

AirTrafficController

NATCA lobbies Congress for FAA bill prohibiting contract tower expansion

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Inside this issue



NATCA President John Carr (center) addresses the media following the Sept. 24 hearing on the contract tower program in the House. (left to right) Controller Jeremy Yahn, Rep. James Oberstar, D-Minn., Rep. Steny Hoyer, D-Md., and Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Ore., all aided NATCA's efforts at trying to halt the expansion of the contract tower program.

At the time of printing the future of the Federal Aviation Administration's reauthorization bill is unclear. Minority Whip Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., and other members of the Senate's

Democratic caucus are working tirelessly to restore language offering a permanent ban on ATC privatization, and insist that the House of Representatives send the bill to the Senate with the prohibition language it originally featured.

NATCA President John Carr echoed that sentiment. "On behalf of the traveling public, this bill needs to be fixed by restoring language that both the full House and Senate already approved to ensure that air traffic control is not privatized," he observed.

The FAA reauthorization bill, Flight 100, encountered fierce opposition from the union and Democrats because Republicans, under pressure from the White House, removed language prohibiting the privatization of ATC functions, and announced the contracting out of 69 towers across the country. On the short

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New Regional Vice Presidents Barbarello, Cantwell, Meachum assumed office Sept. 1

"I thought I could make a difference," newly elected Southern Region Vice President Andy Cantwell said as he reflected on his decision to run for one of the union's National Executive Board offices.

The results are in, and NATCA members now have three new regional vice presidents planning to do just that: Phil Barbarello in the Eastern Region; Cantwell in the Southern Region; and Darrell Meachum in the Southwest Region.

All three new RVPs said they plan to focus more closely on serving the foundation of the union - its membership. "I believe the union is a service organization, and we need to recognize that members come first," Meachum offered. Similarly, Barbarello commented, "for the Eastern Region to remain a key cog in the system of NATCA, focusing on the members is important." Cantwell remarked that, in the Southern Region, "one of the big issues is more open communication with members," and he intends to improve how the leadership disseminates information to his regional constituents, he observed.



Volunteers busily count ballots for the Southern and Southwest Regions races at the Hilton in Arlington, Va.

Meachum also highlighted the importance of strengthening the leadership-member bond. "We're a strong organization internally. Let's focus on what we do best."

In addition to helping the union become more responsive to its members, the new RVPs remarked they intended to improve how their regions work within the NATCA framework as a whole.

"I want to use the strength of Eastern to help out the rest of the country," Barbarello explained.

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ATC SafetyNet

Check out the latest edition of the safety and technology newsletter.



Presidential Perspective

As I'm sure you've noticed we are waging an all out war against those who continue to try to privatize our air traffic control system. Earlier this summer both the House and Senate passed language which would prevent the privatization of air traffic control. However a back room deal between the White House and committee leadership stripped the anti-privatization language in the report and instead inserted language allowing for the privatization of 69 Federal Aviation Administration control towers. This pseudo-conference also opened up the opportunity for the remaining facilities to be privatized after four years. The conference report was so badly flawed that for the first time in twenty years a party to the report refused to sign it. Not a single Democrat, in either the house or the Senate, could bring themselves to sign the document.

We geared up during August to educate not only members of Congress but also the public about the ill-effects this proposition could have on our aviation system. We kicked off a national advertising campaign showcasing television commercials, radio and print ads in targeted areas. Our members who work at the 69 targeted facilities mobilized by holding press conferences and submitting letters-to-the-editor and opinion editorials to raise awareness. We established a toll free number so you could call your member of Congress to ask them to vote no on privatizing air traffic control and you pulled through for us - so far we have logged over 10,000 calls to Capitol Hill.

September was a busy month

for us as well. The General Accounting Office released a favorable report which raised serious concerns about the Inspector General report's use of operational error statistics. The GAO showed that the IG's use of comparing operational errors at FAA and contract towers alone was not sufficient to draw conclusions about the safety records of air traffic control facilities.

I testified before the House Subcommittee on Aviation on Sept. 24 using testimony prepared by NATCA's Executive Vice President Ruth Marlin. This testimony pretty much lays bare all of the bogus statistics the proponents of the contract tower program have been spewing. Cost savings? Wrong. More efficient? Wrong. Safer? I think the two THOUSAND NASA reports I dropped on the committee might infer otherwise.

And when the FAA says they have no intention of contracting out ATC they have some explaining to do. They just finished a cost comparison of FAA and contract towers, so they are either lying when they state their intentions or they are grossly incompetent for wasting taxpayers money on a study of something they have no intention of doing. Ultimately, the hearing closed with our own Jeremy Yahn, who rocked the committee's world so bad it adjourned before any questions could be asked. I know, I know, they said they had to go vote.

"With our efforts and the help of our allies, the White House's foot soldiers have come to realize they cannot simply dismember the most efficient air traffic control system in the world without a fight."

As far as I'm concerned they voted with their feet.

FAA Administrator Marion Blakey and Inspector General Ken Mead also testified at the hearing. Ken gave a half-hearted defense of his report on the contract tower program and several folks noted a few key discrepancies in his work. The administrator spent the better part of an hour trying to explain why she was willing to lay off good employees, shut down airport construction projects, disrupt an industry still reeling from Sept. 11, 2001 and hold sixty BILLION dollars worth of airport improvements hostage just so she could protect the "management flexibility" to do what she swears she won't.

What the administrator - at the beck and call of the administration - is trying to do is crystal clear: slowly chip away at our air traffic control system and hand it over to the lowest bidder.

Our supporters Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Ore., and Rep. James Oberstar, D-Minn., set the Administration straight. Most noteworthy was Rep. John Porter, R-Nev., who observed, "I voted for this bill three times and I never thought I was voting for ATC privatization."

As I write this, the fate of the agency's reauthorization bill is uncertain. We have reached a critical moment in the debate to ensure the safety of our skies. The House of Representatives is expected to consider shortly a motion to send the FAA bill back to con-

ference because it includes misguided provisions including a proposal to privatize air traffic control.

There has been some discussion about stripping out the privatization language from the conference report. Let us be clear: stripping out the language is NOT a solution and does NOT restore the status quo. The dirty little secret in this bill is that in Section 105 there is language that changes the legal status quo and gives the FAA new authority for contracting out air traffic control. If the conferees truly want to represent both the overwhelming will of the Senate, the House and the American people, they would avoid the temptation to tinker with language and do the right thing by restoring the anti-privatization language.

The conferees must also heed the words of Senate Minority Whip Harry Reid, D-Nev., who said on the floor of the Senate that "a conference report that simply strips privatization language will not pass the Senate."

With our efforts and the help of our allies, the White House's foot soldiers have come to realize they cannot simply dismember the most efficient air traffic control system in the world without a fight. We will continue to do whatever it takes to ensure that our nation's air traffic control system continues to be the safest in the world by remaining in the hands of the federal government.

From the cover: Fate of FAA bill uncertain as NATCA pushes for privatization ban

list was the Van Nuys, Calif. Tower - the eighth busiest commercial facility in the United States.

Congress has until Oct. 31 to come up with a solution. That is the expiration date of a continuing resolution that will continue FAA funding at the Fiscal 2003 level.

The CR comes on the heels of the House Aviation Subcommittee's Sept. 24 hearing on the contract tower program. NATCA President John Carr and Controller Jeremy Yahn testified at the event.

In his testimony, Carr pointed out the obvious safety implication of cheaper contract towers - namely fewer controllers regulating traffic.

"This is hardly a groundbreaking business plan. This same logic could be applied to your local firehouse, and a reduction in staffing there would scarcely be noticed until the first big fire broke out."

Blake drew harsh criticism from committee Democrats and Republicans alike. When she described the Flight 100 compromise report as "a compromise,"

NATCA President John Carr (far left) and NATCA Member Jeremy Yahn (far right) testified before the House's Aviation Subcommittee.



Rep. Vernon Ehlers, R-Mich., retorted, "There's a difference between a sellout and a compromise. This is the embryo of the beginning of ... deregulation and privatizing."

Rep. Jon Porter, R-Nev., added that "I can see no reason to disrupt the lives of the flying public" by contracting out dozens of facilities.

In addition, Carr emphasized

the poor working conditions most contract controllers face, such as long hours without bathroom or lunch breaks as well as mandatory overtime.

Yahn - a NATCA member - described the hazardous working conditions and critical understaffing problems he experienced at Boise Tower, Idaho.

After the hearing, Carr, Yahn and NATCA supporters Rep. Peter

DeFazio, D-Ore., Rep. Steny Hoyer, D-Md., and Rep. James Oberstar, D-Minn., held a press conference reinforcing their opposition to the expansion of the contract tower program.

To further help combat privatization, NATCA has waged a national media campaign the past few months, including television, radio and print advertising. More than 75 televised news broadcasts and over 100 publications have featured a story about this critical issue.

To also raise awareness, NATCA members held press conferences in 25 cities where airports have been placed on the FAA's list of potential privatization candidates. These cities include Atlanta, Chicago, Denver, Miami, Orlando and Pittsburgh.

The fight is not yet over, and while the outcome is uncertain, the union will continue fighting hard to ensure the administration cannot contract out facilities to the lowest bidder.

17th Annual Skifest

Whistler/Blackcomb, British Columbia, Canada

Feb. 21 - 28, 2004

Cost:

\$840 for seven night's lodging, round trip bus transfer, opening night dinner reception, lift tickets and much more.

For more information, please contact the NATCA Southwest Region office at 817/540-6661.



New AOPA seminars focus on pilot, controller communication

Now that school is back in session, you have an opportunity, as a NATCA member, to help educate some of the pilots in your community. AOPA is sponsoring a series of seminars taking place across the country over the next few months and NATCA members are encouraged to attend.

The AOPA seminars - entitled "Say Intentions" - are aimed at educating pilots on how to handle emergencies and interact with controllers during unusual situations. AOPA consists of a small group of speakers traveling around the country giving presentations at these seminars. The group has invited NATCA

members from the local areas to attend each seminar.

For a list of the locations and dates, go to the NATCA Safety Committee web page at <http://safety.natca.org> and click on "external links." The web site lists the seminars along with the AOPA presenter and the NATCA representative(s) attending the meeting.

NATCA would like to have as many controllers as possible attend these seminars. Check out the web site and find a seminar close to you. Get a few other controllers together and spend a few hours with the people that you talk to every day at work.

EUROCONTROL report determines U.S. system more responsive to users

Much has been written on the differences between the government-run air traffic control system in the United States and the various systems characterized as privatized air traffic control, but a recent study released by EUROCONTROL (which heads Europe's air traffic management system) has confirmed that U.S. air traffic management is significantly more cost-effective than its European counterpart.

According to the study, the overall indicator of cost effectiveness, "average costs per flight hour," was 74 percent higher in the European system as a whole than it was in the United States in 2001.

Average costs per hour in the selected en-route centers were 62 percent higher in Europe than in the United States.

The study also notes that cost effectiveness in any particular regional control area is likely to look as it does in the system-wide aggregate.

Because these performance measures are similar at the system-wide and sample center levels, the study suggests, "We can infer they are similar in the rest of the system."

Europe's significantly restricted air traffic control system often can be a significant factor in its reduced productivity.

"In the United States, we are able to maintain our extraordinarily high standard of safety with a tremendous increase in productivity," explained NATCA Executive Vice President Ruth Marlin.

"I am not surprised we compare so favorably with the European system, because U.S. controllers continually work

to improve the system and make it more responsive to users."

Despite the fact the United States has fewer controllers today than in years past, Marlin believes the U.S. system is continuously improving.

"The average controller in the United States works nearly three times the number of aircraft than a controller 30 years ago. The rules have not changed

"The rules have not changed substantially, but the drive toward continuous improvement has delivered results for the American people."

***-Executive Vice President
Ruth Marlin***

substantially, but the drive toward continuous improvement has delivered results for the American people," commented Marlin.

Marlin also noted that a philosophical difference between how Europe and the United States view aviation and air traffic has a notable impact on the efficiency levels of each system.

"They are really very different systems," she remarked.

"The United States is mandate-averse when it comes to dictating on-board equipment. We focus on promoting access for all types of aircraft and users while Europe constantly imposes restrictions...it is just a different philosophy regarding

government regulation and use of airspace."

Making the air traffic control system as beneficial as possible to the user has long been a hallmark of United States aviation according to Marlin.

"While our system is user-focused, those that manage Europe's air traffic system want everything streamlined to make the system as simple as possible," she said.

"Our ability to focus on the customer, maximizing their use of the national airspace system while maintaining strict safety standards, is what makes our aviation system the envy of the world."

EUROCONTROL's analysis notes that employment costs relating to air traffic control are higher in the United States, with Europe's expenses in this area constituting only 62 percent of the United States' expenditure.

However, when adjusted for the longer working hours of the U.S. controller, the hour for hour costs are remarkably similar.

This report is the second in a series by EUROCONTROL identifying the advantages of the U.S. system and advocates the adoption of a system that can take advantage of the U.S. model.

"NATCA is committed to ensuring that the U.S. air traffic control system remains the best in the world," Marlin said.

"We should be working to help bring the rest of the world up to our standard instead of trying to dismantle that which has already set the standard for aviation excellence."

NATCA Elections, from the cover

"I'd like to have a real family kind of environment among the regions."

The major hurdle the three RVPs feel NATCA must overcome on the national level is the threat of more widespread privatization of facilities. "This is the most challenging time since we became a union," Cantwell remarked. The future of the union hinges on "NATCA becoming more of a leader in the aviation industry," he added.

"I'm a strong labor relations advocate, and support a collective bargaining method of dealing with the FAA," which could help improve relations with the agency, Meachum remarked.

Barbarelo believes keeping members informed is key to fighting privatization.

"We're in trying times and need to put a real focus on the legislative activity. We need to bring in people to the facilities to talk about privatization."

"We will have continued success, but it's more difficult now," Cantwell said.

The three new RVPs have served in various leadership positions since NATCA's founding.

Barbarelo was Newark area representative and president of NATCA N90. Cantwell was a longtime local president of NATCA MIA. And Meachum was NATCA Ft. Worth Center vice president and co-founded the NATCA Charitable Organization.

Annual Oshkosh "AirVenture" features ATC exhibit, Century of Flight

**Keenan Ormond
and Kelly Richardson**
NATCA Interns

As we arrived at Whitman Field for the Experimental Aircraft Association's AirVenture: Oshkosh 2003 Air Show in Oshkosh Wis., the skies filled with various aircraft, from M.A.S.H.-style Bell Helicopters and Vintage World War II Warbirds to all sorts of general aviation aircraft.

This year's air show, which lasted from July 22 to Aug. 3, was a huge success, drawing an estimated 770,000 people along with 11,000 aircraft.

With nearly 3,000 show-planes, this year's air show was the largest ever.

Some of the sights this year included the Airbus Beluga, which has the largest cargo hold of any aircraft.

Also, to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of Flight, a reproduction of the original Wright flyer was on display, which is scheduled to fly Dec. 18 at the original location of Kitty Hawk, N.C.

The daily afternoon shows caught our eyes as the talented aerobatic pilots displayed their aptitude in the cockpit. The stars of the show, however, were the vintage World War II Warbirds that performed mock dogfights and bombing raids as well as formation flyovers.

To celebrate a century of flight, NATCA introduced its new History of Air Traffic Control exhibit.

This display featured all aspects of ATC, including the first air traffic controller, Archie League, and his wheelbarrow of equipment (which included two flags, an umbrella and his lunch) and the latest innovations in air traffic con-

The Airbus Beluga boasts the largest cargo load of any aircraft.



Controllers at Oshkosh Tower, sporting distinctive bright pink shirts, take time out to pose.

Oshkosh Tower - dubbed "the world's busiest tower" - overlooks the air show's excitement.



A jet engine-powered WACO aircraft - one of the many aerobatic aircraft featured at the Oshkosh air show - prepares for flight.

trol technology such as Standard Terminal Automation Replacement System (STARS).

This exhibit also highlighted the heroic performance of our air traffic controllers on Sept. 11, 2001.

Donning coveted bright pink shirts, the air traffic controllers working this year's air show were the center of attention as they walked around the fairgrounds.

Separating air traffic at Oshkosh - "the world's busiest control tower" - was a highly demanding task.

Controllers staffed the towers and mobile operation and



A Boeing 307 Clipper Flying Cloud attracts a group of onlookers and aviation aficionados.

communication wagons called "moo cows," directing airplanes by referring to their color and type as opposed to the traditional use of their tail call signs.

This was a busier year than usual for controllers because of the pending privatization of the 69 control towers.

Volunteers working the NATCA booth actively solicited support while educating passer-bys the importance of keeping air traffic control under the aegis of the federal government.

It turned out to be a very successful campaign, as NATCA gathered much-needed support.

Labor Day marks time to reflect upon role of unions

Sept. 1 marked the 121st observance of Labor Day, a holiday American Federation of Labor Founder Samuel Gompers described as "different in every essential way from the holidays of the year in any country." The holiday celebrates the efforts of all working men and women, and offers an opportunity to reflect on the benefits unions bring to working people.

What kinds of workers are forming unions today?

A wider range of people than ever before, including many women and immigrants, is joining unions: doctors and nurses, poultry workers and graduate employees, home health care aides and wireless communications workers, to name a few.

How do unions help working families today?

Through unions, workers win better wages, benefits and a voice on the job. Also, good union jobs mean stronger communities. Union workers earn 26 percent more than nonunion workers and are more likely to receive health care and pension benefits than those without a union. In 2002, median weekly earnings for full-time union wage and salary workers were \$740, compared to \$587 for their nonunion counterparts. Unions lead the fight today for better lives for working people through expanded family and medical leave, improved safety and health protections and fair-trade agreements that lift the standard of living for workers all over the world.

What have unions accomplished for all workers?

Unions have made life better for all working Americans by helping pass laws ending child labor, establishing the eight-hour work day, and protecting workers' safety and health. Union efforts also helped create Social Security, unemployment insurance and the minimum wage.

THE UNION ADVANTAGE: BY THE NUMBERS

Union workers' median weekly earnings	\$740
Nonunion workers' median weekly earnings	\$587
Union wage advantage	26 percent
Union women's median weekly earnings	\$667
Nonunion women's median weekly earnings	\$510
Union wage advantage for women	31 percent
African American union workers' median weekly earnings	\$615
African American nonunion workers' median weekly earnings	\$477
Union wage advantage for African Americans	29 percent
Latino union workers' median weekly earnings	\$623
Latino nonunion workers' median weekly earnings	\$408
Union wage advantage for Latinos	53 percent

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Earnings
January 2003

Union offers affordable eye care to members through Vision Services Plan

Lewis Zietz

NATCA is proud to announce a new vision care benefit for our members.

Through our partnership with Voluntary Vision Plan (VSP), you and your family now can have important eye care at an affordable price.

Missing routine eye exams can lead to late discovery of a number of different health conditions such as glaucoma, cataracts and diabetes.

It is incredibly important to realize these problems early on. Signing up with VSP will take away this risk and provide additional discounts on prescription

glass lenses, frames and contact lenses.

One in eight people in the United States rely on VSP for eye care coverage.

This plan puts the most extensive networks of national physicians and private practitioners right in your backyard.

You can find these network doctors right where you need them - close to work, home and shopping malls.

Taking part in the plan is easy. The contribution level is only \$7 bi-weekly per employee, \$11 bi-weekly for an employee and one dependent, or \$16 bi-weekly for an employee and

family.

The co-pay is \$15 for an exam, \$25 for prescription glasses, and no co-pay for contacts.

When you sign up, your benefits include not only an eye exam and new lenses every 12 months, but frame coverage of \$120 every 24 months with a 20 percent discount if the cost goes over this amount.

If you wish to have contact lenses instead of glasses, a \$105 allowance applies to the cost of lenses, along with the fitting and evaluation exam.

Twelve months after obtaining the contact lenses, you also

will be eligible for a frame.

There are added benefits available.

These include a discount on laser vision correction; up to 20 percent savings of prescription glass extras, such as scratch resistant and anti-reflective coatings and progressives; 20 percent off additional prescription glasses and sunglasses; and exclusive pricing on annual supplies of popular contact brands.

You can find additional information by logging on to our exclusive web site at www.natcavision.com, or you may call me directly at 202/220-9803.

Plan set for Communicating for Safety Conference

Scott Voigt

Communicating for Safety will take place near the Dallas-Fort Worth Airport at the Sheraton DFW North in Irving, Texas, April 20 - 21, 2004.

As in years past, NATCA members receive two days of official duty time for attending *Communicating for Safety*.

Members also have a travel day before and after the event if they don't live in the local area.

Remember that members qualify for the travel day only if they travel on the day before or after the event.

If you travel on one of the days of the two day event, you cannot claim the travel day.

We intend to do all registration via online interface - a brand new feature this year. The Safety Committee is working with the Communications Department and the Communications Committee to streamline our registration as well as help automate some of the problems we have had in the past.

Log onto the NATCA Safety Committee web site for the latest information on the conference at <http://safety.natca.org/>.

The last conference touched on subjects that were both future and present issues for controllers and pilots.

Through input from all of the union's members, the next conference will look more toward issues that are affecting everyone today and the very near term.

As soon as we get the agenda firmed up, we will post it on the *Communicating for Safety* web link. The same goes for a list of who will be presenting at the conference.

The hotel hosting us - DFW Sheraton North - is the only union hotel in Texas. As we toured the facility and talked with some of the union members, they found that we, like them, were union members.

The reason we were considering their facility was because of

its union affiliation.

Their eyes lit up upon hearing that we were there to help support them.

In Texas, it's not something they are used to seeing, so when you come to *Communicating for Safety* 2004, share a union member "hello" with them.

These folks are proudly union.

The hotel, located on the northeast side of the airport property right on State Highway 114, is a nice facility with everything we need for our conference. We think the amenities there will meet with your approval.

As with most of the hotels we try to find, this one also will have free shuttle pickup from the DFW Airport.

Just as in the past two years, we will have Facility Safety Representative Training the day before the conference. You can plan on it beginning sometime after lunch.

A more precise schedule will be available on the *Communicating for Safety* web site as the time comes closer.

For those of you who have attended past conferences and have enjoyed them, please tell others in your facility about them.

Also spread the word to any pilot contacts. The largest disappointment we have had in the past is the lower number of pilots attending this event.

This year, we are going to redouble our efforts as a committee to get more of the pilot community to come to our event. We could use your help - tell your friends and neighbors as well as people who frequent your airport.

If you have any further questions about the event, please contact your regional safety chairman for further information. Also continue to read the *SafetyNet* and the NATCA Safety Committee web site for updated information.

Hope to see you there.

Domestic Reduced Vertical Separation Minima will provide ATC flexibility

The U.S. Domestic RVSM Program is an element of the Federal Aviation Administration's National Airspace System (NAS) Operational Evolution Plan (OEP).

The objective is to implement RVSM from FL290 to FL410 on Jan. 20, 2005 at 0901UTC, in the airspace of the continental United States, Alaska, San Juan FIR and the Gulf of Mexico where the FAA provides air traffic services.

Canada and Mexico are planning to implement RVSM concurrently with the launching of Domestic RVSM (DRVSM) in the United States.

DRVSM implementation likely will produce the following benefits:

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Air Traffic

Benefits delivered through improvements in air traffic control operations:

- ATC flexibility
- Mitigate conflict points
- Enhance sector throughput
- Reduce controller workload

Operators

Fuel savings and operating efficiency benefits 2005 - 2019:

- \$5 billion
- 6-1 benefit/cost ratio
- \$393 million first year savings - two percent annual increase

Assessing the impact of DRVSM on the air traffic controller, the user and the airspace requires a series of Human Interface Technology Laboratory (HITL) simulations. Three such HITL DRVSM simulations have been completed. The first of these focused on determining the optimum altitude band for DRVSM implementation.

The simulation evaluated each altitude band for its impact on controller workload, complexity and potential for error, as well as identifying the need for new or modified ATC.

The second simulation focused on handling non-RVSM approved aircraft in RVSM airspace, non-approved transitioning flights, outage of RVSM equipment, tactical use of RVSM in a conventional vertical separation environment and transition to and from non-RVSM airspace. A third simulation evaluated the proposed ATC procedures to support DRVSM. Final Reports for the simulations are available on the DRVSM web site and all future program updates will also be posted at: www.usdrvsm.com.

NAS Modifications. DRVSM will require automation changes for conflict alert and a visual indicator for the Display System Replacement (DSR) display so the controller will be able to distinguish between RVSM approved and non-RVSM approved aircraft. The NAS modifications for DRVSM to the HOST/DSR/DARC

and User Request Evaluation Tool (URET) will be completed several months prior to implementation.

DRVSM Procedures. A DRVSM procedures workgroup, composed of air traffic controllers and Flight Standards specialists, developed recommended procedures to support DRVSM implementation. These procedures were validated during the third simulation conducted in June 2003.

ATC Training. Training of air traffic personnel is an important element of air traffic preparedness. Plans are to utilize the cadre instructor approach for ATC training using tools such as Computer Based Instruction (CBI), classroom and Dynamic Simulation (DYSIM).

System Integration. Completion of a seamless integration plan will ensure compatibility of the new DRVSM airspace with the NAS. System integration will include close coordination with the ongoing and/or pending system programs such as URET and National Airspace Redesign (NAR). TRSVM will harmoniously integrate within the NAS.

Rulemaking. Rulemaking includes the publication of the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) in May 2002. The final rules are anticipated in September 2003.

Safety Assessment. A Safety assessment is in progress and will be completed prior to RVSM implementation. RVSM Equipage Requirements. Aircraft must be equipped with systems that meet RVSM performance tolerances, which include:

- Two independent altitude measurement systems
- One altitude alert system
- One automatic altitude control system
- Aircraft equipped with TCAS II and used in RVSM operations must incorporate Version 7.0

Monitoring. Plans call for deployment of three to five ground-based monitoring systems and continued use of the Global Positioning System-based Monitoring Unit. These systems will validate and verify the accuracy of the height-keeping performance of RVSM approved aircraft.

More information to be provided to all en route controllers in the near future. For additional information visit the RVSM website (www.USDRVSM.com), or contact Steve Entis (NATCA DRVSM representative) at sentis@cox.net.

ATPAC focuses on improving flight standards, establishing terminology

Scott Voigt

The last gathering of the Air Traffic Procedures Advisory Committee met in July in Appleton, Wis. The biggest change in the proceedings was a final determination by Flight Standards that the 250 knot test proce-

dures undergoing testing at Houston should be discontinued. The reasoning behind the committee's decision was the bird strike study it did was inconclusive, so with the absence of information, Flight Standards could not prove the test was safe.

The committee has deferred the issue and we now await FAA Air Traffic's action. We expect Air Traffic Procedures (ATP) to send guidance to the field to terminate the test of exceeding 250 Knots below 10,000 feet. As an aside, this does not preclude the FAA from doing a full study on the

problems with bird strikes - and reinstating the procedure if it is found to be safe.

The NOTAM problem was discussed once again. The FAA currently is planning a test at the Automated Flight Service in Macon, Ga., as well as Cedar City, Iowa. The prob-

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Troubleshooting WARP: A few common problems controllers encounter

Scott Voigt

I've recently had many questions from pilots and controllers about the weather presentation we now have in the en-route environment. I've also heard a lot of misinformation from both pilots and controllers regarding the different aviation web sites.

Here is an attempt to try to clarify some of the issues concerning the weather presentation we get from WARP (Weather and Radar Processor).

First off, the current weather feed we get overlaid on our DSR (Display System Replacement) is WSR88D - or as most folks know it, the tri service weather radar (National Weather Service, Department of Defense and Federal Aviation Administration), NEXRAD. This feed comes into the building and gets sent to the WARP computer.

There it is processed and both the Center Weather Service Unit and the Traffic Management Unit use it, for forecasting and planning purposes, respectively. It also now gets piped out onto the control room floor for the air traffic controller to use.

Most people think of this radar in the same terms as the old weather display in that what you see is what is happening right now. Newscasters who tell you they have up to date weather as it is happening foster this belief.

If meteorologists are using a NEXRAD radar display like what you're using, they are getting at best a look at what happened five minutes ago; at worst, 11 minutes ago.

Compared to the ARSR 2 (Air Route Surveillance Radar), we receive a much more detailed and better picture of what is going on out there; however, there are caveats as well. As mentioned earlier, NEXRAD data is historical data. You only see what has happened and not what is actually happening right now.

In many parts of the country, this is okay, but for those of us who fly and control in the areas of Tornado Alley and other areas plagued with thunderstorm activity have grown to learn that a thunderstorm can grow and mature in under 10 minutes.

Another feature of WARP pertaining to the air traffic controller's display is deletion of the low returns so as to cut down on ground clutter. This is why you see a difference between your display and what you may see displayed on the large NEXRAD display.

Here are some basics about using the WARP product in the en-route environment. First, set your settings to 000B600 for weather display.

This is twofold. First, there is a GENOT out saying that the 000B240 setting is not reliable due to the clutter suppression. It cannot guarantee you are seeing a true (historic) picture of the weather.

Second, check to make sure your settings are correct. With the new presets that we have for DSR, one thing that does NOT change with your presets is the NEXRAD weather settings. Make sure they are on and at the appropriate settings.

Third, look at all three levels. You can set all of your weather intensity levels to a level that should be low enough that won't block out any displayed items.

The National Weather Service runs NEXRAD in two modes. The first is the clear weather volume scan, which takes upward of 11 minutes to complete. The other is the precipitation volume scan, and this can take between five and six minutes.

As a controller, you will never know which scan you are using, and consequently will never know just how old the weather displayed is.

This is another reason why (even though it is happening) you cannot vector aircraft around weather. The way thunderstorms develop, there could be towering cumulus that you don't see on the radar building into full-blown thunderstorms, and you could be vectoring someone right into one. We all know how much the FAA hates that sort of liability.

For those of you who could use a little refresher, the lowest weather display intensity we have is solid blue. That is designated as "moderate weather."

The level this corresponds to from the old VIP levels both pilots and controllers were taught is Level Two, and is associated with rainfall between 0.09 and 0.48 inches per hour.

This also was associated with the green lines we did and still can get today on our display.

The second level we receive is the blue hatched pattern, which is denoted as "heavy weather." This matches the Levels Three through Four VIP level and 0.48 - 2.5+ inches per hour of rain. The old radar display showed green Hs.

The third level is the lighter blue shade and also is known as "heavy weather." This is associated with the Level Five and Six VIP levels. This represents 5.7 inches of rain an hour or more.

One thing you can do to see where the weather is moving with a fast-moving system - as well as where weather may be building - is to select your old ASRS weather channel.

It is still active, and as in the years past, you could pretty much tell when you were getting an accurate display and when you were not.

You can use this as an overlay aid to show you where some areas of weather are beginning to pop up when someone talks about deviating.

The Weather Service knows about the problems we are having with WARP and NEXRAD and is working on the issues. The last filter fix was a bit too aggressive and cut out too much weather. The service hopes to have a fix for the 000B240 setting by this winter.

Testing is ongoing. Another nice thing the Weather Service is working on is getting the volume scan down to four minutes in precipitation mode from five or six.

What will really help, though, is a product going through testing right now in Norman, Okla. It is a phased array radar antenna replacement.

It should cut down the scan time dramatically, since the antenna could electronically scan in elevation mode very rapidly - something that the large mechanical antenna used today cannot do.

This, however, is probably quite a few years off due to testing and budget constraints.

continued from page 2

lem with the direction the FAA's plan is that it doesn't fix the problems with NOTAM distribution in air traffic control facilities. We'll have more on this in future issues of *SafetyNet*.

In regard to the proposed change to FAR 91.129, which is the taxi clearance FAR: the group is looking to clarify language in the Aeronautical Information Manual (AIM), allowing pilots to better understand the rule as it pertains to both taxi in and out.

For clearances at the Initial Approach Fix (IAF), Flight Standards 420 has formed a workgroup to look at proposed guidance for development of a controller and pilot training initiative.

Another ATPAC issue

revolves around the term "radar-required" on an approach plate. Some pilots don't understand when they can and can't approach if radar is no longer available due either to an outage or normal radar coverage. Flight standards will look at a definition for the committee to review.

The problem brought about by the change in ICAO (International Civil Aeronautics Organization) phraseology for taxing and holding short of a runway has led to miscommunications between controllers and flight crews. The phraseology change was from "taxi to holding point" and is now "taxi to holding position." This is very similar to our phrase "taxi into position and hold," or as it is now shortened, "position

and hold." ICAO wants the United States to change and we do not want to change in order to fix a problem ICAO created. For now it is a stand-off.

The one thing to note is that not everyone in Europe is using the new ICAO phraseology due to the problems associated with it.

The pilot community brought another issue to the plate that is causing some problems on the flight deck (as well as with us). With the proliferation of /G, /I, /R, /E and /F, we have found a problem that the FAA had supposedly fixed but came up short. When there is a navaid with the same name and or identifier off airport, where is the aircraft cleared to? As in, cleared direct ELP (El Paso), are you going direct to the

airport or the navaid? Collocating the navaid from the airport isn't a problem, but when the navaid is, say, nine miles away from the airport, this could make a difference in both what the pilot is doing and what the controller is expecting the pilot to do.

ATPAC is looking at what can be done to mitigate this issue as well as clarify it for both controllers and pilots. If you have any ideas of your own, please contact either Wes Stoops or Scott Voigt and provide your input.

The next meeting of the ATPAC is Oct. 20 - 23 at the Command Center in Herndon, Va. If any members would like to attend and see how the sausage is made, please feel free to do so. Just let your ATPAC rep know.

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Safety and Tech's liaisons, reps boast strong record of accomplishment

They're shaping the face of aviation technology from the ground up, ensuring that air traffic controllers have access to the most state-of-the-art equipment and procedures.

Thirty Washington, D.C., based NATCA liaisons and technical representatives and over 200 part-time tech reps at numerous field locations throughout the United States are participating in over 125 project workgroups and teams. Reps and liaisons work closely with their Federal Aviation Administration counterparts at all levels.

"Maintaining a civil, collaborative working relationship with the agency has proven essential in developing and implementing new air traffic control technologies and procedures," Safety and Technology Deputy Director Dennis King said. Additionally, the expertise of liaisons and tech reps and their ability to identify system deficiencies and solutions prior to fielding has resulted in a considerable cost savings for the FAA.

"The tech reps and liaisons normally have excellent relationships with their agency counterparts. The relationship is a symbiotic one - it's good for both the union and the FAA. Programs rely heavily on the tech reps and liaisons, and the agency would have a difficult time continuing these programs without our help. The User Request Evaluation Tool (URET) program is essentially a NATCA invention. I don't think it would have been developed and fielded today if it weren't for NATCA's involvement," Safety and Technology Director Doug Fralick observed.

Article 48 of the 1998 Collaborative Bargaining Agreement between NATCA and the FAA formally established the Safety and Technology Program.

The liaison/rep selection begins when the FAA requests a liaison or tech rep from the union. The Safety and Technology Department then sends out the request to the



Washington, D.C., based reps and liaisons carefully review information presented at one of their meetings, which take place every Monday morning.

appropriate regional vice presidents for support from their facilities. Then the department compiles a list and forwards it to NATCA's president for final selection.

The president then passes the candidate on to the National Executive Board for approval. Washington, D.C., based liaisons and tech reps serve one-year renewable terms. To ensure programs are developed and implemented successfully, the process requires collaboration and compromise at every level, including coordinating with controllers at the facilities.

As Air Traffic Airspace Management Division (ATA)

Liaison Don Ossinger explained, "It's important for us to try and resolve issues out in the field."

Other liaisons also work closely with controllers and management in a collaborative process. Airport Surface Detection Equipment, Model X (ASDE-X) Liaison Dave Rudolf remarked, "The liaisons and reps collaborate to ensure equipment is designed to be controller-friendly. But we also work closely with management to accomplish things."

The liaisons and reps boast a record of success noteworthy for its collaborative method of getting things done, which reflects the best aspects of the union.

Aerospace medicine prides itself on providing high quality services

The members of NATCA's bargaining units are hard at work assuring that all the union's constituents have access to the highest quality services available.

Aerospace medicine is a fine example of the dedication bargaining units impart to the union. This cadre of about 35 nurses and medical program assistants (MPAs), located in each regional office, helps ensure the union's controllers are in tip-top shape and guarantee that medical paperwork runs smoothly.

"Our main function is the air traffic controller health program, which requires that they have physicals yearly," Aerospace Medicine National Representative Patty Beyer said.

In many cases, aviation medical examiners (AMEs) perform the actual physicals while MPAs and nurses review the paperwork to ensure everything is in order. Nurses and MPAs also strive to ensure the confidentiality of the results of physicals they conduct.

Aerospace medicine members therefore must cultivate close

working relationships with AMEs and controllers.

The bargaining unit became a part of the NATCA family in August 2000, and its organization paved the way for more freedom within the workplace.

"What it's done is we've been able to negotiate our working conditions," Beyer observed.

A typical day for the aerospace medicine crew consists of performing physicals, reviewing the paperwork of physicals submitted by AMEs, discussing patients' histories with doctors, or simply answering any medical questions controllers might have.

"Some air traffic controllers may stop by to talk to us to discuss the procedures" aerospace medicine employees follow, Beyer offered.

This bargaining unit also must work hard to ensure the results from the physicals are kept confidential at all times, Beyer said. Confidentiality protects both controllers and aerospace medicine members.

Public policy expert lends prowess to union's efforts at promoting messages in media



Bill Black, senior vice president and partner of Fleishman-Hillard in Washington, D.C., is a skilled government and political affairs professional with more than 20 years experience in Washington, D.C. As a senior member of the Fleishman-Hillard public affairs practice, Black has led a large number of campaigns for clients across a wide variety of issues. He is at the forefront of NATCA's current political battle against air traffic control privatization, and uses his deep expertise in the political and policy process to deliver the union's messages to key legislators, the media and members of the public.

Describe Fleishman Hillard's role in projecting NATCA's key messages to the general public. What have you done in the past, and what do you plan to do in the future?

Fleishman-Hillard is a full service, international public relations company, so we employ a wide variety of strategies and tactics in supporting NATCA's communications objectives. Our first assignment was refining NATCA's overall messages, which we did by surveying the key audiences NATCA needs to reach, such as policymakers, the aviation community and members. We found a high level of respect in Washington for air traffic controllers generally, and NATCA specifically. Building on this research, we developed messages that focused mainly on the contributions controllers make to the safety of the aviation system. Assembling this base has served us well during the privatization fight and has helped position NATCA as an organization of safety professionals, in addition to being a union.

We have delivered these important messages through regular communications with

the media, press conferences and the development of a wide variety of background materials, such as brochures and fact sheets. We have totally revamped NATCA's web site to make it more user friendly and graphically appealing. Most recently, in one of our most exciting projects, we developed a major exhibit depicting the history of air traffic control. The exhibit was unveiled at the Oshkosh Air Show, and was very well-received.

In the future, we hope to help NATCA broaden and deepen the way the organization communicates with its key audiences. A recent *Wall Street Journal* article in effect complimented NATCA on the way it has learned from the past and today uses communication techniques, rather than job actions, to achieve its goals. NATCA's leadership team of John Carr and Ruth Marlin deserve enormous credit for NATCA's sophisticated communications strategy. We expect to continue to work with them to help NATCA enhance its profile in Washington and throughout the aviation community.

How do you think the media views air traffic controllers and their battle against privatization, and how has that changed with recent efforts?

Some in the media see the privatization fight as being about a union trying to protect jobs. But the enormous response from newspapers, TV and radio during the anti-privatization campaign demonstrated that most in the media recognize the larger issues at stake. A number of stories have contrasted the old way air traffic controllers dealt with disputes with the FAA and the new way. The new way enlists the public in support of aviation safety. John Carr often refers to controllers' dedication to safety as a "sacred trust." All we need to do is communicate that sincere belief and the public will be with us. I think the privatization campaign did exactly that.

What issues do you see coming up for NATCA?

First, the privatization issue will not go away. As long as there are ideologues in the government who think the private sector does everything better than the government, we will have to fight that battle. They won't be satisfied until the entire air

traffic control system is in private hands. Fortunately, we have shown we have significant resources, in terms of public opinion and congressional support, as well as a motivated membership and a large PAC, all of which we can bring to this battle. Those who advance this policy now know that when they do so, they are in for a fight.

The next big issue before is likely to be the staffing issue. The retirement bubble continues to loom and we still have an Administration that wants to provide air traffic control on the cheap. Frankly, this is an issue that the public will more readily understand than privatization because it's going to affect them directly when we start running short of controllers. Our job as communicators will be to make sure that the public makes the connection between the delays, inconvenience, and possible safety concerns caused by inadequate staffing directly to neglect and misguided policies at the federal level.

We have already begun to sound the alarm and a report from the General Accounting Office, a widely respected Congressional watchdog agency, criticizing the FAA's lack of a plan for hiring needed controllers strengthened our case. The key will be a longer-term communications campaign that will move Congress and the Administration to act before it's too late.

Do you feel NATCA is influential in Washington, D.C.?

Yes, and getting more so. NATCA represents a group of professionals that most policymakers admire. In addition, the recent privatization campaign shows that we have both the resources and the savvy to put an issue on the Washington agenda. Finally, NATCA has a very strong Political Action Committee making contributions in a very strategic way. While Democrats are core supporters, NATCA has demonstrated Republican support as shown by the 11 Republican senators who voted for the Lautenberg amendment as well as the Republican House members, led by Rep. Jack Quinn of New York, who signed the letter opposing privatization.

There are few, if any, unions who could do the same on an issue of this kind. With Congress so closely divided, any organization that can reach across the parties like this is influential.

Multiple birth parents delicately balance demands of controlling, family

Northern California TRACON Controller Andrew Jaimes summed up his morning routine in four words: "It's basically just chaos."

Jaimes isn't referring to the difficulty of guiding aircraft. As the father of two sets of twins and an additional daughter, his schedule at home is as demanding as at work. For NATCA members with multiple birth children—twins or triplets—balancing work and family time is a demanding task.

"I don't do too much else. I work and I'm with the family," Miami Controller Stephen Thomas, the father of three-year-old triplets, said. Controllers with multiples face a unique challenge—one as rewarding as it is taxing. And their NATCA brothers and sisters have supported and cheered them on through all the way.

Miami Controller Ellen Graham, six months pregnant with twins, described the support she has received from her fellow controllers as "wonderful and very supportive. I'm physically unable to do my primary job, so I do office work. My coworkers have been very helpful, and that makes such a big difference."

NATCA President John Carr - the father of four-month old triplets and an 18-month-old daughter - found a wealth of support in controllers. "The love and support NATCA members have shown to my family is overwhelming. I'm blessed to have these unique challenges," Carr observed.

Parenting multiple children is a round-the-clock responsibility. "Everyone tells me to catch up on my sleep now, before they come," Graham joked. "You've got to feed them every few hours," Thomas said. "I think my wife and I didn't sleep until after the first seven or eight weeks after the triplets were born." Now, at three years and nine months, Thomas and his wife can sleep a little more peacefully. But he has virtually no free time. "I kind of gave up any hobbies for now. I used to go diving, but I had to give it up and sell the equipment," he commented.

"They're a blessing but having children this late in life makes me cognizant of the sacrifices NATCA activists make when they step forward," he reflected.

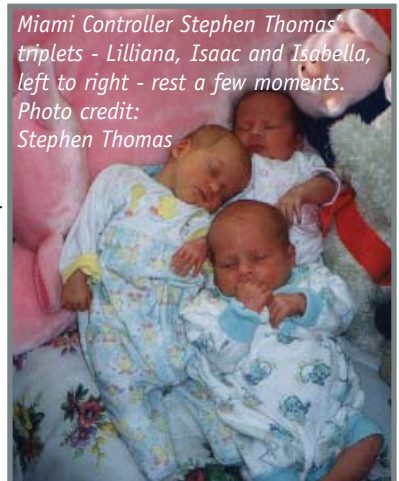
Jaimes agreed that the first months are the most difficult, but

thought the adjustment to caring for newborns was a little easier with the second round of twins. "The older girls helped entertain the babies, so it wasn't nearly as bad," he said.

Gone, too, are the days of compact cars, hotrods and even sport utility vehicles. "I used to own a Honda CRV, but it just couldn't hold all of them, so we bought a Ford Expedition," Thomas explained. Jaimes purchased a minivan after his first set of twins - only to find even it did not have enough cargo space. "We ended up going with a Suburban. Now, when my parents visit, we can at least take one vehicle," he offered.

Thomas' wife stays at home to care for the children, so the family does not use daycare. Sometimes, however, he has to help out, and the coworkers and management have been accommodating, he said. "If one of the kids has to go to the doctor, I'll take the day off," he observed. Jaimes' wife also stays at home to raise the girls.

While balancing work and family life for parents with multiples is a serious challenge, Carr, Graham, Jaimes and Thomas agree it's well worth the effort.

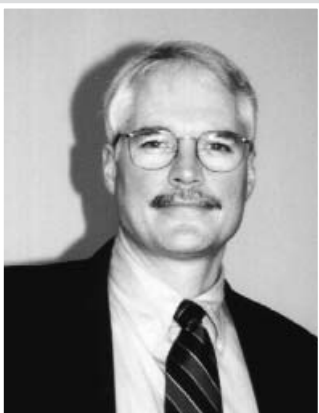


Miami Controller Stephen Thomas' triplets - Lilliana, Isaac and Isabella, left to right - rest a few moments. Photo credit: Stephen Thomas



NATCA President John Carr's four-month-old triplets - Brandon, Jessica and Robbie, left to right - demand constant attention. Their big sister Rachel, 18 months, is always willing to help out. Photo courtesy John Carr

Government credit card misuse can lead to dire unintended consequences



Michael Derby
PASS Times Legal Counsel

Jasper was a longtime AF employee in the Podunk SSC. He frequently purchased hardware items from The Home Depot in

connection with various repair projects for which he was responsible.

He always obtained authorization to make the purchases. One day, while purchasing some wire, he noticed it was the last day of a great sale on power drills.

In fact, the cordless, heavy-duty model featured in the advertisement was the very same drill he frequently dreamed about.

Since his personal credit cards were maxed out, he thought to himself, "Why not just use the government credit card? I'll pay the bill and no one will ever know."

This system worked so well that he began making various personal purchases using the government credit card, always being careful to pay the full bill at the end of the month. Jasper even purchased his wife's birthday present at Victoria's Secret using the government credit card.

While conducting a random audit, Jasper's trip to Victoria's Secret was red flagged by the Federal Aviation Administration.

After extensive investigation over the course of several weeks, including an undercover stake out inside the store, FAA security agents and facility managers concluded that it was

unlikely that Jasper's purchase at Victoria's Secret was work related.

Upon further review of Jasper's credit card usage, Jasper's pattern of personal purchases was uncovered.

Despite his good work and spotless disciplinary record, the agency terminated Jasper from federal service for misuse of his government credit card, even though the evidence showed that Jasper always paid the monthly credit card bill in full.

Jasper was flabbergasted and appealed the removal to the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB). Was his removal over-

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AMASS rapidly expands to the nation's busiest commercial facilities

It was a scenario that, just years earlier, could have been a recipe for tragedy. Although a truck did not receive clearance to cross into a runway at Atlanta's Hartsfield International Airport, it did so anyway - at the same time a commercial aircraft prepared to land.

But, thanks to Airport Movement Area Safety System (AMASS), controllers on staff managed to avert disaster. AMASS currently operates in 32 of the highest density airports in the United States, and is slated for commissioning at most major commercial airports within the next year.

"By December 2003, I anticipate all sites currently under evaluation will be fully commissioned," AMASS Representative Jerry McDaniel said.

AMASS alerts controllers by issuing an aural alarm if aircraft are predicted to come within 150 feet of each other. If the alarm sounds prior to the air-

craft crossing the threshold of the runway, the controller must order the aircraft to go around. This, according to McDaniel, has generated some controversy among controllers, some of whom feel this feature of the warning system intrudes on their ability to direct traffic.

Detroit Metropolitan Airport Facility Representative Vince Sugent commented that while AMASS has helped prevent potential collisions, it also has generated occasional false alerts. "We do receive false alarms," he offered. However, AMASS helped prevent an aircraft from landing on a closed runway at Detroit, Sugent said.

McDaniel also expressed concern over false alarms. "We're averaging four false alerts per facility a year, but we're working on that," he offered. The AMASS Workgroup, which consists of three union members and three Federal Aviation Administration management personnel, "is committed to doing its best to please NATCA members,"

McDaniel said. The workgroup's primary goals are to eliminate false alarms and push for commissioning of the system at all major airports.

While some controllers have concerns, McDaniel is optimistic that efforts at improving the system will be beneficial to controllers, management and the public at large. "We're all on the same page. We're all striving for the same results," he offered.

Despite the occasional false alarm, the statistics on the system demonstrate an encouraging trend. The number of collisions has markedly fallen. A-level collisions-the worst on an A-D scale-decreased at AMASS-commissioned facilities by 60 percent.

AMASS works by combining Airport Surface Detection Equipment (ASDE)-radar equipment on the ground-with the Airborne Radar System (ASR)-into a more comprehensive detection package that employs both air and ground radar. The two systems work together to scan runways for potential collisions.

While the idea seems simple

AMASS recently prevented a collision at Atlanta's Hartsfield International Airport.



enough, McDaniel remarked that designing and implementing the program proved extremely difficult.

"AMASS has been on the drawing board for over 17 years. It's a simple system, but the mathematics of it is tough. The difficulty of using vector analysis to coordinate between ground and air radar systems had, until recently, left the program in the planning stages," McDaniel reflected.

Now, this safety system quickly is becoming commonplace at the nation's highest volume facilities.

Young leaders conference makes stopover at NATCA's headquarters in July

In emblazoned blue letters, the National Young Leaders Conference web site declares, "The leaders of tomorrow meeting the leaders of today." It only made sense, then, that students participating in the annual event Conference spend some time at NATCA's national office.

About 20 high school seniors visited the union's headquarters July 8, and were given information on ATC privatization during the hour-long presentation. Executive Vice President Ruth Marlin and Legislative Director Ken Montoya gave a brief presentation and took questions from the group of eager young minds.

"Having this group select us

shows NATCA's influence is recognized far outside the Beltway," Marlin said. "There are a lot of ways to be involved in policymaking," Katherine Cafferty, associate director of programs for the National Young Leaders Conference, said. She added that learning about NATCA's lobbying efforts is a great way for students to better understand the extent to which lobbying plays a role in the creation of public policy, which underscores the union's importance in the process.

Moreover, the stopover at NATCA was part of a planned itinerary the students had helped create themselves.

While a number of students

expressed interest in issues such as privatization, they were particularly intrigued by the bravery and heroism controllers displayed in the dark hours and days following the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

For the union, it was a unique opportunity to demonstrate NATCA's involvement within the community at large.

It was "an opportunity to show that unions are about far more than workplace issues," demonstrating that NATCA "continues to work for the broader public good," Marlin said.

Over 750 high school seniors

Executive Vice President Ruth Marlin and Legislative Director Ken Montoya talk with high school students visiting NATCA's national office.



flocked to Washington for each biweekly session of the Congressional Youth Leadership Council, which is divided into a national and a global conference. The latter focuses on the international aspect of policymaking, while the former places emphasis primarily on domestic issues.

LR Report

Postings

On July 31, the Federal Labor Relations Authority's regional office in Washington, D.C., ordered the Federal Aviation Administration to bargain with the union over procedures for implementing Phase I, Stage Two of the NexGen messaging system nationwide and to post a notice to all employees regarding the FAA's violations of the statute.

The FAA violated Five USC § 7116(a)(1) and (5) by implementing the NexGen program prior to completion of bargaining with the union.

Settled Grievances

The Southwest Region settled three grievances with the agency regarding staff specialist working hours, nepotism and drug testing.

If you have any questions or would like a copy of one of these settlements, please contact Barbara Fitzpatrick, Labor Relations representative at the national office for more information at 202/628-5451.

Scheduled Arbitrations

Overtime Bypass

Sept. 18 to 19

Information Technology Pay

Sept. 9

Northwest Mountain Region removal

Sept. 17

Violation of Article Six

Sept. 24

Contract Interpretation

Oct. 21

Excused Absence/Holiday Pay

Dec. 9 to 10

Denial of Permanent Change of Station

Dec. 18

Rescheduling Arbitrations

These arbitrations are in the process of being rescheduled:

Article 93 (self-referral): tentatively scheduled for the first week in December. Reclassification and Pay Grade Overtime and Sunday Premium Pay

If you have any questions about these arbitrations, please call the Labor Relations Department at 202/628-5451.

Arbitration Decision

NATCA/Merit Systems Protection filed a grievance on our member's behalf. The

grievance worked its way through our negotiated grievance procedure and during a 4th level (national office/FAA headquarters) review in January 2000 the parties mutually agreed to forward this matter to arbitration.

The arbitration took place over a two-day period at the Minneapolis Center in December 2002.

In March 2003, the arbitrator sustained the union's grievance and found the agency in violation of a previous Merit Systems Protection Board decision, our Collective Bargaining Agreement and the agency's own regulations and training curriculums.

The arbitrator ruled our member had not been treated fairly, the training program had been "short circuited," she had been treated differently from other trainees and had not been given a fair chance to succeed at the facility.

As a result of our grievance, the arbitrator ordered our member be "made whole" and returned to the training program, where she would have a fair opportunity to begin again.

The arbitrator ordered the agency to reinstate the employee, resulting in the payment of over five years of back pay and benefits to our member.

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turned?

In a recent case with very similar facts, the MSPB upheld the removal.

The Board found misuse of a government credit card to be a very serious offense that called into question the employee's trustworthiness, and that paying the credit card promptly was not a defense to the charge of misuse.

In another case, the MSPB upheld the removal of an employee who "confessed" to having used the government credit card to buy personal items (snacks, etc.) while purchasing gas for a government vehicle.

The judge characterized the employee's actions as a "breach of trust."

And what about a case where an employee is reimbursed in full by the agency for

legitimate travel expenses charged to the government credit card, but does not pay the credit card bill at the end of the month?

In a recent case involving an FAA employee, the employee was ordered by his manager to pay the credit card debt. After discovering the debt had not been cleared, the employee was suspended and again ordered to pay the bill.

Claiming the credit card company did not follow the correct procedure under Federal law for collecting credit card debts, the employee continued to refuse to pay the bill.

Eventually, the agency removed the employee for "failure to carry out an order given by a superior official" and the employee appealed to the

MSPB. Did the employee win this one? No.

The MSPB judge ruled that, despite the employee's good work record, the employee's "continued refusal to pay a legitimate debt to the credit card company compounded by his failure to obey repeated lawful orders to pay the debt warrants the employee's removal from his position."

The bottom line is your government credit card must only be used to make official, work-related and properly authorized purchases. When in doubt about the propriety of any credit card purchase, always seek specific guidance from a management official, preferably in writing.

As the previous cases reveal, your job could depend on it.

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