

# AirTrafficController

## NATCA in Washington focuses on privatization and increased staffing



Chicago area controllers meet with Sen. Fitzgerald, D-Ill., during lobby week.

**A**lmost 400 NATCA members braved the ominous Code Orange status to come to Washington, D.C., for the 2003 NATCA in Washington legislative conference on Feb. 24-26 at the Capitol Hyatt. They came during a particularly important time for the union to speak to members of congress about such pertinent aviation issues as

privatization and staffing. "This year's lobby week is incredibly significant," said National Legislative Committee Chairman Randy Weiland. "With the recent threats to the security of a government-run National Airspace System we need to have our members addressing members of congress about our issues."

This sentiment was echoed by President John Carr's opening

speech, in which he offered, "By any account we are facing the most challenging times in our organization...Your mission is to find our friends. Find them in either the House of Representatives or the Senate, but find our friends and report back to the NLC and the Legislative and Political Affairs Department so we can work with these friends when you've gone back to your home district." Carr also encouraged members to stay informed and involved, keep growing the NATCA political action committee and remain united.

"Carr's speech was very powerful and encouraging," remarked Controller Bernie Campau of Detroit Tower. "He gave us all the news, good and bad, and then told us what we could do about it." "It's so important that we all work together right now," said Pat Dalsanders of Seattle Tower. "His speech really

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## Office of Management and Budget move puts air traffic control in jeopardy

For the first time in three budget submissions to Congress, the Bush Administration did not propose exploring any form of air traffic control privatization. But simultaneously, the administration's Office of Management and Budget made official what NATCA had known since December: The job of air traffic control was reclassified as a commercial function.

NATCA condemned the decision, saying it serves as a prerequisite for future privatization of the system and has dangerous implications for safety.

"We reject the OMB's conclusion that the jobs of

air traffic controllers aren't inherently governmental, or vital to the safety of the American public," NATCA President John Carr remarked. "For this administration to federalize airport security workers and then take steps toward privatizing air traffic control is not only a stark, head-scratching contradiction in policy, it's the continuation of a march toward the erosion of safety in our skies."

Under the FAIR Act of 1998, government agencies must declare their job functions to be either

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# Presidential Perspective

**T**he days that passed between my last two appearances to testify before Congressional committees, the first in August 2001 and the most recent this March were some of the darkest in the history of aviation, including Sept. 11, 2001 and an overall period of profound change for the National Airspace System.

This time has also marked the engagement of U.S. military forces in several Middle East theaters of war to fight terrorism and, as I write this, hundreds of thousands of our men and women in uniform – including many NATCA members – are serving this country with courage, valor, determination and distinction in Iraq.

Indeed, it is a different world in which we live than the one we faced in times of peace and relative calm just a few short months ago.

But the messages I delivered on Capitol Hill on Aug. 2, 2001 and the one I gave on March 27 are remarkably similar and serve to remind us that the major challenges this union faces are long and arduous, but the resolve to meet them grows ever deeper.

## **Modernization of the NAS**

From my Aug. 2, 2001 testimony: "NATCA is working day and night with the Federal Aviation Administration to move new technologies into the workplace as quickly, efficiently and safely as possible. FAA modernization is an ongoing process and NATCA is directly involved in every technology project from its inception."

From my March 27, 2003 testimony: "Article 48 formalized the process for air traffic

controller participation in all NAS activities from beginning to end. The motivation for involving users as part of every new technological development is simple. It saves money, reduces schedule delay, and increases the likelihood of success. From October 2000 to April 2002, air traffic controllers devoted 494,558 hours to the development of technological and procedural changes. There is no quick way to summarize the benefits of this and no standardized way to estimate the costs incurred if projects are delayed or run over budget."

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## **Staffing**

Aug. 2, 2001: "The thousands of controllers hired during the post PATCO-strike recovery period will reach retirement eligibility in just a short period of time. Retirements will dramatically increase until 2007, when they will peak at 8.4 percent of the workforce. By 2010, cumulative retirements will exceed 50 percent of the workforce. Mandatory overtime, six-day work weeks and understaffed shifts are what air traffic controllers will be facing if something is not done now to prepare for this crisis."

March 27, 2003: "The president's fiscal year 2004 budget

request provides for the hiring of 302 additional air traffic controllers. This is wholly insufficient to replace retiring controllers and maintain air safety. First, not all of the 302 hired will make it through the training, and those that do will not be fully qualified until 2007 (or after) when almost 5,000 controllers are eligible to retire. Hiring this year only to replace those retiring this year keeps us behind the power curve. We need to create a staffing bubble, and 2010 is just around the corner...We ask this subcommittee to authorize the hiring of

an additional 1,000 new air traffic controllers each year for the next three years."

## **Privatization**

Aug. 2, 2001: "On July 17, 2001, *The Wall Street Journal* carried a story entitled "The Unfriendly Skies" which advocated radical reform of the FAA touting (the privatized) NAV CANADA as the perfect model. I am here to tell you that NAV CANADA is not the appropriate model for the United States. Even Air Canada President Robert Milton admitted that, 'we have a long way to reach the levels of efficiency that exist in the United States.'"

March 27, 2003: "NATCA

believes that establishment, operation and maintenance of air traffic control services, and the regulation and control of air traffic throughout the NAS is an inherently governmental function. That is why we support legislation to ensure that the air traffic control system is not privatized. And, I would like to thank the members of this subcommittee who have publicly stated their opposition to privatizing air traffic control and who have expressed their concerns to the administration. The U.S. air traffic control system is the envy of the world. Other countries experiences with air traffic control privatization have been at best, financial messes, and at worst, safety hazards."

Clearly, these are the most challenging times in our organization's history. Not only is our nation at war, but increased security protocols here at home have complicated the mission for all of the bargaining units we represent. Fundamental change has occurred in our industry and continues to evolve as current events dictate.

However, by the same token, never before in our history have we taken more pride in this union than during the time since Sept. 11, 2001. Through it all, this union has maintained a sense of solidarity while spreading our messages in no uncertain terms.

And like our country, we will accept nothing less than victory on your behalf.

## Lautenberg, Oberstar lead parade of NATCA supporters on Capitol Hill

Sen. Lautenberg, D-N.J., and Rep. Oberstar, D-Minn., join forces with NATCA members to fight privatization.



A positive burst of support on Capitol Hill for NATCA's fight against privatization is gaining momentum and yielding an impressive cache of Congressional bills, public statements, co-signatures and letters written to President Bush, Federal Aviation Administration Administrator Marion Blakey and Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta on controllers' behalf.

Leading the charge are Sen. Frank Lautenberg, D-N.J., and Rep. James Oberstar, D-Minn., who have introduced bills that would stop privatization efforts or restore the designation of "inherently governmental function" to the job of air traffic control.

NATCA Political and Legislative

Congressional challenge and retaining its bargaining rights under the civil service code.

However, Montoya stated, "This is the best organized event NATCA has had. We're putting this issue on the front burner where policymakers can see it and are now being asked to make a decision on it."

NATCA's legislative efforts began in earnest late last fall when the decision by the Office of Management and Budget to make air traffic control a commercial function was made known.

Lautenberg's bill, S. 338, states: "No funds may be obligated or expended to classify the air traffic control system as anything other than inherently government-

tal or to privatize or contract all, or any part, of the air traffic control system which includes all current terminal, en-route facilities, flight service, air traffic control system command center and operational control centers operated by the Federal Aviation Administration."

Oberstar wrote a letter to the president, asking for a reconsideration of the OMB's decision, which he called "very disturbing, as it appears to be an initial step towards privatizing our nation's air traffic control system. In the existing ATC system, the FAA and the Congress make decisions on safety issues in the overall best public interest, with input from system users. If there is any move towards privatization or some form of government corporation, how will the public be assured that ATC operations will be managed with a primary goal of protecting the interest of airline passengers and ensuring safety and security?"

Lautenberg authored a similar letter, co-signed by many of his colleagues in the Senate, including presidential candidates John Edwards, D-N.C., John Kerry, D-

Mass., and Joe Lieberman, D-Conn. In addition, a press conference on Feb. 25, hosted by Lautenberg and Oberstar to discuss their efforts, was attended by nearly 100 enthusiastic NATCAvists who were in town for *NATCA in Washington 2003*, providing a highlight for the union's current campaign.

"This was the most successful lobby week we've ever had," NATCA Legislative Committee Chairman Randy Weiland remarked. "We went to the Hill and persuaded many members of Congress who were neutral or against us and moved them to our position or at least into our court to hear our issues."

NATCA President John Carr concluded: "We have stated that we will not sit by while this administration attempts to sell off the world's safest air traffic control system to the lowest bidder. We are pleased to report that a growing number of members of Congress aren't sitting by either."

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commercial or inherently governmental. Commercial activities are those subject to contracting out and privatization, while inherently governmental functions are those which are defined as, "so intimately related to the public interest as to mandate performance by federal employees." The law goes on to cite control of space and navigation as criteria for declaring a function to be inherently governmental, a fact controllers believe should have taken precedence over the administration's ideological philosophy that presumes nearly half of all government jobs are subject to competitive outsourcing.

"It's highly disturbing that the safety of the flying public is being moved around like a pawn on a political chess board," Carr stated. "We have the safest, most sophisticated system in the world. I can't think of a good reason to put that at risk and introduce it to words like 'commercial' or 'privatized,' which we have seen in other countries translates into a degradation of safety standards."

The new commercial label carries a special designation, known as Reason Code A, which means the jobs of controllers can't be outsourced this year. But because the OMB's Commercial Activities list is issued annually, no long term protection from privatization

exists. Carr described NATCA's current situation as a "slippery slope." The administration, he added, is trying to do this quietly and is certainly not seeking Congress' or the public's approval. "They have neither, by the way," Carr declared.

NATCA Executive Vice President Ruth Marlin said the repeated public statements by the Federal Aviation Administration and Department of Transportation are making it harder – but far from impossible – to keep a spotlight on the issue.

"Despite the FAA's best efforts in the past to try to deflect attention from its continuing steps to sell off the nation's ATC system piece by piece, we were

able to keep the media focus by pointing to the language in the president's budget," Marlin remarked. "When it said it had no intention of considering privatization, we could point to the 2003 budget that said the administration 'will consider privatizing or franchising.' The fact that it's not in the budget this time means we will have to work harder to point out their other activities. Since the OMB A-76 process that declares us 'commercial' is very technical, it is harder to get reporters to latch on to it. But our team is up to the task."



Great Lakes region controllers mingle with congressmen at the reception.

stressed that."

The conference continued with a series of panels, the first, on FAA Reauthorization (AIR-21), hosted by Political and Legislative Affairs Director Ken Montoya, featured counsels from both the minority and majority sides of the House and Senate. The second, on political realities in Washington, D.C., moderated by Carr, featured Marc Lampkin, a director at Quinn Gillespie and Joe Lockhart, a founding partner of the Glover Park Group (Quinn Gillespie and Glover Park Group are political consulting firms). The third, on the new Transportation Appropriations Subcommittee, directed by Montoya, featured staff from House Democrats and Senate Republicans.



Members peruse the NATCA Charitable silent auction offerings.

The panels were an interesting way to inform union members about the perspectives of both sides of congress," NLC Great Lakes Representative Richard Ulmes remarked. "They fostered a healthy amount of debate that was quite engaging." "It was great to be able to see both sides of the coin," said Reddy Lashoda of the Regional Logistics, Finance and Information Management Services Division bargaining unit. "Knowing where Democrats come from helps us appeal to both."



EVP Ruth Marlin and union members join Ted Strickland, D-Ohio, at the reception.

New FAA Administrator Marion Blakey was a keynote speaker at this year's lobby week. In her speech, she extolled the virtues of



NLC Chairman Randy Weiland poses with FAA Administrator Marlon Blakey after her speech.



Professor Elliott Sclar speaks to the NATCA in Washington attendees about the dangers of privatization.

air traffic controllers, pointing out how NATCA Members Wayne Dimmic, Kevin Graham and John Joseph were able to coordinate from different facilities to guide a North Atlantic Treaty Organization aircraft with fumes in its

cockpit to a perfect emergency, no-gyro surveillance approach into Scott Air Force Base during winter storm conditions. She stated, "But you know what? They have a lot of company...so while this is one extraordinary example of the work you do, it's only one." The administrator focused on the coming challenges to the FAA and encouraged a spirit of unity among employees of the agency. "I'm convinced that government can run on an accountable, performance basis, and I think we can prove it."

Executive Vice President Ruth Marlin kicked off the second day of the conference, speaking to attendees about high prices and its affect on unions, aviation safety and the upcoming challenges for the union. "This is a marathon, not a sprint. We will not finish the battle this week, but we will move closer to our goal," she stated. "Look around at the activists that have joined you today and remember you are a part of an amazing team. We have fought harder battles and won, we have the potential not just to push back these efforts, but to defeat them once and for all." Allen Fritz of Reading Tower, Penn., observed, "Marlin crystallized our issues into key points. And anyone who has tried to hold the attention of their legislators knows the importance of keeping it simple."

Marlin was followed by Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Ore., and Professor Elliot Sclar of Colombia University. Sclar recently authored a research paper entitled "Pitfalls of Air Traffic Control Privatization," which offers hard evidence to dispute the claim that the NAS would be better run by a private company. Mel Leskinen, an engineer from the Alaska Region, remarked, "We all know that privatization would have a negative effect on safety, but it was interesting to hear exactly why, with facts and research to back everything up." "It was interesting to hear a quantified argument against privatization," said Southern California TRACON Controller Wanda Boyle.

Sen. Lautenberg, D-N.J., provided an impressive highlight for the conference, by holding a press conference for his upcoming Safe and Secure Skies Act (S. 338), which seeks to make permanent a designation of inherently governmental for air traffic controllers. Lautenberg addressed the attending journalists flanked by Carr, Marlin and many union members. The senator was joined by Rep Bill Oberstar, D-Minn., who is seeking to introduce the bill in the house. "It was an impressive show of solidarity," remarked Newark Controller Russ Halleran.

Montoya summed up the conference, stating, "This year's NATCA in Washington was particularly important and extremely successful in pointing out the problems with the current administration's belief that air traffic control is a commercial activity. The bottom line is that air traffic is a safety function, and should remain in government hands."

## Carr speaks out on union issues at key Washington, D.C. press event

Safety was at the top of President John Carr's agenda as he addressed the attendees at the recent Aviation Safety Alliance Newsmaker's Breakfast in Washington, D.C., attended by aviation industry journalists as well as reporters from *The Washington Post*, *Time* and the *Los Angeles Times*. "Aviation safety is quite simply a litmus test against which all of our actions can be measured," he remarked. "When we see a situation that impedes that safety mission, or threatens it, we do what we need to do to bring attention to the issue before the safety margin is worn thin or worse yet, worn completely away."

And safety was the bottom line as Carr gave his opinions on such hot topics as privatization, budgetary pressures and staffing to the assembled journalists.

Carr reiterated his belief that the tide is turning toward pri-

vativization of air traffic control. He recounted steps made by the Bush Administration toward privatization, such as the removal of the designation of inherently governmental and the recent classification of air traffic control as "commercial" by the Office of Management and Budget.

He stated, "I take no comfort from the qualified denials from the Federal Aviation Administration and the Department of Transportation regarding ATC privatization. In the immortal words of (former President) Nixon Attorney General John Mitchell, 'Watch what we do, not what we say.' Their actions speak volumes." Carr went on to recount some of the voluminous evidence of diminishing safety in privatized systems, citing examples from Great Britain and Canada.

Carr also addressed Inspector General Kenneth Mead's recent remarks to Congress in reference to escalating FAA costs. Mead attributed these costs to

Carr addressed privatization and inadequate staffing at a recent press event.



controller salaries. Carr responded by pointing out that most of the cost was due to escalating overtime pay, which controllers had to work in order to keep their facilities properly staffed.

"The inspector general's testimony was incomplete, inaccurate and designed to inflame," stated Carr. "Controllers are fairly compensated for the high stress and very demanding work they perform. And remember, absolute perfection is the minimum acceptable

level of performance."

Carr reminded the panel of journalists that it takes five years to train a new controller, and the agency only plans to hire around 300 this year. The controllers hired this year will only become fully functional the year that retirements are expected to peak, in 2007 according to a General Accounting Office study. "You do the math," said Carr. "We'll end up with fewer controllers than we need."

## Report on pitfalls of privatization echoes NATCA's claims

In fighting the battle against the privatization of air traffic controllers, NATCA has raised many relevant and crucial points on its negative effect. Now, Professor Elliott Sclar of Columbia University has authored "Pitfalls of Air Traffic Control Privatization," a searing dismissal of the claims of those who favor commercialization, which was released by the HDR Management Consulting Group of White Plains, N.Y., one of the nation's leading consultants on privatization of government services.

The study, performed by The HDR Management Consulting Group presents challenges to the potential savings assumed by advocates of privatizing the U.S. air traffic system. It also raises questions about the safety and security of the privatization of our nation's skies.

"We've always been able to point to the failures of privatized air traffic systems in Canada and the U.K. to demonstrate why a commercial system would not work in the United States," Executive Vice President Ruth Marlin remarked. "This report verifies our beliefs and shows us how privatization has the potential

for disaster."

The report recounts the history of the privatization movement, detailing its resuscitation following Sept. 11, 2001, when President Bush revoked the "inherently governmental" status granted to ATC by former President Clinton in Executive Order 13180. It asserts that the current downturn in air travel and the new focus on safety and security has left privatization advocates bereft of a good argument, yet they still maintain their stance.

"The arguments that proponents of a commercial ATC system use are actually false," stated Director of Strategic Planning and Policy Jose Ceballos.

"This report points out these fallacies."

"Privatization proposals for ATC put the cart before the horse," the report asserts. "Privatization advocates propose a solution, but never actually specify a problem...We must look at the range of alternatives to address improved and secure air travel in the context of national travel in general."

***"Privatization advocates propose a solution, but never actually specify a problem...We must look at the range of alternatives to address improved and secure air travel in the context of national travel in general."***

## *EVP Marlin named chair of international labor organization committee*

**W**ith unanimous support, Executive Vice President Ruth Marlin was recently elected to chair the Air Traffic Services Committee of the International Transport Workers Federation, a worldwide counterpart to the AFL-CIO's Transportation Trades Department. The committee consists of representatives from Asia, Europe, North America and South America and includes unions that represent controllers, engineers, technicians, administrative officers and other profes-

sions within the air traffic services field. The chairperson not only serves on this committee but also becomes a member of the full Civil Aviation Section Board.

"This is a key position to ensure that air traffic issues are not lost in the labor agenda when global

aviation policy and strategy are formulated," said Marlin.

"NATCA's broad representation secured this position, and I am honored to hold it."

The committee is responsible for setting the work program for ITF, which includes research, influencing ICAO, representing

workers at the International Labor Organization, international coordination and solidarity. Their official task is to "advise, develop and coordinate all ITF activities on air traffic services issues." The primary issue for the committee is opposing privatization of air traffic control.

"One of the most visible benefits of the committee is access to information," Marlin remarked. "While NAV CANADA is telling the world that everything is great, we have direct access to the controllers to find out the reality of the situation."

*"This is a key position to ensure that air traffic issues are not lost in the labor agenda when aviation policy and strategy are formulated."*

## *Modern weather information technology, WARP, debuts at centers*

NATCA and the Federal Aviation Administration have joined forces to install a new system called the Weather and Radar Processor at air traffic control facilities nationwide, providing controllers with the most modern weather technology available today.

Air traffic centers across the country received the system in 2002. The WARP technology brings weather information directly to controller displays on the same screen as aircraft position data for the first time. WARP collects, formats and distributes weather information to supervisors and weather professionals so they can inform pilots of potential weather problems. The system provides meteorologists in centers with data and communications needed to help predict areas, routes, or single airports where bad weather could affect traffic. In addition, state-of-the-art color equipment that uses different colors to signify varying degrees of precipitation has replaced outdated controller monitors. These features combine to give controllers access to better weather information than ever before.

"No program like this is available for controllers anywhere else in the world and this is still in its infant stages," commented Steve Pelissier, NATCA WARP/Next Generation Weather Radar (NEXRAD) representative.

The new system provides many improvements over the old weather technology including increased accuracy for controllers.

"The old system was unreliable," Pelissier said, "Sometimes it would miss weather and other times it would show weather where there wasn't any."

WARP gives controllers a more accurate view of precipitation and allows for a faster evaluation of the current weather's impact on a particular space or sector. It allows controllers to perform their jobs more efficiently.

"This technology helps us to run sectors in a safer manner, allowing controllers to plan more efficiently in managing traffic," commented Pelissier.

WARP, which has received praise from many controllers, has led

to safety improvements across the board, including significant improvements for general aviation aircraft.

"Because NEXRAD/WARP is a weather radar and long range RADAR is a weather-adapted

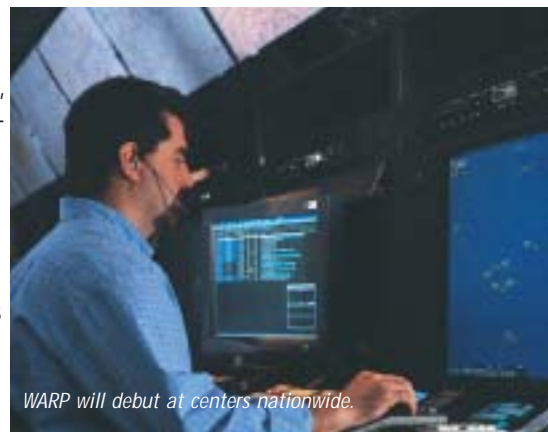
surveillance radar, WARP is more accurate and reliable," Pelissier explained, "With this new technology controllers can provide better service to general aviation airplanes that don't have weather radar on board."

Technology enhancements to WARP will be implemented in the future to provide controllers with as many safety tools as possible when dealing with adverse weather conditions.

"We want to cut the delay time (for controllers to receive the current weather data) from six minutes to 4.1 minutes in the future," Pelissier remarked, "Also, lightning data, an important feature not currently available, will eventually be accessible on controller displays to provide further safety enhancement."

While WARP is a notable safety improvement for the flying public and provides more accurate information to controllers, Pelissier warns that people should not see the program as something it is not.

"This program marks a significant improvement to the tools that controllers have to make the best decisions in the interest of safety," he said, "But people should not forget that due to NEXRAD's six minute delay and the fact that controllers will never be meteorologists, weather for en route controllers is advisory in nature."



# New training course helps members to improve their leadership skills

They come from small facilities and large facilities across the country. Some have great relationships with management; some have to fight for everything they get. But what the attendees of this NATCA Advanced Representation Course, "Local Union Leadership and Administration" in San Diego, Calif., have in common is the desire to expand and enhance their leadership skills so they can better engage their bargaining unit members and more effectively run their local unions.

"This is a brand new program," said Training Director Greg Llafet. "These people have done tremendous things for our union. And when we get them together they provide valuable tools to each other."

"This class is unique in that it takes the leadership skills present in the attendees and sharpens them," said Free Flight Liaison Jerry Whittaker, who joined Llafet to teach the course. "And once they realize what they already have, we hit them with the new stuff."

The attendees each came with their own goals, ranging from learning basic leadership skills to motivating stagnant locals, networking, creating a foundation for holding office and recharging their own union zeal.

The course began with an overview of basic objectives. The members were then invited to form small groups and recall past accomplishments of their locals. Kelly Fleming of Nashville Tower detailed how his facility managed to trade a small union office for one three times its size for his 53 members' use. Ron McAuley of

Pat Dalsanders of Spokane Tower jots down facility accomplishments as Dan Olsen of Seattle TRACON looks on.



Free Flight Liaison Jerry Whittaker encourages the attendees to formulate their own action plans.



Northern California TRACON told the group of his local's involvement in his facility's name change.

"The members described both small and large accomplishments," Llafet observed. "But you can look around the room and see the heads nodding as the attendees thought about applying these methods at their own facilities."

The exercise motivated the entire group to proceed with renewed confidence in developing a future action plan for their individual local.

Mel Davis, Ed Parris and Wanda Boyle of SoCal TRACON discuss leadership with Ron McAuley of Northern California TRACON.



increase bargaining unit involvement. They felt that increasing union participation would benefit the credibility of local leadership.

Karl Keller of Las Vegas TRACON and Kelly Fleming of Nashville tower trade tips, one fac rep to another.



"The National Executive Board then directed the training department to develop and deliver training to 125 fac reps and executive board members nationwide. "The course teaches the basics of good leadership," remarked Pat Gallagher of New York Center. "But the best benefit comes from the cross-pollination that occurs when you get all these local leaders together." "We've all heard about the tenets of leadership; integrity, honesty, fairness, dignity, etc.," stated Karl Keller of Las Vegas TRACON. "But this course lets us explore them and really learn how to apply them to our own situations."

## Membership director receives "Certified Association Executive" mark

The national office's Membership and Marketing Department has made important strides in recent years, including organizing several of the new bargaining units, fostering a partnership with the FAA First Federal Credit Union, making available many other new benefits, creating the NATCA Membership Directory and Guide Book and recruiting corporate members. And now, the American Society of Association Executives has made official what many union members have already known about the Director of Membership and Marketing, Lew Zietz, by

bestowing upon him the title of Certified Association Executive.

The ASAE created the CAE program in 1960 in order to give its members a mark of distinction that demonstrates a high level of commitment to the profession and the ongoing pursuit of knowledge.

In order to become a CAE, a member of the ASAE must take a grueling four hour exam consisting of 200 multiple choice questions that test the five domains of knowledge inherent to the practice of association management identified through the ASAE Foundation's Body of Knowledge/Role Delineation

Study. The exam emphasizes the application of the concepts and principles of sound association management practices, such as administrative, financial, human resources, legal, legislative, marketing, meeting planning and membership. High-level cognitive skills, such as data-interpretation and problem solving, are assessed in problems that pose management dilemmas and situations requiring resolution. Some are derived from a case set, which develops a setting and then asks questions based on that scenario. Others are presented as individual items.

"This is a great honor, which tells us what we already know about our membership director," remarked President John Carr. "He's constantly looking for ways to improve our members' benefits; he's an asset to the national office and the union."

"I would like to thank the people of NATCA for the opportunity to take the exam and become active in the ASAE as well," stated Zietz. Zietz is also a member of the association's Membership Council.

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

*Facility Representatives Jack Fader and Dan Olsen of Seattle Center and Seattle TRACON wrote this op/ed published in The News Tribune (Tacoma, Washington)*

## **Lowest bidder isn't best bet for safe air traffic control**

The Bush Administration's plans to place nearly half the federal civilian workforce up for competition from private contractors in coming years was widely reported in November.

What has largely gone unnoticed is the fact that this monstrous endeavor includes an intent to try and privatize the jobs of 15,600 air traffic controllers employed by the Federal Aviation Administration.

Controllers in Seattle and Tacoma and across the country vehemently oppose any plans to privatize or contract out U.S. air traffic control and voiced our concerns at 75 airports including Sea-Tac last weekend in an effort to raise awareness with holiday travelers.

There are three main reasons behind the controllers position:

### **1. Privatization puts profits ahead of safety.**

The safety of every flight is the sacred trust of each controller. Controllers provide a critical safety service that also includes a responsibility for national security, which was demonstrated on Sept. 11, 2001.

This service is much different than a business that makes a specific product. Privatization is about making money, cutting costs and resources and instituting business practices in order to further the bottom line. These things simply do not belong in a safety-oriented profession and to introduce them into the U.S. air traffic control system the worlds safest, largest and most sophisticated would be irresponsible and put safety at great risk.

### **2. Air traffic control is as much a critical government responsibility as airport security.**

Any talk of privatizing air traffic control creates a puzzling contradiction within the policies of this administration. It has declared that your luggage is important enough to be screened by trained federal workers (the Transportation Security Administration). But once you're up in the sky, the administration sees no problem in putting your safety in the private hands of a company that has bid the lowest for the service.

In early December, the FAA took the unprecedented step of declaring that air traffic control is a commercial activity, not an inherently governmental one. We completely disagree with this change in designation because we feel there are few if any jobs in the government that are more important to the safety of the American public than air traffic control.

### **3. Privatized air traffic con-**

**trol is failing in several countries.**

The administration points to Canada's privatized system as a potential model for the United States. Its fiscal year 2002 budget proposed a study of the successes of Canada's system. The White House chief of staff even talked about Canada during a national television appearance in which he dismissed the importance of maintaining government control of air traffic.

But Canada is not a success story.

The Air Transport Association of Canada has warned that travelers are being crushed by special charges and taxes, including higher Nav Canada fees, that are reducing travel demand and undermining Canadian competitiveness. Canadian controllers say Nav Canada's proposed three percent increase in fees will not solve its worsening debt problems and have accused the organization of subsidizing airlines.

Understaffing has been a chronic problem and is cited as one of the main reasons that two passenger jets were put on a possible collision course in the skies over Northern Ontario last year. An investigation uncovered that staffing reached only 75 percent of what is necessary a common occurrence in control centers.

At Seattle Air Route Traffic Control Center, controllers work closely with Canadian controllers on flight handoffs and have witnessed the bad effects of privatization first-

hand. One example occurred when Vancouver Center controllers failed to notify Seattle controllers of a flight handoff.

When Seattle called, the Canadian controller who answered said he was on his 15th straight hour of duty due to no money to pay anyone overtime to cover for a controller out sick. Simply put, 15 straight hours for a controller means a degradation of safety for passengers in that airspace.

Meanwhile, Great Britains privatized air traffic control system is in shambles. Delays have increased by 20 percent. The government has twice bailed out the failing system. Because of declining safety standards, the British Transport Ministry announced the public/private partnership had failed and the government was considering retaking control. Airlines are furious at the prospect of increased fees. And to top it off, the chief operating officer for the company received a bonus of 62,100 British pounds for the opening of a new air traffic control facility six years behind schedule.

U.S. controllers have seen the effects of privatization in other countries and we will not allow the United States to lose its position as the world leader in the field just to satisfy an ill conceived ideology.

Privatization is a solution in search of a problem that doesn't exist here. Air traffic control is too important to our public safety and our national security to be put out to the lowest bidder.

## Once you get the ATC bug, it's hard to lose: PATCO rehires tell their stories

When President Clinton passed an order allowing former Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization controllers who were fired during their strike in the early 1980s to be eligible for rehiring in 1992, it marked a long awaited moment for many who had been hoping to return to their beloved profession.

Controller Steve Harris works at Van Nuys Tower in California. He was fired in 1981 from Los Angeles TRACON despite being on prime-time leave the week of the strike. Afterwards, Harris was able to find work as a cartographer where he drew maps for the next 16 years. Despite enjoying the job, he missed the excitement of working traffic. When the Federal Aviation Administration called in May 1997, it marked a turning point in his life.

"They asked if I was still interested in employment with the FAA, and of course I was interested," Harris remarked, "Air traffic control was a job I was very good at, and one I enjoyed more than any other."

Mark Massey worked as a controller at Memphis Tower before being fired in 1981. He worked for three years in various jobs before being hired by the Department of Defense in Fort Knox, Ky., as an air traffic control supervisor. During this period, Massey missed the faster-paced atmosphere at his old job in Memphis.

"I often referred to my previous job as 'imitation' air traffic control," remembered Massey, "Traffic consisted mostly of a few helicopters."

After Massey arrived back to Memphis Tower in 1998 at the age of 48, he was surprised by how much had changed.

"It was like being a weight lifter who took 17 years off and then came back and started with heavier weights," Massey commented,

"I am now 53 and finally getting comfortable with the traffic."

Controller Gary Pole works at Boston Center. Pole had a number of different jobs during the 16 years before he

was rehired by the FAA, including a general contractor, a school teacher and a used car salesman. Pole wanted to come back to working traffic because of his love for the profession and the feeling that he could still contribute.

"I always wanted to come back because I knew I still had it," Pole said, "Everyone kids me about when I'll retire and when I tell them 65 they go nuts!"

Ed Rucker, a controller at Reno Tower, was a former PATCO member rehired in 1997. Rucker worked for the Department of Energy and was involved in the organization and completion of nuclear weapons testing at the Nevada Test Site. Despite enjoying the job there, Rucker always looked fondly upon his former career as a controller.

"To be honest, I missed being a controller and every time I was at the airport traveling for the DOE, I would stand at the terminal windows, watching traffic and longing to be in the tower," Rucker recalled.

*PATCO rehires were excited to return to FAA facilities such as Boston Center.*



### Regional Counsel's office: making rule-breakers regret their mistakes

NATCA represents over 15,000 air traffic controllers in the United States, but many do not realize that the union also represents 5,000 other professionals at the Federal Aviation Administration including a unique group of people who make pilots, passengers and air carriers who break rules experience the consequences.

This bargaining unit is the Regional Counsel's Office and members include attorneys, para-professionals and other administrative staff. They provide all legal services within the regional offices, using their understanding and experience with legal issues and their implications to provide an important resource.

Zishoni Hymes serves as the

group's national representative of NATCA. To her, the duties she helps perform are both interesting from a personal standpoint and integral to the functioning of the FAA.

"We represent the agency with various legal administrative actions against pilots, air carriers and passengers who commit violations," Hymes explained.

Passengers who attempt to conceal a firearm when passing through airport security are an issue that Hymes and the entire legal division face on a regular basis. Those who commit these violations face prosecution on two fronts, having to contend with both criminal charges and penalties imposed on them by the FAA.

"We are prosecutors, but only on the government side of the cause," commented Hymes, "We will often fine these passengers, and repeat violations could lead to revoked flying privileges."

The Legal Division also handles cases of pilot misconduct. Members of this unit may impose disciplinary action up to revocation of flight licenses should a pilot be accused of, for example, flying under the influence of alcohol or committing a procedural violation.

"One of the more interesting cases we have been working on recently is related to the plane crash in which (R&B artist) Aaliyah was killed," Hymes said, "We are looking

into the pilot's conduct during that incident."

In addition to the above infractions, the Regional Counsel's Office also represents the FAA in cases where the agency is charged with discrimination in hiring or firing.

When these types of complaints are brought against the agency, we represent them and present reasons why an action taken was just and not due to discrimination."

Within NATCA, the legal division is further combined with other bargaining units including the engineers and architects and creates essentially one "region," of about 2,508 total bargaining unit members, and is represented by Region X Vice President Jim D'Agati on the National Executive Board.

## Members push for air traffic control commemorative stamp

Most controllers understand the importance of the service they perform, but one in particular has embarked on a determined effort to get his profession a unique form of recognition among members of the public.

Controller George Gmitro, who works at Daytona Beach, Fla., Tower, has teamed up with two controllers from his facility, Roger Abel and Doug Stevens, to encourage the U.S. Postal Service to issue an air traffic control commemorative stamp as part of their tradition of recognizing selected professions. He has been an avid stamp collector for over 30 years, and feels that controllers deserve to be recognized.

"The hundreds of thousands of men, women and children who fly in our crowded skies depend on the skillful work of the air traffic controller to guide them safely to their destinations," Gmitro, chairman of the Air Traffic Controller Stamp Committee, wrote in a letter to the Citizens Stamp Advisory Committee, "Controllers from airport towers coast to coast,

as well as 22 en route control centers nationwide, are faced with the unnerving reality that hundreds of lives are at stake with each decision they make."

The process of getting a commemorative stamp approved is long and arduous. The Citizens Advisory Committee meets quarterly and is greeted with thousands of new stamp proposals. Applications are analyzed to determine whether or not they meet several different criteria, including the ability to draw national interest and the historical significance of the profession. Only 30 to 40 stamps are selected each year, and it often takes three to four years for a selected stamp to be issued.

"We have to convince the committee that our profession has national appeal and people would be interested in it," Gmitro commented, "Its goal is to sell as many stamps as possible that people will collect rather than mail, and I think many aviation enthusiasts and others would find our stamp worthwhile to collect."

Gmitro believes that having a stamp recognizing air traffic controllers could help with the challenges the profession faces in the future.

"By petitioning the U.S. Post Office to commemorate the air traffic control profession we will have recognition among not only stamp collectors but from the general public as well," he remarked, "This recognition may help convince the public just how important our jobs are to safety and how crucial it is that it remains a government function."

NATCA Executive Vice President Ruth Marlin strongly supports Gmitro's efforts. She believes that a stamp commemorating air traffic controllers is important to public awareness.

"This stamp would go a long way towards recognizing the role air traffic control has played in the history of aviation and I am behind it 100 percent," commented Marlin.

NATCA members, as well as aviation enthusiasts and supporters, can be a great help to the Air Traffic Control Stamp Committee's efforts.

"We ask that people write a personal letter to the chairman of the Citizens Stamp Advisory Committee explaining the benefit the air traffic control system has had on this country and any individual experiences they may have had," Gmitro said, "In addition, please ask your U.S. senator and representative to send a letter to the chairman as well."

Letters can be sent to the following address:

U.S. Postal Service  
ATTN: Stamp Development  
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW  
Room 5670  
Washington, DC 20260-2437

More information, including example letters that can be sent, is available online at [www.atcstamp.com](http://www.atcstamp.com). Individuals that want to help, including anyone interesting in being a point person at their facility to help motivate controllers to write, are urged to contact Gmitro through his website.

### ***NATCA membership on the rise***

According to the latest membership figures, NATCA now represents almost 82 percent of all FAA controllers, bringing the total FAA controller membership to 12,761. This is an increase of almost 400 controllers from this time last year. This remarkable feat is primarily due to recruitment effort of NATCA members all over the nation. Anchorage Tower, for example, recently reached 100 percent membership and Denver Tower members brought 10 of 10 newly hired controllers on board and are diligently recruiting the next group of newcomers. Keep up the good work!

### ***Signing in to the NATCA web site***

If you haven't had a chance to check out the revamped NATCA web site, here's your chance. To sign in to the "member's only section," simply click on the "request access" link on the upper right part of the page. You will be asked to provide your membership number and last name. If you do not have this information, please call the national office at 800/266-0895 and ask to speak to someone in the Membership Department. If you do not have a membership number because you are a national staff member or are retired, please email [webredesign@natca.net](mailto:webredesign@natca.net).

### ***Getting an early start on the calendar***

Thanks to members who sent in pictures of their facilities, the 2003 NATCA calendar was a huge success. The national office needs your help once again so that the 2004 calendar can be even better. Please send 8 x 10 photos (if digital, at least 300 dpi) to Communications Specialist Jeff Sigmund at the national office by phone at 202/220-9812 or by e-mail at [jsigmund@natcdc.org](mailto:jsigmund@natcdc.org).

### ***2003 "Communicating for Safety" Conference***

Communicating for Safety Conference will take place April 29-May 1 in Denver, Colo. Please Contact Safety and Technology Administrative Assistant Pauline Hines at 800/266-0895 ext. 4846 with any questions.

### ***NATCA Benefit Consultants***

NATCA Benefit Consultants are now available to serve members nationwide with information relating to NATCA benefits and services, as well as provide alternative options to current federal government benefits. These professionals can provide one-on-one information about AIG Life Insurance, UNUM Long Term Disability, AAO Dental and much more. Please contact Membership Director Lew Zietz with any questions or concerns at 202/220-9803.

# LR Report

## Scheduled Arbitrations

### National Arbitrations

March 25: Agency's unilateral decision to withdraw a consent form agreed to by the parties to be used in conjunction with drug testing form.

April 29: Night differential and unscheduled overtime.

April 30: Use of compensatory time.

July 3: Article 93

### Regional Arbitrations

March 26: Five day suspension

### National Grievance Update

The arbitration for the overtime bypass grievances in the Great Lakes Region has been postponed. The union and the Federal Aviation Administration are in talks to reschedule for April 21 –23. For more information on this issue, please contact Bob Taylor, director of Labor Relations at 800/266-0895.

Also, the national grievance pertaining to official time on holidays and Sundays has been postponed. NATCA and the agency are looking to reschedule for the week of April 21.

## New Memoranda of Understanding

The following is a list of the recent MOUs signed by NATCA and the agency.

Host Computer System (HCS)	Jan. 6
Labor Distribution Reporting (LDR)	Jan. 16
ASOS Dew Point Sensor Replacement, ice-free Wind Sensor Replacement	Feb. 6
Precision Runway Monitor equipment (PRM)	Feb. 19

If you would like a copy of an MOU, please contact Labor Relations Administrative Assistant Kendal Guinn at 202/220-4845 or [kguinn@natcadc.org](mailto:kguinn@natcadc.org).

## Fourth Level Review

The Labor Relations Department is in the process of wrapping up the results of the fourth level review, which took place last year. Both NATCA and the FAA had grievances that required further review. The process has been completed and the parties have begun the process of scheduling those grievances for arbitration. Each region has received a copy of the results for their respective grievances. Arbitration dates will appear in the newsletter as the grievances are scheduled.

## Union web site adds more and more new and exciting features

The new year is upon us, and with it comes several exciting changes to the NATCA website. The website, located at [www.natca.org](http://www.natca.org), has many new features designed to keep visitors informed of the latest NATCA news and happenings, and provides feature stories, media analysis, and fun facts that reinforce important issues.

The "NATCA Hot Sheet," updated on a weekly basis, is available on both the public and private versions of the site, providing an important resource that keeps visitors current on the latest union news and happenings. This section comes in two different versions, with information that is more relevant to members available on the private version of the website. The "NATCA Spotlight" section contains a feature story and is available on both versions of the site. A recent story provided insights into the new and extremely modern Potomac Consolidated TRACON facility in Virginia.

In addition, a "Highlighted Links" section featuring aviation or air traffic control-related websites is updated each week and can be found in the lower-right corner of any page on the NATCA site. Also, the privatization section under "Issue Briefs" now goes into greater detail with several new sections detailing the Bush Administration's steps towards privatizing air traffic control as well as the problems evident in countries with a privatized air traffic control system.

All of the above features can be found directly on the homepage in the public version of the site, and can be accessed on the private version of the website by clicking the "NATCA News" link on the homepage.

NATCA members have access to additional features, including

"Issues to Watch" and "Leadership Perspective" sections. Media coverage of important issues is highlighted in "Issues to Watch," while "Leadership Perspective" provides excerpts from NATCA President John Carr and

NATCA Executive Vice President Ruth Marlin's columns to give readers a look at what is on their minds each week. These sections can be found on the private version of the website by clicking on "NATCA News" on the homepage.

Additionally, members can now download editable PDF forms for expense vouchers by accessing "Member Center" on the homepage menu (left side of the page) and then selecting "Forms." Members visiting the private site can read letters of support from congressional members opposing privatization by visiting the "Media Center" (located in the menu on the left side of the homepage) and then selecting "Congressional Letters." In addition, members can view the full text of Professor Elliot Sclar's informative report, "Pitfalls of Air Traffic Control Privatization," by clicking on the privatization section under "Issue Briefs" on the homepage, then selecting "Privatization Materials."



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 Read about NATCA's grassroots legislative conference.

**Lautenberg's Bill**  
 Learn how Sen. Lautenberg, D-N.J., and Rep. Oberstar, D-Minn., are helping NATCA fight privatization.

**WARP**  
 Check out the latest developments for this weather detection technology.

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