

# AirTrafficController

## New budget cuts severely impact ATC modernization programs

**T**he administration's proposed 2005 budget will slash the Federal Aviation Administration's budget for air traffic control facilities and modernization programs by \$393 million - hurting an already cash-strapped agency, drawing criticism from both sides of the aisle and putting many modernization programs in jeopardy.

Opposition to the proposed budget extends beyond union membership.

Rep. Steny Hoyer, D-Md., said the budget cut "reflects an effort" by the administration "to pretend" that cutting domestic non-defense discretionary spending "can make a dent in the budget."

On the heels of announcing steep cuts, the administration unveiled a plan for tripling the capacity of the National Airspace System over the next 15 to 20 years.

"The White House is saying two entirely different and contradictory things," NATCA President John Carr observed.

"You cannot modernize the system and add capacity by announcing less money will be available to pay for it."

As the FAA begins tightening its belt this fiscal year, modernization initiatives feel the impact virtually across the board.

"The cuts push a lot of the programs back, so it will take much longer for the agency to implement them," Safety and Technology Director Doug Fralick explained.

### Modernization Cuts: Impact Program by Program

Program	Impact
Airport Surface Detection Equipment - Model X (ASDE-X)	Cut by \$10.4 million
Airport Surveillance Radar - 11 (ASR-11)	Delayed
Automated Surface Observing System (ASOS)	Cut funding 30 percent - from \$4.3 to \$2.8 million
Electronic Drop Tube/Electronic Flight Strip Tracking System (EDT/EFSTS)	Palm Beach, Las Vegas and Phoenix will not receive it as scheduled
Integrated Tower Weather System (ITWS)	Cut two systems (\$2.8 million)
Local Area Augmentation System (LAAS)	Eliminated funding completely
Medium Intensity Airport Weather System (MIAWS)	Cut funding by 50 percent; eliminated in fiscal year 2005
Next Generation Communications (NEXCOM)	Eliminated funding completely
Stand-Alone Weather System (SAWS)	Cut from 61 installations to 32; eliminated in fiscal year 2005
Standard Terminal Automation Replacement System (STARS)	Cut by \$10.4 million
User Request Evaluation Tool (URET)	Delayed

### Feeling the Pinch

While the agency plans on bringing a number of new Standard Terminal Automation Replacement System (STARS) sites online, the present cut of \$10.4 million earmarked for "tech refresh" purposes further sets

back a modernization drive the agency once pursued aggressively.

"The agency is not implementing STARS as quickly as planned - it simply does not have the money," Fralick remarked. "At

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# Presidential Perspective

Brothers and Sisters,

As we approach our next biennial convention in St. Louis, we are looking forward to the largest gathering of NATCA activists in our history. As those of you who have attended conventions past know, it is very energizing to be in the company of so many brothers and sisters from all over the country. We always look forward to this occasion because it reminds us that we have friends and compatriots in every city and state who care about one another and about our professions. We want this convention to be even more extraordinary than usual.

To that end, your National Executive Board and Constitution Committee have been tossing around some ideas designed to give you a greater voice and a more profound influence in the way your union sets its sails for the coming years.

We believe the growth and maturity of NATCA is both driven and reflected by our biennial convention. To mirror that maturity, we have developed a framework of initiatives that we think captures the enthusiasm and represents the will of our membership. It is a design for fundamental change in the way we conduct business at conventions.

First, we compared our constitution to that of other mature organizations and sought the counsel of resident experts and our hired parliamentarian. They all agree that our constitution needs changes. Our constitution is a hodge-podge of ideas indicative of a fledgling organization. It does not accurately reflect the pro-

fessionalism and sophistication of our organization. What we call "articles" are actually bylaws. Many of our bylaws are actually policy.

Our current governing document contains a whole slew of directives meant to set policy that often miss the mark.

Sometimes we pass things that sound good but are essentially undoable. We also pass well-intentioned concepts that have unintended consequences.

Our constitution should become a concise set of bylaws which confine themselves to the structure of the organization. Accordingly, we are proposing a constitution and bylaws stripped of any language that does not fit this description.

Delegates retain the ability to revise the constitution and bylaws, but if properly done; our document should be the bedrock of our union and require little change.

To accomplish that objective, your National Executive Board and Constitution Committee are working on a document that removes all language that does not fit the definition of what properly belongs in your constitution and bylaws. Everything removed is set forth in a brand new document called a "policy statement." We do not believe all the material we will transfer to the "policy statement" is still relevant, but we need to preserve it there until the convention body makes those determinations for itself. We will make

recommendations to you in St. Louis concerning those items we think should be dropped entirely, as appropriate.

The "policy statement" is a document the delegates will create to provide policy direction to the National Executive Board. Policy statements shall expire at the end of the next biennial convention unless passed again by next convention's delegates.

This procedure would assure the policy statement remains dynamic and relevant.

The president will also open every convention with a "State of the Union" address. It will provide a detailed rundown of the status and progress of the agenda set forth in the policy statements at the preceding convention. In the out years, our annual report will also provide the membership a detailed account of accomplishments met in accordance with those policy statements.

Convention delegates will not be relegated to the role of wordsmithing all day...they will set policy.

To begin this process, we are asking you to submit to your regional vice president those issues about which you are most interested and concerned. Please submit your ideas by May 1. We will compile the information for our meeting in May and choose the three topics mentioned most often by our membership. Then we will form panels to thoroughly research the resources, obstacles, benefits, as well as pros and cons of

pursuing these objectives. The panel will present its findings to you at the Convention for your consideration. Following the presentation, delegates will have freedom to discuss and debate the issues from the floor.

By the end of the convention, you will have had the opportunity to decide which statements in our policy statement remain relevant, useful and representative of where our union is and where it needs to go. You will also have a real opportunity to set other goals and priorities for the coming two years when you decide upon a broad agenda that expresses the will and interest of our members. For the first time, together, we will produce a living document for our elected leaders to pursue that expresses the real world hopes and concerns of our membership.

Your National Executive Board, Constitution Committee and Rules Committee will provide you more details of our plans over the next few weeks and months. Please feel free to contact your regional vice presidents for more information.

We sincerely hope this new way of doing business will make NATCA more responsive to those issues that really matter to our members right now.

In Solidarity,

***"You will ... have a real opportunity to set other goals and priorities for the coming two years when you decide upon a broad agenda that expresses the will and interest of our members."***

***"These tools simply have to modernize for the system to accommodate the demand it will soon face. Traffic has already returned to pre-Sept. 11, 2001 levels at many of the major hub airports."***

***-Doug Fralick***

Chicago, Denver, Minneapolis and St. Louis, the dated equipment is showing its age. The radar scopes in use at those sites are virtually out of memory."

"The end result is these facilities will not receive any software upgrades for years."

Other modernization programs face similar budget cutbacks, including User Request Evaluation Tool (URET) and Airport Surface Detection Equipment - Model X (ASDE-X).

The FAA plans to eliminate some completely, such as Local Area Augmentation System (LAAS) and Next Generation Communications (NEXCOM).

### **Pushing Modernization Downstream**

While some in the agency have suggested refunding programs at some point in the future, Fralick contends that the delay in funding will cause irrevocable damage and leave equipment in facilities outdated.

"Even if these programs receive money in the future, the agency's pushing them downstream four to five years," he explained. "The technology will remain that much further behind the curve."

"Also, delays in the modernization of these programs can only increase system congestion at a time when traffic is on the rise," Fralick said.



COURTESY FAA STARS PROGRAM OFFICE

*Standard Terminal Automation Replacement System (STARS) is one of many programs negatively impacted by the agency's steep budget cuts.*

"These tools simply have to modernize for the system to accommodate the demand it will soon face."

"Traffic has already returned to pre-Sept. 11, 2001 levels at many of the major hub airports."

The agency's attitude toward controllers with expertise on modernization programs has soured, which will further ham-

per the modernization process, according to Fralick. "NATCA has experts working on projects to make them successful. However, It appears the FAA wants to limit our involvement."

"As a result, the tools and procedures won't be as efficient because the agency will not receive input from the professionals who use the equipment," Fralick commented.

## ***NATCA Activists prepare to descend on Washington, D.C., for Lobby Week***

On May 16-19, several hundred NATCA activists will meet in the nation's capital for *NATCA in Washington*, the union's annual legislative conference where a broad range of legislative issues impacting FAA air traffic controllers, engineers and other safety-related professionals are examined in detail.

During the conference, held at the Hyatt Regency on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., NATCA members have an opportunity to hear from and meet with both Republican and Democratic lawmakers on key legislative issues. NATCA National Legislative Chair Randy Weiland believes every NATCA member would benefit from attending the event.

"It really gives you a better perspective on how NATCA affects changes in the lives of its members outside of the traditional labor relations arena," Weiland said. "Here members can actually have a hand in influencing policy matters that are crucial to the future of their professions."

Before meeting with lawmakers, first-time attendees of the conference must attend grassroots training conducted by Bob McLean, an expert in the often complicated task of communicating messages effectively on the grassroots level.

"The training is so popular that members often do it more than once even though it is only required of first-timers," Weiland explained. "Members learn to identify certain types of legislative staffers, as well as the best tactics to ensure their message is heard. They become extremely well-educated on the legislative issue at hand, and can take pride in serving the union and performing basic civil duties."

NATCA's Legislative Director Ken Montoya echoed Weiland's enthusiasm for *NATCA in Washington*.



"This event provides an opportunity for NATCA members to meet their representatives and discuss issues of both local and national importance to the union," he commented. "The conference energizes our members, encouraging them to support NATCA and ensuring our issues are heard."

Christine Corcoran, NATCA's legislative counsel, sees the conference as a tool for the union to cultivate relationships with key decision makers in the nation's capital.

"In Washington, your enemies today could be your friends tomorrow," Corcoran explained. "Over the years, we have discovered that we have more friends than we thought, and *NATCA in Washington* presents the union with a unique platform to further develop those relationships."

# Russ Chew, chief operating officer of the new ATO, shares his views



Russ Chew, Chief Operating Officer of the Federal Aviation Administration's new Air Traffic Organization.

Russ Chew, a former American Airlines executive, accepted the challenge of forming the Federal Aviation Administration's new air traffic control organization, of which he serves as its chief operating officer. The ATO was rolled out last November and is already off to a fast start. The organization will establish new performance standards for safety, service, cost and productivity - and then hold managers accountable for meeting them.

As Chew wrote to ATO employees in his first update last September: "At American Airlines I was in charge of systems operations. My job was similar to the FAA's moving thousands of aircraft every day. And throughout my career, from when I flew light twins and Lear jets and talked with controllers, to when I headed American's operations control center and talked with the ATC command center, I have worked closely with FAA especially over the past 10 years. And through all these interactions, I was always impressed with the commitment and dedication of employees at all levels of the agency."

NATCA President John Carr has greeted the start of the ATO with open arms, calling the initiative "bold and smart" and Chew, "innovative and thoughtful."

Chew recently offered his insight to the *Air Traffic Controller*:

**What would you say will be the most visible changes that air traffic controllers will see in the new ATO?**

**Chew:** Better communications and faster decision-making will be the most visible changes for controllers and all other field employees. It's critically important that the field people are closer to all executive decisions, so we're taking steps to make that happen.

The old "stovepiped" organizations, with overlapping functions and inefficiencies, have been replaced with a flatter, integrated structure. This brings field management at least two levels closer to the service unit vice presidents, and therefore closer to all field employees. In other words, fewer management levels are above the facility layer.

This is just the first step in developing better communications and more timely decision-making.

Although we're making real progress, it will take considerably more time before you actually "feel" the difference, because these are just lines on charts. But, behind those lines we're actually working to change the processes as well, and that takes time.

I envision the agency delegating facility management significant responsibility for comprehensive operation of its facilities (budget, improvements, staffing, awards, etc.).

**Controllers were very happy to see that you have called for union participation as a priority in the ATO. Can you give us a sense of what your plans are in this area and also what you will be looking for from NATCA?**

**Chew:** Employees and their unions, along with other stakeholders, will play vital roles in making the ATO work. And, together we will face some very tough decisions ahead. I say that because over the past five years, the FAA's operating costs have risen steadily - up seven percent in just the past year. As many of you know, most of the FAA's air traffic services budget is derived from various aviation excise taxes deposited in a trust fund.

At the present time, the increase in operating costs is outpacing the rate of growth in the trust fund. If this continues, it will result in fewer resources to finance our business. Air traffic capacity is once again becoming very tight at many of our airports.

In 15 to 20 years, the United States will need triple the amount of air traffic capacity it has today. I strongly believe in being open with our customers, owners, and employees about how we manage our resources and the costs of our services.

Consequently, I plan to engage NATCA leadership in finding solutions to the business challenges we all face. We have to be transparent if we expect our customers and owners to make hard choices about the services and products they want us to provide. And to do that, they need to know what their choices cost.

Transparency, too, will help employees understand those choices, why they were made and how we will execute them.

We also need to be honest with everyone, including ourselves, about our financial condition and openly show our customers and owners the results we are achieving with the resources we have available. Transparency will be a hallmark of the new organization.

**Many controllers have been**

**around long enough to remember about a dozen new FAA plans for reorganizations come and go with great fanfare. What are the main reasons why they should believe this one has the greatest chance of succeeding?**

**Chew:** First of all, without change our future is at risk. With the cost of operations growing and the trust fund shrinking, the FAA can no longer rest on its past greatness. FAA people understand that change is necessary. As for the difference between past reorganizations and the present, the ATO is a fundamental realignment that, over time, will bring about meaningful, sustainable change for everyone at all levels of the organization. Previous FAA reorganizations focused primarily on FAA headquarters, usually at the top tiers of the organization, and less so on the deeply-layered "stovepipe" structures in place at the time.

The ATO creates a flatter organization designed for greater efficiency, improved coordination, and faster decision-making. It removes ambiguity about who the FAA's customers are and provides the underlying process tools and management information framework necessary to measure performance and establish accountability. In addition, the ATO is a "performance-based organization" - the first of its kind in DOT and the FAA, with a chief operating officer appointed to lead the ATO for five years.

As COO, my mandate is to lead the transformation of our organization and I fully understand and appreciate the central role controllers play in making it happen. Together, we can make the ATO a fundamentally different organization - one that con-

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# Veteran controllers reflect upon changes in ATC, technology over the years



Roy Warner, a controller at Dallas Fort Worth Center (above), experiences far fewer equipment failures than when he began his career in the early 1970s.

Air traffic control has advanced rapidly over the years, and many veteran controllers have seen it all during their long and successful careers. As these NATCA members near retirement, many are struck by the contrast between the air traffic control of today and that of yesteryear.

Roy Warner, a Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO) rehired at Fort Worth Center, was initially hired by the Federal Aviation Administration in 1970.

He feels that modern equipment has made air traffic con-

trol easier to manage.

"The new equipment makes the job easier and, although traffic is heavier, it is easier to work," Warner said. "When I first started working, Dallas/Fort Worth Tower only had two runways, and traffic was more complex due to the constant metering and holding of airplanes. The computer in the old days would overload and crash almost daily. Since my return to Fort Worth Center, I have never seen a computer crash."

Patrick Sartori is a controller at Monroe Tower in Louisiana.

The air traffic control veteran believes computers and more advanced technology have changed the nature of his profession.

"When I first started, we used primary radar most of the time," Sartori recalled.

"Computers and the knowledge required to operate many different types is the biggest technological advancement from my perspective.

"Controllers today have to be knowledgeable about many different types of equipment, all of which combine to make things safer and more efficient for the flying public."

While air traffic control has evolved greatly over the years, Sartori believes that one thing always remains the same: the importance of management to a productive working environment.

"I started working traffic in 1980," Sartori remarked. "Labor/management relations are crucial. A decent air traffic manager and a couple of decent supervisors makes the job fun, like it should be; reverse those and you have a difficult environment to go to."

Domenic Torchia, a controller at California's Oakland Center, began his air traffic control

career in 1967. He believes technology has kept an individual controller's workload consistent over the years, despite an enormous increase in air traffic.

"The workload per controller has remained fairly steady," he said.

"Technology has allowed us to work more air-planes per controller. Increased speeds of aircraft and sheer volume make us work hard. Back then, we had an uncanny mix of aircraft

and had to do everything with shrimp boats (clear pieces of plastic used by controllers to identify and track aircraft) and calls to other sectors."

Torchia vividly recalls the differences between today's air traffic control facility and that of the past.

"I have strong memories of how much more intense it was before Radar Data Processors (RDP)," he explained.

"Three controllers back then would do the work of one, maybe two now."

"Controllers were assigned a sector for the entire day when they arrived, and many days you would get no more than a couple quick bathroom breaks and have to eat lunch on the sector."

*"The new equipment makes the job easier and, although traffic is heavier, it is easier to work."*

*-Roy Warner*

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tinues to deliver the safest air traffic services while becoming the most efficient.

**Administrator Blakey told The Washington Post that those who think FAA employees will try to kill the program "underestimate the FAA's appetite for change." Have you also seen this "appetite for change" and if so, how will that translate into success as the ATO rolls along?**

**Chew:** Yes; in fact, I'd say employees are starved for change. As I've visited ATO facilities around the country and met with people, they've been eager to get involved and make suggestions.

I've been impressed by the dedication and talent of ATO employees. They clearly recognize that the FAA has an unusual opportunity with the ATO to make a fresh start and they want to be a part of the new organization.

**Is there anything you would like to add or say?**

**Chew:** I would like to thank the controllers for their hard work and for keeping our system the safest in the world. You are the ones who interface with the customers of our services every day, and you know firsthand about their needs. We want your feedback and ideas, if we're going to improve our services. More and shorter lines for two-way communications are being established.

# Tampa Local's sixth annual golf tournament nets thousands for charity

As many other parts of the United States bundled up for winter, 132 controllers converged on sunny Tampa, Fla., for the Tampa Local's sixth annual charity golf tournament, which benefited the NATCA Charitable Foundation.

"This is a premier NATCA event," explained Tampa Tower Controller Pat McCormick. "We just get more and more people every year." Eric Christensen, a controller at Chicago Center, said the event was a welcome break from Chicago's frigid weather. "And we know people who work in the area, so it's always fun."

Although the event offered raffles for numerous prizes - including round-trip airline tickets to the Cayman Islands - the tournament also netted \$11,400 for the NATCA Charitable Foundation.

"This is more money than in years past," Jim Jarvis, a Tampa controller and the tournament's organizer, commented. He attributed much of the event's success to the vice president of the NATCA Charitable Foundation, Cathy Meachum. "She played a key role in our success this year because she attracted NATCA members across

the United States."

"It's our first year working with this tournament," Meachum observed. "NATCA members always flatter me with their generosity. They participated heavily in the raffles."

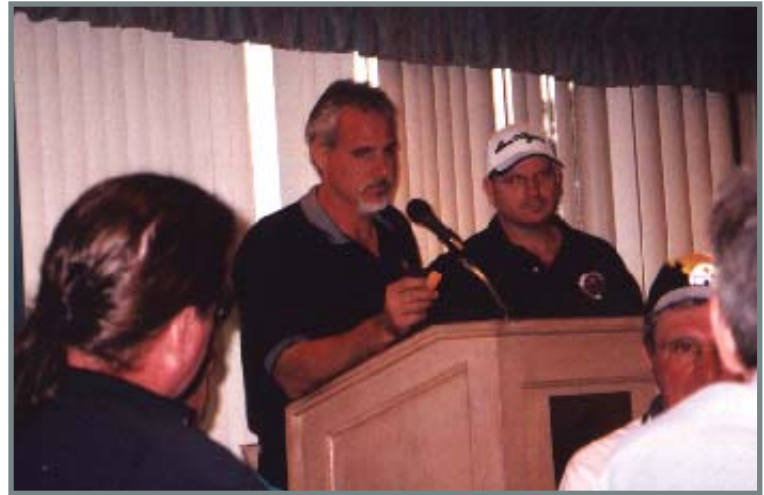
NATCA Charitable Foundation provides funds and necessary services to charities important to air traffic controllers in the community. "We give to charities that are either underfunded or overlooked," Meachum remarked. The NATCA Charitable Foundation will distribute the tournament's proceeds to two charities the Tampa controllers earmarked:

Shriners Children's Hospital, which provides care for children with developmental disabilities, and Horses for Handicapped, an organization allowing disabled children an opportunity to ride horses.

"We're happy with the dollar amount we raised," Jarvis observed. "It's a happy balance - a good time at a reasonable cost per person that benefits a good cause."

At the 10th hole, participants took swings at a chance to win a brand new Nissan Pathfinder Armada - the hole-in-one grand prize.

***"NATCA members always flatter me with their generosity."  
-Cathy Meachum***



Tampa Controllers Joe Formoso (left) and Jim Jarvis (right) conducted raffle drawings at the post-tournament awards dinner (above). Controllers boarded golf carts and anticipated a day of excitement on the green (below).



Dinner and the raffle drawing followed the excitement on the green. In addition to the prize raffle, controllers also had a shot at a cash raffle, which offered two winners \$567 each.

During the dinner, representatives from Shriners Hospital for

Children and Horses for Handicapped thanked the crowd.

"We're getting the money we've raised back into the charities and spreading our good fortune into the community," Meachum noted.

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Contact Marketing Specialist Katie Wittig at [kwittig@natcadc.org](mailto:kwittig@natcadc.org) or 202/266-9859.

# Union's new contract with Virtual Flight Surgeons expands benefits

**Dr. Quay Snyder**

*Virtual Flight Surgeons, Inc., President*

NATCA recently signed an agreement with Virtual Flight Surgeons, Inc. (VFS) to provide a comprehensive aeromedical services program to union members. Following a limited one-year trial in 2003, a robust new program of free consultation and medical qualification advocacy services for NATCA members with the aerospace medicine physicians of VFS is now available.

This new member benefit seeks to:

- Enhance members' health and wellness
- Minimize and avoid air traffic control specialist medical disqualifications
- Protect ATCS careers
- Improve consistency of medical standards applications across regions
- Update FAA medical standards with current knowledge and technology
- Develop a fair and safe administration of FAA drug and alcohol abuse programs
- Provide "in-house" aeromedical expertise to NATCA leadership
- Promote synergy with pilot organizations in FAA aeromedical policy advocacy

The VFS Aeromedical Services Agreement will give individual NATCA members ready access to the expertise prized so highly by airline pilot unions for over 30 years. Additionally, NATCA will gain knowledgeable resources that will influence union interactions with the Federal Air Surgeon's medical staff.

## **About VFS**

Virtual Flight Surgeons, Inc., is a Colorado-based company which is an outgrowth of Aviation Medicine Advisory Service (AMAS). AMAS provides aeromedical information and certification advocacy services to the Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA) and other pilot unions.

VFS currently has six physicians on staff. Each received certification by the American Board of Preventive Medicine in the sub-specialty of Aerospace Medicine and all are graduates of the U.S. Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine residency. The VFS physicians are all former military flight surgeons, each having served in national aeromedical leadership and educational positions.

Most of the VFS physicians are pilots and have additional medical certification in other specialties. They have extensive experience working with air traffic controllers as well as pilots and other aircrew members. NATCA members can access brief biographies of our staff at [www.AviationMedicine.com/staff.htm](http://www.AviationMedicine.com/staff.htm).

The staff of VFS and AMAS represents the aeromedical interests of approximately 100,000 pilots and ATCSs. The office responds to an average of 300 telephone calls and emails daily, directly assisting over 9,000 customers each year.

About one-fourth of those customers require advocacy actions including compiling medical records and submitting waiver requests to Federal Aviation Administration aeromedical authorities. The VFS

staff will participate in advocacy actions with the federal air surgeon on behalf of NATCA.

## **Getting Help From VFS**

Several methods exist for NATCA members to obtain both general and personalized information and assistance from the VFS staff. These methods include extensive information on the public access portion of the VFS web site, private e-mail consultations and telephone contact. Additionally, NATCA representatives may contact the VFS staff on behalf of a member. The VFS staff does not conduct medical examinations.

The award-winning VFS web site at [www.AviationMedicine.com](http://www.AviationMedicine.com) features over 2,000 pages of free information for pilots and controllers. Three key pages lead to a wealth of additional information. A listing of over 55 articles on a variety of medical conditions and

the FAA implications of those conditions is only a click away at [www.AviationMedicine.com/contents.htm](http://www.AviationMedicine.com/contents.htm). NATCA members can access health and nutrition links at [www.AviationMedicine.com/health.htm](http://www.AviationMedicine.com/health.htm), and information on medications and FAA policy is at [www.AviationMedicine.com/meds.htm](http://www.AviationMedicine.com/meds.htm).

For NATCA members with specific concerns, the preferred method of contacting the VFS staff is through the private, secure e-mail form available at [www.VirtualFS.com/NATCA](http://www.VirtualFS.com/NATCA).

The form is completely confidential and requires certain information to verify eligibility for free services (name, address, ATC duties, NATCA number).

It also features fields for preferred contact information and times, and also boasts links to various FAA Medical Standards of Air Traffic Control services. VFS monitors the e-mail form seven days a week. By using e-mail for initial inquiries, the VFS staff may quickly and efficiently respond to an individual ATCS's concerns.

The response from VFS may come by email, telephone or both depending on the preferences indicated. Responses will come within 24 hours of submission. This method is most efficient for both VFS and the member. When needed, multiple contacts between VFS and the member may occur to resolve an inquiry.

For those ATCSs who wish to contact VFS by telephone during office hours (Monday - Friday 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. Mountain Time), toll-free voice mail is available. The number to call is 866/AEROMED (237-6633) or 720/857-6117 in the Denver metropolitan area. A VFS staff member will return the call and gather the appropriate contact and eligibility information from the member prior to relaying the inquiry to a VFS physician.

## **FAA Medical Qualification Advocacy Services**

For ATCSs facing temporary or permanent medical disqualification, the VFS staff is available to assist in compiling records necessary to petition the FAA Regional Flight Surgeon or Federal Air Surgeon for "Medical Qualification with Special Consideration."

Most private physicians are not familiar with the FAA protocols or the critical aeromedical information required for a favorable decision by the FAA. VFS physicians will provide written checklists and protocols on a variety of conditions for NATCA members to use with

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***"NATCA will gain knowledgeable resources that will influence union interactions with the Federal Air Surgeon's medical staff."  
-Dr. Quay Snyder***

# NATCA's Political Action Committee revenues reach an all-time high

"The Bush Administration made it clear it didn't have our interests at heart," National Legislative Committee Chairman Randy Weiland observed. NATCA members stood tall in the face of the privatization agenda, contributing a record amount to the Political Action Committee last year (PAC). "That issue brought a legislative threat to the forefront of controllers' attention," Weiland added.

While a significant factor, controller angst over the Bush Administration's privatization push was not the only reason for the sharp rise in PAC revenue. "The determination of a few members was key," Weiland observed. Western Pacific Vice President Bob Marks roused support throughout the region.

From there, increases in donations spread like wildfire.

Now, the PAC sits in a strong position as the Legislative Committee gears up for this year's election season.

"The PAC generally raises around \$2 million per two-year election cycle, but we accomplished this goal by the time of the 2002 Convention in Cleveland, Ohio," Weiland commented.

Since its financial goals have met with resounding success, the Legislative Committee is focusing on increasing the number of members contributing to the PAC.

Currently, about one-third of union members contribute portions of their salaries, and Weiland declared he wanted to increase

this amount by about 1,000 members by the time NATCA's convention rolls around in September.

"We continually foster the grassroots involvement while acknowledging the members for the job they've done spreading the message," Weiland said.

Weiland is confident the PAC will continue growing and giving members a strong voice in the legislative arena. "Its exponential growth has definitely led us to uncharted territory," he observed. "The generosity NATCA members exude is impressive."

The NATCA PAC is designed to provide controllers a voice in the legislative process. The PAC contributes to the campaign efforts of lawmakers promoting issues important to the union. Contributions are completely voluntary and can be made without fear of reprisal. Contributions will be screened and contributions from non-NATCA members will be returned.

***"We continually foster the grassroots involvement while acknowledging the members for the job they've done spreading the message."  
-Randy Weiland***

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their physicians.

The member is responsible for forwarding all the information to the VFS staff, which will then insure the information is sufficient to address all aeromedically relevant issues and prepare a cover letter with the medical records requesting favorable medical consideration.

VFS forwards this package to the regional flight surgeon and serves as the advocate for the member with the RFS. In most cases, telephone follow-up between the VFS physician and the RFS is required. VFS will keep the ATCS informed about the status of each case.

## Authorization

Prior to VFS becoming involved in advocacy with the RFS or federal air surgeon staff, VFS must receive authorization from the members' regional vice president or alternate.

The authorization may be relayed to VFS by telephone or using the NATCA e-mail form. Prior authorization is NOT required for e-mail or telephone inquiries.

## Confidentiality

VFS completely protects the medical information provided by all NATCA members, and only release information upon receiving written authorization from members.

E-mail information is released only to individuals specifically authorized by the member in the email form submitted to VFS. VFS strongly encourages all NATCA members to proactively engage their health care providers and promptly address all health concerns.

Ultimately, protecting one's health also protects one's career.

By having a confidential resource of expertise in aeromedical issues, members will protect their health and aviation safety without unnecessary fear regarding medical qualification for ATCS duties.

NATCA's new agreement with VFS is designed to protect every member's health, rights, career and aviation safety.

Contact the expert VFS staff at [www.VirtualFS.com/NATCA](http://www.VirtualFS.com/NATCA) or 866-AEROMED for any medical issue or question. The service is free to all members.

## THAT'S LIFE MIKE TWOHY



Speed Bump and Close to Home run Mon., Wed., Fri., and Sat.;  
The Other Coast and That's Life run Tue. and Thu.

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## Grand Canyon controllers enjoy picturesque beauty of a natural wonder

**M**any air traffic control facilities are situated in remote locales, but for NATCA members at Grand Canyon Tower, picturesque beauty and a sense of isolation are both par for the course.

For NATCA Facility Representative Robert Eck, transferring to Grand Canyon Tower allowed him and his wife to raise their children in a one-of-a-kind location with benefits of its own.

"I've always liked the area, and my kids prefer smaller schools where more individual attention is offered," Eck explained. "They go to the only school in the country located in a national park, and there are only 125 kids combined in grades nine through 12."

Eck and his family spend some of their free time boating on Lake Powell, which traverses through the canyon and offers some of the area's most spectacular views.

Bob Karsky, a fellow controller at the facility, feels that the beauty of the area is its primary attraction for controllers.

"My wife works as a guide at the rim of

the Grand Canyon while I work traffic in the tower," he explained. "We enjoy hiking together, and both of us love the freedom to spend time outdoors in these surroundings."

But with nature's beauty comes a number of downsides for controllers at the facility. Though there is a grocery store in the area, a limited selection and high prices force many families to visit neighboring towns on a regular basis.

"Both Flagstaff, Ariz., and Williams, Ariz., are about 50 miles away, and our family makes the trip five or six times a month for groceries," Eck said. "Controllers here also need to travel to neighboring towns if any medical or dental issues arise. There is a clinic in the park, but it has limited services and isn't very good."

Eight controllers currently work at the tower, and these members live in government-issued housing inside Forest Service boundaries with other Forest Service employees. Four helicopters from three different operators account for about half of

the facility's traffic, and summer is the busiest season. A new and enhanced air traffic control tower opened in 2000, providing controllers with the latest technology to maintain safety in the skies above one of nature's great wonders.

New equipment included the latest radios, digital voice recorders and voice switching systems, all of which were housed in a cabin three times larger than its predecessor.

Eck feels the Grand Canyon attracts a certain type of controller; some stay for long periods while others tend to come and go.

"Of the eight controllers we have, three are single people with a passion for the outdoors and all the sights this area has to offer; this includes a female controller who spends most of her free time hiking through the forest," he remarked.

"For the most part, controllers who come here want to be on their own, attracted by the beauty of the place. They accept trading off some modern-day conveniences for their surroundings."

# NEWSWIRE

### 2005 Calendar Photo Requests

Do you want your facility featured in NATCA's 2005 Calendar?

The NATCA Communications Department is currently seeking photographs of towers, TRACONS and centers for next year's calendar.

Photos should be 8 x 10 in size. Electronic photos must be both 8 x 10 and 300 dpi. If we've already featured your facility in a previous calendar, don't worry! You can submit a photo of the "inside" view of the facility.

If you have any photos you'd like to contribute, mail them to Publications Specialist Adam Justice at:

NATCA  
1325 Massachusetts Ave, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20005

For more information, contact Publications Specialist Adam Justice at 202/220-9814 or [ajjustice@natcadc.org](mailto:ajjustice@natcadc.org).

### Arbitration and MOU Databases Now Available on Wireless Devices

The NATCA Arbitration and MOU databases are now accessible via your PDA or mobile phone. To connect to them remotely, simply point a Palm Pilot, PocketPC, or other wireless device to [wap.natca.net](http://wap.natca.net). While this application has been tested extensively, the sheer number of different wireless devices prohibits testing of them all.

If you experience problems viewing those pages, please use the contact form on the web site, available at [http://www.natca.org/natca/wap\\_contact.asp](http://www.natca.org/natca/wap_contact.asp).

Due to the length of arbitration and MOU records and the limited memory on certain mobile phones, individual records may not display correctly or at all on these devices. We recommend using a PDA to fully access this wireless application.

### Online Newsletter Set to Debut

NATCA members: are you interested in

keeping up with the news that impacts you the most? Well, look no further! In the coming weeks, NATCA will unleash *The NATCA Insider*, an online newsletter for your eyes only. Get the inside scoop on the latest media coverage, arbitrations, regional and facility news, legislative news, member benefits and much more for members only!

Members will receive information on subscribing to this new resource through their NATCA e-mail addresses and/or regional listserves. Alternately, information is available on the members-only web site at [www.natca.org](http://www.natca.org). The first issue of this publication will go out on Friday, April 30.

The e-mail version of *The NATCA Insider* will contain short news bites about the latest union business, and members can link to the NATCA web site to read the full story.

Readers will have a choice between HTML and plain text formats. If you have questions about this publication, please contact Communications Specialist Jeff Sigmund at [jsigmund@natcadc.org](mailto:jsigmund@natcadc.org).

## Prior to becoming controllers, NATCA members held variety of jobs

Before beginning their careers as aviation professionals, NATCA members achieved excellence in a wide variety of workplace settings.

"We are a really diverse group. We come from many different professions," Miami Tower Controller Molly Welsh, who once worked as the general manager of *The Fruitport Area News*, a weekly paper in Fruitport, Mich., said.

Welsh primarily drew layouts and designed graphics for the paper, but the profession bored her after a few years; in 1989, she came across an offer she couldn't pass up.

"I was reading another local newspaper, and there was an ad from the Federal Aviation Administration. To get a job with the FAA, you just had to send in a postcard with your name and address."

Welsh responded to the ad, and went on to the FAA's academy. While her former job differs vastly from her current one, the skills she learned still help her. "I've used my graphic ability to design shirts for facilities," she explained. "I also think my old job helped me with communication, since I had to deal with the public at large."

With more than a decade of controlling experience under her belt, Welsh summed up her

career in a few words: "I love my job."

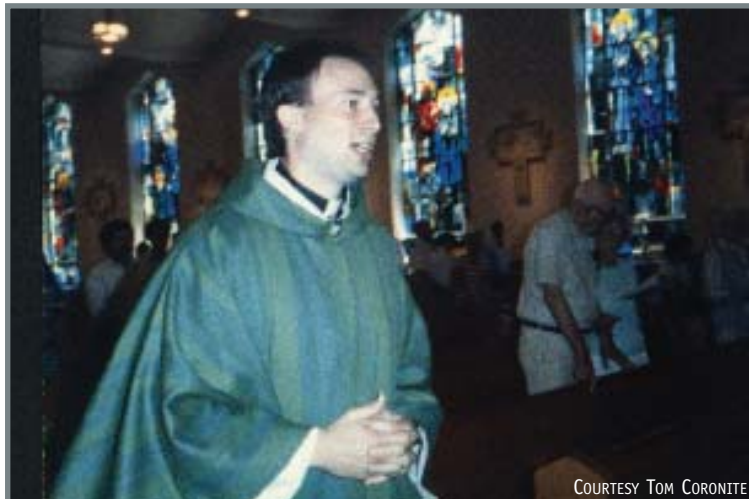
Like Welsh, Boston Tower Facility Representative Tom Coronite originally worked in a vastly different occupation from controlling. He was a Roman Catholic priest.

"It's one of these jobs where you're never off - it's an identity and an entire lifestyle," he remarked. Although the job had its rewarding elements, Coronite realized after a couple years he needed another option.

"I loved having a part in major moments in people's lives and helping people through difficult times, but I didn't love the institution of the Catholic Church," he explained. In 1989, he left the priesthood in search of other opportunities.

Because he had little employment experience outside the church, his job search proved difficult, and he began work at McDonald's. Like Welsh, Coronite stumbled across an FAA ad in a newspaper that piqued his interest. Because his brother was a pilot for United Airlines at the time, Coronite thought seriously about a career in aviation, so he signed up to take the exam. He became a controller in 1991.

Rick Cote, a support specialist at Northern California TRACON, was a bass guitarist with the dance troupe "Up with People,"



*Boston Facility Representative Tom Coronite was a Roman Catholic priest before becoming a controller. He is leading the procession into mass.*

which performed variety shows set to contemporary music.

While the job offered many highlights, his proudest moment came when "Up with People" shared the stage with Diana Ross during the halftime show of Super Bowl XVI in 1982.

"It was an exciting time for a 20-year-old," Cote reflected. By the mid-1980s, Cote worked as a studio musician in Denver, Colo., where he first developed an interest in aviation.

"The only place I could afford in Denver was next to the old Stapleton Airport. I'd watch the planes land and really became interested in the industry," he observed. He toured the bar circuit in Arizona and New Mexico,

performing country western songs, but began weighing other options.

"I just got tired of it. I always had to get a part-time job to supplement my income, so I wanted a real job," Cote remarked.

He landed a sales position for a pharmaceutical corporation and learned to fly. Like Welsh and Coronite, he found his calling in a newspaper's classified section. "Since I was into aviation, I thought, 'what the heck,' and went through the application process."

Even before entering the aviation industry, current NATCA members engaged in exciting and rewarding work.

## Union members enjoy spotlight in newspapers across the country

Here is a sampling of NATCA officials quoted in news articles on a variety of issues over the past couple of months:

"(Foreign carrier pilots frequently ask that instructions be repeated) so you say it again. But sometimes you're so busy you move on to your next transmission. In the back of your head you're wondering, 'did that guy understand what I said?'"

**-Barrett Byrnes**, John F. Kennedy Tower's facility representative, discussing the sub-

ject of language barriers in communications with foreign carrier pilots in the *South Florida Sun-Sentinel*.

"Moving to the new tower is kind of like selling your old Ford Pinto and getting a new Cadillac."

**-Jim Mostrando**, facility vice president of Roanoke Tower in Roanoke, Va., in *The Roanoke Times*, reacting to the opening of his local's new tower. Mostrando said the old tower was 60 years old and had a leaky

roof that required buckets on the floor when it rained.

"Our job is complicated and complex. When we have everything we need, we manage. When they start taking our tools away, it compromises our job."

**-Josh Rogers**, a controller at Abilene, Texas, Tower, describing to the *Abilene Reporter News* the poor working conditions in the building due to mold. A removal project was delayed for months.

## **Staff Specialist Negotiations:**

The last meeting took place in Tunica, Miss., and the union tentatively agreed upon (TAU'd) roughly 10 articles. Most importantly, NATCA TAU'd Article 7, which held the language concerning the three-prong test contained in the union's other agreements.

This should allow NATCA to move more quickly on the contract. The union currently awaits the agency's response on 15-20 outstanding proposals, which keeps NATCA from TAU'ing articles more quickly. NATCA and the Federal Aviation Administration meet next in Savannah, Ga., April 5-9.

## **Information Technology (IT) Pay:**

The arbitrator issued two rulings in this case. The first was that 334 series employees were entitled to the IT pay going forward.

The supplemental ruling awarded the union full backpay for all these employees dating back to when the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) granted the pay raise.

NATCA filed an Unfair Labor Practice (ULP) because the agency still has not begun paying the employees going forward. NATCA will give it a reasonable time period to fulfill its duty on the backpay.

NATCA may file another ULP if the agency takes too long. The agency has said compliance will occur as soon as it disburses the annual pay raises, which will happen after the issuance of an executive order on how to do that.

## **Bob Taylor Director of Labor Relations**

The agency is circulating a new sick leave abuse letter. Instead of merely requiring a medical certificate, as stated in Article 25, the letter requires a statement by a licensed, practicing physician detailing the diagnosis, course of treatment, length of treatment, prognosis, etc., for each instance of sick leave.

It further states that until the information is provided, the Federal Aviation Administration will consider the employee AWOL, and the information is subject to approval by a manager before the employee

receives restored pay status.

Other issues the union currently faces include:

## **FAA Issues Guidance to Apply the De Minimis Defense Where Appropriate and Implement Changes Without Negotiations**

LMR BULLETIN NO. 04-01, UNDATED:  
The agency issued a guidance memorandum in an attempt at expanding the de minimis test to substantive bargaining. It relies on a case recently decided by the Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA) and the Social Security Administration (SSA): *Office of Hearings and Appeals Charleston, South Carolina, and Association of Administrative Law Judges, International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers, AFL-CIO*, 59 FLRA No. 118.

First and foremost, the FLRA ruled on this same issue many years ago; this is not something new. The union strongly believes this issue is bound with Article 7 of its Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), 47 FLRA No. 96, 46 FLRA 1004 (1993) (SSA), and the memorandum of understanding (MOU) on the FLRA's three-prong test.

NATCA must remain firm in its position that the requirement and duty to bargain is critical. The union will not allow this agency to opt out of de minimis substantive bargaining.

Supportive case law is as follows: *U.S. Department of Treasury, Customs Service, Region IV, Miami District, Miami, FL*, 38 FLRA No. 68; *U.S. Department of Treasury, IRS Jacksonville District, FL*, 3 FLRA No. 103; *US Department of Labor, Washington, D.C.*, 44 FLRA No. 81; and 44 FLRA 988, 1006, 1992.

The de minimis test does not apply to changes when the union has the right to bargain over the substance of the change. When an agency exercises a management

right under 7106 of Title 5, Chapter 71 of the United States Code to change the conditions of employment of unit employees, management has a statutory duty to negotiate how such changes impact unit employees where an impact is reasonably foreseeable, according to *IRS, Washington, D.C., and Fresno Service Center, Fresno, CA*, 16 FLRA No. 23.

## **Accusations from the Agency of a Change to Bargaining Ground Rules**

NATCA received a letter from Mike Herlihy, manager of labor relations for the FAA, which in part states, "These requests to negotiate ground rules are being done solely for purpose of delaying the agency's actions. After these many years, the union's sudden interest in having additional ground rules does appear odd.

However, if the union feels a need to now bargain additional ground rules nationwide as provided under Article 7, Section 8, please submit such notice and any proposals to us at the national level as soon as possible."

"If we have misunderstood the union's position or intentions, please clarify. Otherwise, we main-

tain the parties' past practice of conducting midterm negotiations without supplemental ground rules in effect."

NATCA will respond to Herlihy while making it very clear that substantive bargaining is covered by Article 7, Section 8. The union will also address the agency's failure to bargain over ground rules proposals concerning impact and implementation of changes in conditions of employment.

This is a violation of NATCA's CBA and 7116(a)(1) and (5) of Title 5, Chapter 71. Ground rules proposals must, at a minimum, be designed to further, not impede, the bargaining for which the ground rules are proposed, according to *U.S. Department of Air Force, HQ AFL Wright-Patterson AFB, OH*, 36 FLRA No. 86.

***"NATCA must remain firm in its position that the requirement and duty to bargain is critical."  
-Bob Taylor***

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**Inside this issue**

**Lobby Week 2004**  
 Read about the conference, which will take place in May.

**Old Guard Controllers**  
 Read about how veteran controllers feel the profession has changed over the years.

**PAC Growth**  
 Read about how NATCA's Political Action Committee has experienced considerable growth.

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