers recently completed a national recruitment effort resulting in 61 new members. This "Member-Get-A-Member" campaign was a win-win for all involved because current members earned valuable NATCA merchandise. This campaign effectively increased the number of NATCA represented engineers by more than 15 percent with total membership now over 400 active individuals nationwide. More than 20 percent of all engineer members reside in the Southwest Region.

A controller at a contract tower wants to take a vacation, so what does he do? He puts in for leave, which is approved. For some unknown reason, the manager determines controllers can't work six consecutive days. What does the employer do? When this scenario recently occurred in January, the employer brought a controller from a different facility over, trained him for less than seven hours to certify him, and then let him work alone on the following day to fill in for several shifts. Will this happen again?

NATCA controllers from Miami Tower, Ron Brinson, Victor Ferguson, Larry Holland, Dave Larson and Charlie Rathburn, participated in the Super Bowl for the first time this year, directing airships, airplanes and helicopters from a tower constructed on the roof of Pro Player Stadium.

Congratulations to Accounting Team Lead Frances Alsop. She celebrated 10 years with NATCA on March 1.

100 Percent Facility	
David Mohr	Santa Monica Tower
CONGRATULATIONS	

Western Pacific Region transoceanic controllers brought up to grade

On Jan. 6, an arbitrator awarded oceanic controllers at Oakland Center a retroactive promotion, including back pay to March 1996, bringing them up to grade with oceanic controllers at New York Center. (In March 1996, New York Center received an increase in grade to GS-13, while Oakland Center remained at GS-12.)

NATCA argued "equal pay for equal work," in accordance with Title 5 USC 2103, *Merit System Principles*, Section 3, as well as Article 17. After the union presented a job description of both facilities' positions, it was also decided Oakland should also not undergo further training as suggested by the agency because these controllers have been performing the same duties all along, only receiving less pay and benefits to do so.

Memoranda of understanding signed

Three memoranda of understanding have been signed regarding the Computer Human Interface upgrades to the Display System Replacement. The first, dated June 16, 1998, sets forth the resolution guidelines for which DSR may be deployed. An addendum MOU dated Jan. 13 specifies the requirements necessary for deployment at Anchorage Center (ZAN). The third contains the timetables to be followed for deployment at ZAN.

Engineer negotiations underway

NATCA and the engineers have begun negotiations on a new collective bargaining agreement with the agency. Negotiation sessions will be conducted for one week each month through June at the Center for Management Development in Palm Coast, Fla.

Sun. premium pay issue continues

On Jan. 11 the national office received an update from Outside Counsel William Osborne, Jr., regarding Sunday premium pay. The Court of Federal Claims found NATCA's complaint out of its jurisdiction, and the Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit also affirmed this decision. NATCA is now in the process of determining what its next course of action will be regarding this issue.

Controller comes to aid of another

A Robinson Van-Vuren employee, Bruce Sistrunck, McAllen Tower, played an instrumental role in retaining the job of a fellow controller. Due to a misdiagnosis by the agency, the employer began removal proceedings stating the employee was declared medically disqualified. Because of Sistrunck's direct and continuous dialog with RVA, the employee was able to remain in a Leave Without Pay status, while training to become recertified.

Alaska/Russia communications

continued from page 8

FAA Director of Air Traffic Ron Morgan indicated in a recent letter the number of restrictions may further change because AT&T is encountering additional difficulties. The P-K partner may terminate the link between Anchorage and P-K, which "will force Anchorage to implement similar traffic flow restrictions on aircraft bound for P-K's airspace," Morgan wrote.

"At the same time, our (FAA) parallel effort to establish satellite communications between the Anchorage and Anadyr centers has stalled...The Anadyr telephone company has failed to demonstrate any substantive cooperation on this

effort."

"Morgan recently met in Paris, France with his Russian counterpart to discuss this problem. The Russian Air Traffic Control Authority agrees this is a dilemma, but contends it is having difficulty resolving the issue," added Alaskan Region Vice President Rick Thompson.

WHAT Should THE FAA DO?

"The agency needs to make the equipment work like it is supposed to. We need the proper communication tools, but none

of this will happen unless the Russians are pressed to make this happen," stated Munroe. "But instead the FAA has eased pressure by appeasing the airlines with additional flight allowances. So the ball is in the Russian's park, and who knows if they will ever go to bat."

The agency has expressed its concern of the hardship Russia's eastern cities are facing including harsh weather, scarce food and fuel supplies. But is this proper justification to operate a less than safe and efficient operation to the RFE tracks?

www.natca.org

Keeping you abreast of updates on natca's homepage

Revised Travel Policies [Members only home](#) [Field Services](#) [Travel Policies](#)

The latest revision to the NATCA travel policies is now available online. The Accounting Team added all attachment forms, which may be printed and returned to the national office. Attachment files include a letter on travel procedures, travel authorization form, cash and credit card expense report, a sample voucher and receipt attachment.

Revised constitution and by-laws [Members only home](#) [Inside NATCA](#) [Executive Office](#)

All 14 articles of the constitution and seven sections of the by-laws have been revised and posted on the web.

NATCA Bulletin Board

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Regional Vice Presidents

Alaskan	Eastern	New England	Southern	Western Pacific
Ricky Thompson P.O. Box 233291 Anchorage, AK 99523-3291 Phone: (907) 346-3372 Fax: (907) 346-3373 subartic@alaska.net PIN: 11001	Joseph Fruscella 370 Vanderbilt Motor Pkwy., Suite 2 Hauppauge, NY 11788 Phone: (516)436-7457 Fax: (516)436-7520 natcafuse@mindspring.com PIN: 13001	Mike Blake 20A Northwest Blvd. Suite 226 Nashua, NH 03063 Phone: (603) 673-7443 Fax: (603) 673-3432 mikepappa@aol.com PIN: 15001	Rodney Turner 100 Hartsfield Centre Pkwy. Suite 510 Atlanta, GA 30354 Phone: (404) 766-3118 Fax: (404) 766-4265 NSO-NATCAmaniac@worldnet.att.net PIN: 17001	Gus Guerra 2450 Peralta Dr. Suite 211 Fremont, CA 94536 Phone: (510) 739-1585 Fax: (510) 739-1653 natcawp@worldnet.att.net PIN: 19001
Central	Great Lakes	Northwest Mountain	Southwest	National Engineers Director
Bill Otto 4385 Bonfils Dr. Bridgeton, MO 63044 Phone: (314) 209-7827 Fax: (314) 209-7405 Central@natca.org PIN: 12001	Jim Poole 1910 Highland, Suite 210 Lombard, IL 60148 Phone: (630)268-8430 Fax: (630)268-8476 jimpoole@earthlink.net PIN: 14000	James Ferguson 8118 So. Deer Run Way South Weber, UT 84405 Phone: (801)479-1290 Fax: (801)479-1434 j.ferg@worldnet.att.net PIN: 16001	Mark Pallone 1001 W. Euleuss Blvd. Suite 215 Euleuss, TX 76040 Phone: (817) 540-6661 Fax: (817) 354-8589 nswrvp@flash.net PIN: 18001	Pete Healy 3909 Diamond Loch W. H. Richland Hills, TX 76180 Phone: (817) 284-7431 phealy@flash.net PIN: 32000

The National Air Traffic Controllers Association (AFL-CIO)

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This month's highlights...

Open Season
 Community Service
 Oceanic Modernization
 Alaska/Russia Communication

