

Swarm of confusion hovers above aviation industry in 2000

Rock, paper, scissors...
 Heads or tails...
 Duck, duck, goose...

These games are all filled with uncertainty. Who will get caught, considered "it" or lose the bet? Those involved just don't know. Similar uncertainties plague the aviation industry and the year 2000. No one knows for sure what will happen when the clock strikes 12 a.m. on Jan. 1, 2000. But what is more alarming is the Federal Aviation Administration still hasn't figured out exactly what preventative and proactive measures to take to ensure air traffic control equipment will function properly, or what actions should constitute the contingency plan if the system fails.

When controllers in the field are questioned as to whether their facilities are Y2K compliant or if testing is being carried out to make a determination, the answers vary. Even two individuals in the same facility will give opposite replies. This confusion adds to the already mass skepticism of what will really occur in the nation's skies on New Year's Eve.

? Deadline ?

By June 30, special FAA management offices must successfully complete

around 4,000 "events" as the agency describes its Y2K computer work. This may entail anything from installing new computer hardware to creating a software "patch" to keep automated equipment running. At a recent House hearing, Administrator Jane Garvey expressed confidence that it will complete Y2K critical work on schedule.

The FAA plans to deploy about 75 mission-critical air traffic control systems to one or more of its roughly 654 air traffic



facilities. A recent General Accounting Office survey indicated among the 334 airports responding, about one-third said they would be Y2K ready by June 30. The remaining planned a later date or had not set a completion date, with half of these airports saying they have no contingency plans for core functions. Although most of those not planning to be ready by June 30 were small facilities, 26 are among the nation's 50 largest airports.

Given there are no guarantees every computer glitch will be discovered, Department of Transportation



Inspector General Kenneth Mead urged agency officials to obtain more participation from its two key unions, NATCA and the Professional Airways Systems Specialists, in the development of contingency plans. In case of unexpected failure, most of the responsibility for maintaining safe air traffic operations would fall to members of these unions, he noted. Garvey confirmed she will continue to utilize these organizations in writing plans.

? Contingency Plan ?

The initial contingency plan called for a nearby facility to take over the designated airspace if one goes down due to radar scopes going out or losing power. In September 1997, the FAA air route traffic control centers were the first to be provided with a contingency plan development guide. Upon further review of the airspace parameters, NATCA concluded it did not provide adequate levels of operational readiness. The union found basic controller responsibilities were not addressed, causing facilities to scramble in a worst case scenario, such as trying to put a puzzle together without all of the pieces. This may look good on paper, but

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In his own words...

NATCA President
Michael McNally



Reclass: union initiated interim pay system

Awaits challenges as door closes to full implementation

Dear Friends and Members:

We have been taught to believe that “negative equals realistic and positive equals unrealistic” – so the quote goes. NATCA must have missed class that day. The Federal Aviation Administration did not.

Working through the new air traffic control pay system, we have (as usual) been saddled with the agency’s “can’t be done” and “it’s going to take forever” mentality. Why is that, we wonder. Because manipulating three antiquated computer systems is difficult, yes – but not impossible. Reprogramming can be done in a timely manner, thanks to the administrator and her deputy. Most of you are well aware of the enormous challenges we faced during the implementation phase of the new pay system.

Since the Sept. 15, 1998, agreement was signed, we experienced nothing if not an uphill battle. We all had hoped the appointment of Administrator Jane Garvey would solve most of the problems with the agency. In many ways, her clear mandate set the tone, and things they are a-changing, although not everywhere yet. Ever so sluggishly the bureaucracy inches forward, but it’s especially slow with the new and, in some cases, very different pay system.

Progress has only come at NATCA’s instigation. To reassure you reclass is a reality, that dollars are available and ready for transfer into your pockets, NATCA initiated the interim pay system.

Now as we close the door to full implementation, we may expect continued challenges. We must stabilize our traffic count databases, which generates our classification indexes, we must hear and act upon all appeals and deal with many other problems as they pop up. If current calculations prove over or under the \$200 million pay agreement, modifications may be made.

Regardless, the agreement is the agreement and nothing short of it will be acceptable to NATCA. We anticipate minimal adjustments, because we worked on modifications at the front end, rather than risk greater pay uncertainties over the next two Octobers.

Additionally, at this writing, we are pushing for final cost of living differentials. It will not surprise you this is proving a difficult endeavor but – again, not impossible! FAA’s Air Traffic division is struggling to reconcile its impact upon management, supervisors and other staff specialists.

I am confident COLD will be imple-

mented. It would be foolhardy for me to guess a time frame, but as of this writing, it is once again a slow torturous process. By the time all this is successfully concluded, perhaps the FAA will also learn positives are realistic.

In solidarity,

Mike McNally
President

Front page cartoons reprinted with permission from Ted Goff.

NATCA in Washington '99

May 10-12

Meet congressmen and build relationships with some of the most powerful people in Washington, D.C.



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How to reach
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Feedback

All letters must include an address and phone number. NATCA reserves the right to edit letters for clarity and space.

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Privatization gave Canadian controllers a type of double jeopardy

I often hear members of the aviation community talk about how successful air traffic control privatization has been in Canada, so I decided to check into it and obtain the controllers' perspective. With their contract negotiations breaking down and a summer strike looming, it is far from a success to the men and women of the Canadian Air Traffic Controllers Association. They share many of NATCA's concerns, with staffing and equipment topping the list.

When NAV CANADA took over air traffic services, it assumed substantial efficiencies would be gained from the controllers. It instituted a hiring freeze and planned to combine facilities. But, combining facilities doesn't change the number of controllers needed as long as the airspace remains the same. So the alternative was to close towers and reduce services.

Management of NAV CANADA is heavily controlled by the airlines, so corporate and general aviation have little voice in the decisions of the company when it comes to reducing service. Now that it has made itself critically short staffed, management claims to need so-called "efficiency increases" to keep the system running.

Controllers initially supported privatization because they saw it as the only way to get out from under a restrictive pay system and receive a real wage increase. They also believed efficiencies would come from reduced management, more flexible control of budgets and faster equipment procurement. Instead, the

new company focused on the line controller. Their pay offers came with a demand for huge concessions, described as "the destruction of your personal life" by Tony Rushton, CATCA vice president technical.

NAV CANADA proposed an increase in hours per week, number of days worked per year and fewer consecutive regular days off. It also offered to increase the number of paid sick days, but the first two days of each illness would be leave without pay. This offer was aimed at increasing controller efficiency and included time on position targets at six and a half to seven hours in an eight and a half-hour shift. Controllers' shifts would change from standardized schedules to individual ones with many different start times and shift lengths ranging from seven to 12 hours.

It came as no surprise when 95 percent of the CATCA membership voted down this proposal. Labor relations have changed dramatically since privatization. "NAV CANADA has done in a few months what CATCA has been unable to achieve in 40 years. That is to make us into a living, breathing trade union," says Rushton. "Before, we saw ourselves as more of a professional association, but things have become so acrimonious we have had to do things we have never done before, like going to the media."

As government employees, CATCA technically had the right to strike, but they were 100 percent essential personnel so effectively could not. In the private sector they have an expanded right to strike,

but the employer can also take swift action. For example, when there was a slight increase in sick leave, NAV CANADA decided it was an illegal job action and went to court. Every controller in Canada was served with a cease and desist order by the local sheriff. Controllers who gotten sick had to jump through hoops to get leave approved or risk violating a court order.

Privatization has also given the controllers a type of double jeopardy. Since the regulator is no longer the employer, an operational error may be handled in a more oppressive manner. The employer can suspend the controller for not following procedures (such as maintaining separation), the government can fine the controller for breaking a regulation (i.e. issuing clearances in accordance with separation standards), and depending on the severity, can suspend the controller's license. Fines start at \$250 and peak at \$5,000.

CATCA has had to face new battles and use new weapons to fight them. While it may not have to resort to a full walk out, it's likely that it will face at least a partial strike. CATCA is currently going through the collective bargaining process that allows a legal strike. With only 2,200 members, CATCA does not have the resources NATCA enjoys and I am confident our members will do anything they can to aid our northern brothers and sisters when the time comes.

*Ruth Marlin
Miami Center*

viewpoint

Member



We want
to hear
from
YOU!

Controller making more time for union

I have been a member of NATCA for nine years. However, with training the first few years and a growing family as well, I never gave much thought to what NATCA does. I had the chance to learn a little more about my union at the Women in Aviation Conference in Orlando, March 18-20, when I discovered the NATCA trade booth. I stopped to talk to some of my friends from ZMA who were working the booth, and ended up volunteering for a few hours. Our booth not only gets our name out to the public, it also gave me an opportunity to talk to pilots about how they see our issues. I also didn't mind listening to all of the pilots, from general aircraft to air carrier, tell me how great they think we are. Every one of them thanked us for the great job we do, and all the help we give their students. It was a great experience and I got to see a little more of what NATCA is doing to promote our profession. I'm glad it attends these conferences, and even though my life hasn't slowed down, I'm going to make time to learn and do more for our union.

*Pamela Fero
Miami Center*

How can the national office serve its membership's needs better?

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

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

Deadline

Field Services Team juggles multiple tasks to meet members' needs

Handling the demands of NATCA's membership is a task the Field Services Team has mastered. This group responds to the desires of membership by fulfilling requests for merchandise, creating recruiting kits and information packages and researching benefits. *The Air Traffic Controller* recently sat down with Field Services Team Lead Carol Poole to discuss how her team juggles these multiple tasks.

The Air Traffic Controller: What do you do as Field Services Team lead? What are the responsibilities of the other individuals on your team?

Poole: I am responsible for planning, directing and evaluating NATCA's benefit programs, projects, events and initiatives focusing on the union's membership to include current, associate, retired and corporate members. I investigate new benefits, serve as liaison to Union Privilege and keep members up-to-date on what perks NATCA offers. I decide what NATCA items we order, keep in stock and sell, including several new things such as NATCA pullover sweat shirts, jackets and hats. We are working on a color brochure to feature these. To keep members abreast of the latest news, I also update the members only Field Services Team page of NATCA's website. Additionally, I assist the president in administering the scholarship program, which gives 10 individuals \$1,000 scholarships. I also serve as a member of the Organizing Committee and help set up the new locals by coordinating membership packets, disseminating information and getting applications processed.

As a team, we handle around 50 member inquiries a day, ranging from people wanting a Walt Disney discount card, to changing their address. We also receive a lot of phone calls from individuals who need to talk to someone in the national office about something, but don't know who specifically to talk with, so we send them in the right direction. Field Services Assistants Candi Derr and Wilma Gisala distribute the new password to the members only site of www.natca.org after verifying the individual is in good standing. They answer a lot of phone calls about the Union Privilege benefits, such as the legal services. We have a binder filled

with all of the attorneys who participate all across the country, so if a person needs a lawyer in his or her area, we may provide a name. Candi and Wilma also process membership applications, make up new member kits and send out materials for trade shows and career days.

The Air Traffic Controller: What can the new membership database do that the old one can't?

Poole: We started working on this project over a year ago. The new database is going from a DOS-based program to a Windows version, which will make it faster, cleaner and more user-friendly. It will be easier to compile information and customize reports. For instance, if a member calls and wants to know how many NATCA individuals are in their facility, we can quickly run a report. If a regional vice president wants to know how many members are in his area, we can rapidly find out.

A new feature we will utilize is identifying people by a membership number, rather than their social security number. Once we convert to the new system, we will print new membership cards with names and membership numbers.

The Air Traffic Controller: What are the benefits of membership?

Poole: NATCA offers a wide range of advantageous benefits. There are a variety of dental benefits along with the largest provider network available to suit individuals' dental needs. The union's dis-



Field Services Team Members (l-r) Candi Derr, Carol Poole and Wilma Gisala.

counted auto insurance program offers NATCA members significant savings and easily accessible centers for assistance. NATCA's affiliation with the AFL-CIO last year also garnered a large array of Union Privilege, the AFL-CIO's not-for-profit corporation which scouts for new benefits for members, benefits including accident insurance, life insurance and legal services. For a more detailed look at union benefits, please refer to the chart below.

The Air Traffic Controller: Are there any new members-only benefits on the horizon?

Poole: I have been working for the past year on a disability insurance plan, but what I have come up with so far is too expensive, so I am still researching other possibilities. Another one is a reduced rate for laser eye surgery. Clinics in Canada are offering it for \$495 per eye. Information regarding this went to all facilities in April. Union Privilege is also al-

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NATCA Membership Benefits

- NATCA Merchandise - Discounts available on jackets, hats and other items.
- Disney Park Pak - Theme park, merchandise and car rental discounts.
- NATCA Dental Plan - Wide variety of dental benefits with large provider network.
- Union Member Dental Program - Dental discounts averaging 30 percent.
- Union Privilege Legal Services - Free and discounted legal advice.
- Union Member Accident Insurance - \$10,000 of accidental death insurance.
- Union Member Mortgage & Real Estate - Selling and refinancing made easier.
- Union Member Life Insurance - Quality term life insurance.
- Member Buying Plan - Low-cost price quoting and buying program.
- PageMart Pagers - Discount pager program offered through PageMart Wireless.
- Geico Preferred Auto Insurance - Discounted auto insurance offered.
- Mortgage Banking Assistance - Assistance for applications, marketing and such.
- Home Savings of America - National relocation program offering preferential rates.
- NATCA Ford Purchase Plan - Purchase new cars and light trucks at discount.
- Union MasterCard from Amalgamated Bank - Low finance rates, low APR, no annual fee, free air travel.
- Pre-Paid Legal Services - Low cost legal insurance plan providing many services.

Field Services Team

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ways scouring for new opportunities.

The Air Traffic Controller: What is the most used benefit by NATCA members?

Poole: It is a toss up between the Disney card and the Union Privilege legal program.

The Air Traffic Controller: What is the least used?

Poole: Probably the Amalgamated Bank credit card. They sent out 6,000 pre-approved applications, and less than 100 members responded. The member buying plan is also not utilized often.

The Air Traffic Controller: Is there anything you have heard our members say they want, but we can't provide them with it?

Poole: They want medical insurance and we can't obtain it for them because we aren't a big enough union to receive a large volume discount.

The Air Traffic Controller: How can members help Field Services do its job better?

Poole: When individuals move from one facility to another, relocate or any other types of changes, such as phone num-

ber, please call us and let us know, so we may keep up with them. If they see a benefit out there which may be beneficial to the membership nationwide, please let us know.

When a member transfers from one region to another, the FAA payroll office frequently stops their dues. Check your pay stub if you have transferred and if you don't see a dues deduction, contact us.

Y2K

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does not go into enough depth.

"If the system fails, the only back up is the air traffic controller," remarked President Mike McNally. The draft plan "does not fully address several broad failures that could affect aviation operations," commented Joel Willemssen, director of civil agencies information systems for Congress's GAO, at a recent congressional hearing. "This approach may not be appropriate should year 2000 induced facilities affect adjoining facilities."

At a two-day workshop March 30-31, industry representatives and agency officials went over the plans in detail, and have until the end of April to adjust and put on the final touches. "We recently told the FAA our outstanding problems with this project, and it is supposed to take our issues into consideration," stated Executive Vice President Randy Schwitz.

Willemssen elaborated on how the FAA still faces challenges, including ensuring systems validation efforts are adequate, implementing multiple systems at numerous facilities, completing data exchange efforts and end-to-end testing.

? Y2K Testing ?

The agency has begun its end-to-end testing to check whether the air traffic control systems can exchange data properly and whether individual fixes of components will work together as a whole. Testing at the FAA's technical center in Atlantic City, N.J., March 22-24, indicated a lot of uncertainty still lingers. It is unknown whether the Y2K problems previously identified had been resolved be-

cause of lack of coordination and proper briefing to union officials.

Meanwhile, the agency has also been running tests in the facilities in the Denver area. The fourth "dry run show" of the system occurred March 27. These "dress rehearsals" were taking place to prepare for when the same test would run April 10, because on that day, Garvey along with the press, dignitaries and other officials would be present. All of the clocks in Denver Center, Denver Tower, Denver TRACON, Colorado Springs and Grand Junction were moved forward to Dec. 31. Around 11 p.m., a FAA Flight Inspection Survey Service aircraft, with its system clocks advanced 12 months, flew on a filed flight plan from Grand Junction to Denver International to Colorado Springs. The aircraft went through a variety of different types of airspace and was handed-off between all of the facilities.

Several systems were supposed to determine if it functions properly as a whole. "But if the agency wants to shake down the whole system, it needs to test all of the vital equipment. It still hasn't examined the National Airspace Data Interchange Network or the Voice Switching Communications System," commented Denver Center Facility Representative Chris Monaldi.

? Controllers' Viewpoints ?

Controllers in the Denver area have different feelings about the Y2K testing and whether their facility would be ready. "We all want to know our equipment works,

so if these 'dry runs' help the agency determine this, more power to them," offered Denver TRACON Facility Representative Tracey Weathers. "The agency is telling us all this equipment is Y2K compliant, but it isn't showing us. We want to see documentation it will function correctly," added Colorado Springs Facility Representative Paul Vitale.

So what type of testing should occur? And where should it take place? "I appreciate the agency's effort, but I don't think it answers all of the questions. We need more field testing, rather than the agency just using our little corner of the nation. This approach doesn't give an accurate depiction of the entire country. Not every facility uses the exact same software, a lot of it was adapted locally or has different patches," elaborated Monaldi. Denver Tower Facility Representative Mike Coulter believes more testing should happen in a simulator rather than live traffic, and involve more airplanes. "It is useless to test one plane on a Saturday night, with almost no traffic," he argued.

? Continued Uncertainty ?

The months preceding the turn of the millenium may be even more confusing and chaotic than when the clock really does strike 12 a.m. on Jan. 1, 2000. No one knows what to test, where to test it, how to test it or who has already tested what. It is difficult to prepare the aviation industry for what may or may not become a crisis, when no one knows what to even expect.

Annual 1999 IFATCA conference resolves air traffic control issues, institu

Often it's easy for a person to become consumed with the problems afflicting his or her daily life, but what many fail to recognize is the big picture. Beyond the realm of NATCA is the International Federation of Air Traffic Controllers Associations, which discusses and implements policies relevant to air traffic controllers worldwide.

For the fifth year, NATCA sent delegates to attend IFATCA's annual conference, this time held in Santiago, Chile, March 15-19. Around 60 member associations attended, bringing the total attendees to about 500 people. This year the union's President Mike McNally, Northwest Mountain Region Vice President James Ferguson, Western Pacific Region Vice President Gus Guerra and Great Lakes Region Vice President Jim Poole provided representation. NATCA's presence was further enhanced by Washington Center Controller Martin Cole who just finished his two-year term as vice president technical on IFATCA's executive board.

"We have something to gain in IFATCA, but we have much more to offer. With our

assistance, the air traffic control system of this region will improve and thus enhance our interactions internationally," concluded Ferguson.

The conference is traditionally structured into three committees, which meet separately, except for opening and closing plenary sessions. Committee A handles the administrative business of running the federation. Committee B deals with the technical issues, such as equipment and navigation. Committee C oversees legal and professional issues, such as free flight and controller standards.

"All committees address issues through working papers, drafted by individuals, member associations such as NATCA or standing committees. Most are submitted by these five current committees, which deal with anything from finances to technical issues. Once Committees A, B and C finish their agenda, it is submitted in the form of a report for ratification by all member associations on the last day," elaborated Ferguson.

Highlights of Committee A's work, attended by McNally and Ferguson, in-

cludes reviewing finances from the last year and reports from each of the IFATCA executive board members, along with passing a new budget for the next fiscal year. The group accepted Cabo Verde as a new member and terminated other associations for reasons such as delinquent dues. Zambia's membership was revoked because its organization sent controllers across a picket line when a neighboring country was on strike. Several parts of IFATCA's manual were also changed as it relates to the new permanent office, now in Montreal. Members were appointed to the Finance and Constitution Committees. McNally will serve on Finance and Ferguson on Constitution. New officers were elected and Morocco was chosen as the site for next year's conference. Geneva, Switzerland will serve as the host for 2001.

In Committee B, the United States was elected as one of the six members associations to work on the Technical and Operational Matters in ATC Standing Committee. Cole will fill this position. "The specific item from the work program we

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Case Study: Panamanian controllers need NATCA members' help

Some U.S. controllers adamantly argue they aren't being paid enough, receiving proper benefits or treated fairly. But compared to individuals in other countries, this nation's controllers are treated like royalty. In Russia, controllers did not receive pay for several months, in Uganda a controller was jailed after a government plane was shot down by rebel forces and in Canada a continuing severe staffing/overtime problem lingers. More appalling is the current situation in Panama, and NATCA members' help is needed to bring about positive change.

In November 1996, 93 out of 94 controllers decided to support an industrial action proposed by the Panamanian Association's executive board, due to the Panamanian Authority's lack of interest to support their intentions to establish the air traffic control job as a professional not technical career. They were bargaining

to receive a pay raise from roughly \$15 an hour to \$20 an hour.

After the industrial action, 93 controllers were dismissed, but after a few days, several members returned to work. The government accepted 24, and the remaining 69 remained dismissed. The airspace was closed for a day and a half, until the authorities contracted out 10 to 15 controllers, who earned \$110 an hour. Most of these employees came from the United States, some of them who worked in Panama in the early 70s when the Federal Aviation Administration controlled the airspace.

Then the Panamanian government filed a lawsuit against the 69 dismissed controllers, claiming they endangered the flying public's safety. Two hearings were held in September 1997 and July 1998, and the court has still not rendered a decision. Each of the fired individuals also presented to the Supreme Court of Jus-

tice an administrative litigious demand arguing for restitution and back pay of salaries dating to November 1996. A ruling on this matter is expected in a few months.

To handle these legal issues, the Panamanian Association covered the initial court trial fees, totaling \$15,000. To be included in the next phase, each controller has to pay \$250, for a total of \$17,250, to cover legal costs. The problem is amplified by the fact the majority of the membership, around 75 percent, is older, so many haven't found permanent jobs and remain unemployed.

NATCA is trying to garner donations from members to assist this group. The Great Lakes regional office is coordinating this effort, and money may be sent to 1910 Highland, Suite 210, Lombard, IL 60148. For additional information, contact Panama Liaison Officer Rolando Rios at seneca@sinfo.net.

ates new policies and opens various doors for NATCA members

will work on is *Common ATC HMI: Advantages and Disadvantages*. The expertise developed by NATCA in the development of Display System Replacement and Standard Terminal Automation Replacement System will be utilized to contribute to this work," commented Cole.

Guerra and Cole joined representatives from groups such as the International Federation of Air Line Pilots Association, International Civil Aviation Organizations and International Air Transport Associations in Committee B. Numerous changes occurred to various policies. Several revisions were made to IFATCA provisional policy on Automatic Dependent Surveillance, and an extensive policy was adopted regarding the introduction of 8.33 KHz radios in Europe. Please refer to the chart below for additional alterations.

Poole will serve on two standing committees, Professional and Legal Matters. Professional issues were covered in Committee C such as performance indi-

cators, rating structure and free flight. Changed conditions under privatization were also addressed. "Most of the world's air traffic control system is being privatized, and I didn't find a single country where the controller had received any significant benefit from it. In most every case, it was more time on position or even less staffing. There is a lot we can learn from the experiences of other countries as we continue to fight contracting out in the United States," remarked Poole.

Committee C also examined several legal matters including an in-depth review of the year 2000 problems. "Action is being taken to significantly reduce traffic on Jan. 1, 2000. Many countries plan on restrictions such as 60 minutes in trail into them on that day. It appeared the level of preparedness ranged from non-existent to complete, usually depending on the level of development of the country," added Poole. Other areas addressed were legal responsibilities and the trans-

fer of control function to pilots, such as the use of Traffic Alert and Collision Avoidance System for airborne separation by flight crews and other technologies.

"During the meeting, I had a number of controllers approach me about working in the United States as a controller, most from developed nations such as Sweden, South Africa and Lithuania. They wanted to receive pay, benefits and working conditions like we have. I was surprised to learn just how low the pay is around the world. The lowest I heard was \$43 a month in Ukraine to \$90,000 in Tokyo. Many were in the low thirties per year or less," elaborated Poole.

International information helps U.S. controllers keep things in perspective. Although there are still steps to take in achieving everything NATCA members want, this nation's system is far ahead of many parts of the world.

Sample of Policies Adopted at 1999 IFATCA Conference

Data Link

Policy was adopted regarding under what conditions data link communications could be considered "direct" communications.

"For digital air-ground data link communications to be considered to be direct controller pilot communications, they shall have demonstrated that they support communications dialogues that provide equivalent VHF voice characteristics in terms of the transaction times, the interface which the human uses to interact with the system, and in terms of the cognitive interface between human and system."

Reduced Vertical Separation Minima

Policy was adopted regarding a non-flight "safety" altitude to be reserved when full RVSM is implemented in the North Atlantic oceanic track area. (Note: USA voted against this proposed policy and four of the Nordic countries abstained.)

"With the NAT region where RVSM is in operation, FL300 would be established as a non-flight plannable level applicable to the organized track system."

Minimum Safe Altitude Warning

"MSAW as a last ditch ground based warning system must be fully implemented without delay with the necessary operational requirements and appropriate ATC procedures and training on a world-wide basis in order to significantly reduce the number of CFIT (Controlled Flight Into Terrain) accidents."

North Atlantic Oceanic Track

Policy was adopted to establish an organized two mile track offset procedure in this area.

"Subject to the appropriate Collision Risk Modelling, an off-set procedure is to be adopted in the NAT region as detailed in appendix A, that prior to aircraft establishing on tracks that they establish to the following off-set procedure; Off-set left when flying at odd levels i.e. 310, 330, 350, 370, 390; Off-set right when flying at even levels i.e. 320, 340, 360, 380, 400. That the off-set shall be 2nm."

Ground-Based Navaids

"Until failsafe procedures have been proven and installed, the removal of terrestrial navigation aids is neither feasible nor safe and would therefore be highly premature, and that adequate navaids should be guaranteed."

Reclass Team computing and compiling data regarding interim pay

Interim pay is on the minds of the NATCA Reclass Team and it is busy ironing out all the details. "The interim pay went into effect March 23 and it is a percentage assigned to each facility that closely matches the phase they will get when we turn the new system on. That percentage is later calculated on the money they have earned, not on the new system," says Classification and Compensation Committee Chair Tim Haines. The new system was activated on April 25. The Reclass Team will go back and calculate the new pay as if it became effective on Oct. 1, 1998, to make it retroactive.

The new reclassification pay scale came about through a lot of negotiation and cooperation. Reclass needed to establish some pay requirements with the Department of Transportation and the Federal Aviation Administration's payroll office in Oklahoma City, Okla., to allow the programmers to turn the interim switch on, and not delay activating the big switch. The pay requirements are extensive for the new system and reclass has worked on those for several months because there are 157 connected programs computing everybody's pay.

Other projects the Reclass Team is currently focusing on going through all 81 appeals filed by individual facilities, and adjusting the grades and data as appropriate. It is also spending an extensive amount of time working on cost overages of \$200 million in various ways to make sure NATCA is neither over or under.

"We have had to change some of the pay requirements and rules to bring the cost down," remarked Haines.

Reclass also designed, along with the agency, a validated pay calculator, which is expected to go online in the near future. The calculator should work similar to the FAA's payroll computer in Oklahoma City, Okla. Individuals will be able to plug in their information to ensure they are receiving the correct amount. It will include everything from retirement to taxes, and increases in operational differential and Sunday differential.

The Reclass Team is currently in the process of putting together a joint NATCA-FAA national validation team. It will look at data type problems both in the center and terminal option per the new FAA traffic counting order, and identify shortcomings in both the En-route Track Analysis Program and Terminal Track Analysis Program.

The next stage will be verifying all the developmentals training stages for placement in the new pay system with the revised training rules. Reclass also plans on working on the new transfer process, which allows controllers to bid any open vacancies regardless of grade level. It also guarantees a percentage of the permanent change of station monies pot.

tabulating the NEW PAY system

The \$200 million were divided up several ways. Forty percent was taken out

for roll up costs (retirement and health insurance, etc.). The remainder of the \$200 million will be divided up over three October payments; 1999, 2000 and 2001. For example, controllers will take their target base pay increase and divide that dollar figure approximately into a third for each year, and for each October they will receive that increase in their base pay. Controllers will also, at the same time, when the new system goes into effect, stop receiving the five percent operational differential. Instead, they will get a 4.1 percent increase in their base pay in addition to the October payment. In January, they will receive the presidential increase, and in April they will receive a 1.6 percent increase, which was formerly the step pool money.

3 Octobers - Increase in base pay
January - Presidential increase
April - August - 1.6 percent increase

To figure out the individual base pay for each year, the Reclass Team suggests using the following math formula. Subtract the current pay from target pay in third year. Take that dollar figure and multiply it by .32094 to tabulate the first year increase. Multiply that same dollar total by .36785 for the second year, and multiply that same amount again by .31121 to tabulate the third year increase.

"The increase in total compensation will make a major difference not only for controllers' quality of life, but will also have a major effect on their retirement. This is the largest increase the federal sector ever negotiated," concluded Haines.

Labor movement's tentacles extend well beyond the federal sector

The labor movement is far reaching – its tentacles extend well beyond the federal sector. Evidence of diversity in America's workplace is apparent at major AFL-CIO meetings, including its annual meeting – held in Miami during February. Both executive officers of the National Air Traffic Controllers Association attended.

Already, affiliates are preparing for the aggressive presidential campaign in 2000. Key tenets of the AFL-CIO's political strategy include targeted membership mobilization, proactive initiatives that fight pro-corporation tactics, registration of union members and coalition building.

"It's easy to forget about the wider world of labor when we are entrenched in NATCA's issues day after day," President Mike McNally said upon returning from the Florida convention. "Even though many resolutions passed deal with the private sector, we can be supportive by voting for pro-union candidates."

Bylaws passed at the convention deal with preserving social security without cutting benefits, adopting a policy on presidential endorsements, organizing and mobilizing non-union workers and Medicare reform.

"The AFL-CIO's own statistics show

declining union membership in the growing industries, such as high technology and computers," NATCA Executive Vice President Randy Schwitz said. "It will be important for all unions to recognize the old ways of recruiting members will not work with highly educated employees working in industries that typically offer high salaries and strong benefits. This will mean changes in our approaches, and no one gravitates to modifications without anxiety. As the air traffic control system increasingly demands high tech education and experience, NATCA will be facing these same challenges."

Controllers review data link human computer interface on DSR

Data link is to the modernization of air traffic control as the hub is to the wheel.

Data link will replace/supplement many routine voice conversations with non-voice digital messages. It will become part of an overall global communications environment, interlocking computer satellites, sensors and communications software to integrate ground automation systems with aircraft computers.

A number of complex technical issues have slowed data link decisions in the past. But, controllers recently completed their first opportunity to sit in a simulated lab at the Tech Center in Atlantic City, N.J., and look at the first cut at Controller-Pilot Data Link Communications in Display System Replacement. The Data Link Ground Systems Group conducted the first of a series of human factors studies, evaluating CPDLC Human Computer Interface's transition from the Plan View Display to DSR. The study was conducted to analyze and refine the controller human-computer interface, air traffic control procedures and training for the first build of CPDLC.

Participants in the study were from en route facilities. They were four controller en route members of the Air Traffic Data Link Validation Team with subject matter expertise on data link communications, two controllers from an air traffic team participating in the DSR development process and one of two NATCA representatives involved in the CPDLC implementation.

The group began in a classroom session with reviews of differences between the older PVD and the DSR controller interaction requirements, followed by a number of practice periods in the DSR

laboratory. They were given a list of CPDLC tasks to perform while controlling traffic on DSR, which required each team to exercise all of the data link settings and controls. The hands-on sessions were preceded by structured group discussions as well as individual design reviews, in which specific design modification recommendations were discussed and recorded.

Throughout this entire study, a special emphasis was placed on human factors evaluations. Controllers studied in detail data block symbology, keypad assignments, route assignment service and other HCI design issues.



(seated l to r) Data Link Test Director Tim Hancock, Safety and Tech Team Lead Bill Blackmer (standing l to r) ACT 350 Evan Darby and Controller Ruth Marlin review data link on DSR.

Miami Center is the first facility to receive CPDLC, and is slated for initial operating capability in June 2002. Miami will be the sole site for the first of four steps, which the FAA is calling Build 1. This initial stage will involve a test using VHF Digital Link Mode 2 (VDL-2) for air-ground-link communication, but will have only four operational messages compliant with the future Aeronautical Telecommunication Network. These will be: frequency changes, initial contacts, altim-

eter settings and some non-clearance free text messages that will be preformatted by supervisors. American will participate by supplying 767-300ER and 737-800 aircraft for the trials.

The second step, Build 1A, will deploy CPDLC nationally for en route communication, also using VDL-2, but will expand the number of ATN-compliant messages to 18. National deployment to all 20 domestic centers should be completed by December 2004. Build 2, the third stage, not yet funded, is forecasted to cover international and hoped oceanic CPDLC may be brought on board. This implementation should garner 114 ATN-compliant operational messages. The time frame for its completion is 2006. Finally, Build 3, also lacking monetary support, will utilize a complete ATN message set and ultimately use Next Generation Air/Ground Communications (Nexcom) hardware. Its earliest possible deadline is 2011.

"The introduction of data link has profound implications for controllers and pilots and will fundamentally change the way they communicate. This recent study is a prime example of how the agency is going to emphasize human factors as we progress toward the implementation of CPDLC," remarked Data Link Branch Manager Gary Morfitt.

"If NATCA and the FAA are successful in fielding a data link that meets the needs of the controllers, then this new technology has the potential to significantly improve communications between controllers and pilots. If voice radio congestion can be reduced, controllers will have more time to devote to the safe and efficient movement of aircraft," concluded NATCA National Representative for Data Link Martin Cole.

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Want to keep up with the issues affecting air traffic control on Capitol Hill? Read more about it in NATCA Legislative Education. Topics include the FAM program, FAA reauthorization, contracting out and more.

 **NEB Meeting Minutes** [Members only home](#)  [Inside NATCA](#)  [Executive Office](#)

Straight from the board room to the personal PC comes the recent telcon and national executive board minutes online.

The Aviation Reform Act for the 21st century, H.R. 1000, passed the full Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, but not before NATCA succeeded in getting a crucial amendment to the legislation. The bill established an Air Traffic Control Oversight Board within the Department of Transportation. It would be composed of nine members, one of which was merely an unspecified "full-time federal employee." NATCA's proposed language instead inserted "One member shall be from among individuals who are leaders of their respective unions of air traffic control system employees."

"It's an outlandish, almost secret world that not many people know about." Director Mike Newell is not speaking of the newest science-fiction movie, but the work environment of air traffic controllers. It is this "world" Newell depicts in the movie *Pushing Tin*, which hit box offices April 23. In multiple conversations with a Twentieth Century Fox publicity executive, Communications/Legislative Assistant Katie Wittig got the inside scoop on this film. Screenwriters created a story centering on controllers and the stresses affecting their lives, especially how they work together.

Some controllers are concerned about how this film may characterize them. Twentieth Century Fox has been in close contact with NATCA trying to get controllers to see early screenings of *Tin* to get feedback. Through this input, Fox not only wants to promote their movie, but show reactions to their portrayal of an air traffic control "world." Wonder how well they did? Look in local listings to find a theater nearby, and let Wittig know what you think!

The response to NATCA's recent retirement survey was overwhelming. The national office received over 3,500 responses. Watch for results in an upcoming newsletter.

James D'Agati, Pete Healy and James "Ajax" Kidd accepted nominations for the engineer/architect vice president position.



Controller Diane Earhart, St. Louis Downtown-Parks Tower, was recently presented with the St. Louis Aviation Safety Counselor of the Year award for 1998 at the annual Super Safety Seminar at Boeing in St. Louis, Mo. In accepting the award, she thanked the group of over 200 pilots and aviation enthusiasts, adding, "This is the first time and probably the last time, I am at a loss for words. I didn't know this was going to happen." Aviation Safety Counselors are volunteers, appointed by their local Federal Aviation Administration Flight Standards District Office, who provide information on local flying procedures to transient pilots, counsel individuals who may have exhibited potentially unsafe acts, hold safety seminars or conduct proficiency flight training. They must have a high degree of interest and concern in aviation safety and attain a good safety record.



Controller Diane Earhart accepts her St. Louis Aviation Safety Counselor of the Year award.

Women in Aviation, International held its 10th Annual Conference in Orlando, Fla., this past March. This gathering has grown from 150 to 2,100 participants and from five to 145 displays. To join in this success, NATCA sent both its trade booth and members to represent the association. FAA Liaison Ruth Marlin gave a speech touching on how her involvement with NATCA has allowed growth in her career, and took part in a panel discussion on women in air traffic control. Trade booth volunteers received positive feedback and answered many questions from pilots, especially students, on issues affecting people in all aviation related fields. Next year's conference is planned for Memphis, Tenn.

Many first heard of data link at NATCA's convention in Seattle, Wash., when a 12-minute video, "Data Link – The Key to the Future" sponsored by NATCA, the Federal Aviation Administration, Boeing and Aeronautical Radio Inc., premiered. The video highlights data link's intention: to alleviate the growing problem of radio frequency congestion. This video recently received a prestigious Telly Award according to Data Link Test Director and Subject Matter Expert Tim Hancock. The Telly Awards, founded in 1980, showcase and give national recognition to outstanding non-network and cable video productions. This year, the judges selected from over 10,000 entries. "The Telly has become one of the most sought-after awards in the TV, commercials and video industry. In the past 19 years, winners and finalists have come from a large cross-section of agencies, production companies, television stations and cable operations, as well as corporate video departments. The data link program office thanks our partners and staff who helped make this possible," commented Hancock.

The national office welcomes two new employees, Training Specialist Greg Llafet and Legal Research Ass't. Dennie Rose.

On March 25, campaign contributors, labor executives and U.S. senators convened in Washington, D.C., for the *Majority 2000 Labor Council*. The Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee hosted a breakfast to address concerns of labor unions and find innovative ways to preserve them. "Organized labor provides good, hard working jobs for families and it is Congress' responsibility to maintain it through the 21st century," remarked DSCC Chairman Sen. Robert Torricelli, D-N.J. Maureen McGaffin, communications, represented NATCA.

100 Percent Facility	
Joe Clyde	Paine Field
Gary Mueller	Grand Junction
C O N G R A T U L A T I O N S	

On March 29, the Federal Labor Relations Authority returned its decision regarding granting of, or lack thereof, official time to the NATCA regional vice presidents to attend board meetings. The FLRA determined the agency did not establish the original arbitration was deficient; the arbitrator also did not make sufficient fact findings to determine whether the award is contrary to law. The authority remanded the decision back to the parties to either reach a settlement or resubmit to the arbitrator for further fact finding.

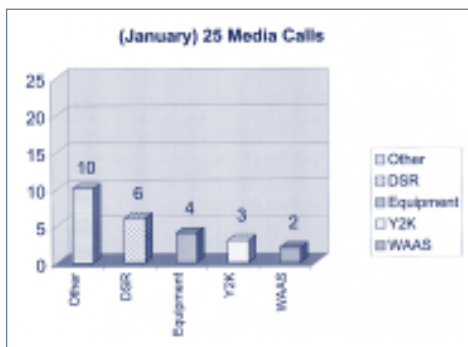
In the meantime, on March 19, the parties reached a settlement where official time will be granted for "NATCA's regional vice presidents...to attend meetings of the union's national executive board." It further states in this memorandum of understanding, "all activities conducted while on official time at NEB meetings will be in accordance with 5 USC Subsection 7131. Matters relating to internal business of the union will be conducted only during the employees' non-duty time."

Modernization/equipment remain top priority for aviation reporters

The last year of the 20th century is just five months old, but the press has been keeping a watchful eye on key issues involving air traffic controllers.

With the recent interest of Display System Replacement deployment at Seattle Center, NATCA can expect to see similar modernization and equipment stories leading the press pack.

Generally, reporters call the national



office when equipment malfunctions or goes down. The media is then directed to the local facility representative for follow-up, because he or she is directly involved and aware of the details with the situation.

Occasionally, the national office will respond to a particular equipment issue if a pattern of problems emerge across the country.

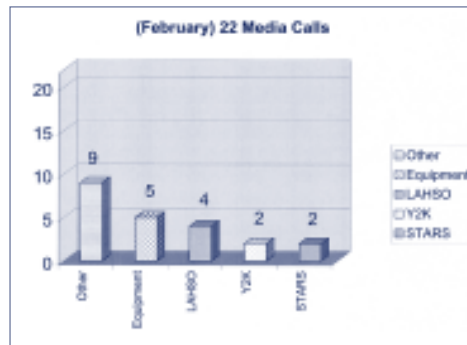
"This is our opportunity to tell the public we desperately need new equipment. The Federal Aviation Administration does not always listen to controllers, but it will pay close attention to stories circulating about faulty equipment in the field," says NATCA's Safety and Technology Team Lead Bill Blackmer.

DSR received attention when it was deployed at Seattle Center in January. Aviation reporters quickly jump at the chance when new equipment is installed

in the field. Modernization issues typically rank highest among queries at NATCA.

"I talked to several reporters on both the national and local level and the response was mostly positive. Some members of the national press wanted to play up its vulnerability, however, they remained fair in their coverage," remarked Seattle Center Fac Rep Jack Fader. DSR was also profiled on the *CBS Evening News* during the February sweeps.

Standard Terminal Automation Replacement System is another divisive topic because of complexities involved. Due to significant delays in air traffic modernization, reporters call wanting an explanation. Recently, at a House subcom-



mittee meeting, Department of Transportation Inspector General Kenneth Mead recommended the agency delay any further software decisions on STARS until the Department of Defense's system is completed at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla. NATCA strongly disagrees with Mead's opinion.

"The current system is falling apart. Any further delays in the development of STARS will place unnecessary burdens on the controller workforce. We can no longer afford to fly on a wing and a prayer with substandard equipment," stated NATCA President Mike McNally.

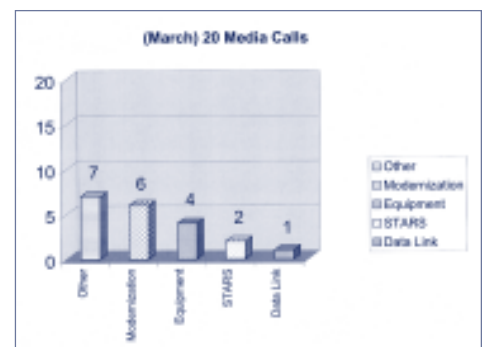
Aviation Daily will be covering STARS throughout its development.

Another subject garnering attention every few months is the Y2K issue, otherwise known as the year 2000 computer glitch. The national media is examining this story closely, because of its wide implications.

The Washington Post recently published a federal report card of the government agencies and listed the DOT as receiving an "F" for its contingency efforts. The agency is defensive on this issue and maintains flying will be safe. FAA Administrator Jane Garvey plans to be on board a plane at the stroke of midnight on Jan. 1, 2000, to prove the system is safe.

"Whether or not these modernization changes will take effect now or later, only time will tell, but NATCA's voice in the press steadily gains credibility.

We want the public to know the union is involved in every stage of the modernization efforts. We have an excellent staff of technical representatives and FAA li-



aisons who work hard to catch mistakes early on, so everyone comes out on top," concluded Blackmer.

NATCA Bulletin Board

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This month's highlights...

year 2000 and aviation industry: is it ready?
 data link human computer interface on DSR
 reclassification update on interim pay
 policies adopted at IFATCA conference

