

What is IFATCA? A brief account of the Federation

IFATCA had its origins in Europe almost 50 years ago in 1961. Among its principal objectives are:

- **Promoting safety, efficiency, and regularity in international air navigation; and**
- **Promoting and upholding a high standard of knowledge and professional efficiency among air traffic controllers; and**
- **Striving for a world-wide Federation of Air Traffic Controllers' Associations.**

In upholding those objectives today IFATCA represents over 50,000 air traffic controllers world-wide. New Zealand has been an active member in all aspects of the Federation since joining in 1965. But how is IFATCA made up, and how does it operate?

The Federation was founded in Europe, and to this day is still quite European-focused although its headquarters are in Montreal, Canada. Having our HQ in Montreal gives us proximity to ICAO – the International Civil Aviation Authority, which is the world's aviation regulatory body. Much of IFATCA's effort is focused on monitoring and influencing ICAO's programmes so they benefit the overall safety of aviation while promoting the interests of the ATC community.

To garner the concerns and experiences of the ATC community and relay and highlight these issues, IFATCA holds an annual conference. The structure of the annual conference is as follows:

- **The Executive Board (which also meets quarterly throughout the year),**
- **Committee A – Administrative,**
- **Committee B – Technical and Operational, and**
- **Committee C – Professional and Legal.**

Each country, or Member Association (MA), that belongs to the Federation has the right to attend conference. At present there are around 130 countries that belong - they pay their subscriptions and have complied with the objects and rules of the Federation. Only one association, representing the majority of controllers within each country, can be accepted from any country within the Federation structure.

MAs can send as many representatives as they wish to conference, however each MA has only one vote when either the conference is in combined session (plenary) or on each committee when the committees are working separately. This of course is reliant on the MA being present, or providing a proxy vote.

Another important part of IFATCA is the Standing Committees. These are the research and development engines of the Federation. When MAs, the Executive Board, or members of these committees themselves identify issues and technologies that will affect the ATC community, it is the Standing Committees that are given the task of researching and presenting working papers for discussion at conference for the purpose of developing policy around these issues.

There are two Standing Committees for Committee A – the Constitution and Administration Committee (CAC) and the Finance Committee (FIC). Committee B has the Technical and Operations Committee (TOC), and Committee C has the Professional and Legal Committee (PLC). Each Standing Committee consists of between 3–10 MAs which are elected at conference. Each MA nominates its representatives who are normally volunteers from within its own ranks.

Each standing committee meets twice between each conference to develop and monitor progress on, working papers for presentation. Such working papers could be for information only, or may lead to the creation of new IFATCA policy or, if the subject is a long-standing one, initiate the revision of current policy.

The creation or revision of policy is of particular importance as it is IFATCA policy that MAs will refer to when addressing subjects at home within their own professional/technical/industrial areas. MAs can also register differences with such policy if they can't or won't comply (either willingly or not).

Most importantly however it is IFATCA policy that the Federation and its representatives at ICAO, Eurocontrol, IFALPA and other major aviation forums use as reference material when issues that affect us are discussed.

All of IFATCA's work and representation is done on a budget approximately one third the size of NZALPA's. As one would expect among a large body of financially diverse countries, the wealthy MAs subsidise the subscriptions of the developing nations. To fully perform its role, IFATCA relies heavily on additional support from the MAs who volunteer for more prominent roles (such as Standing Committees and the Executive Board), the gracious support with travel from many airlines when available, or other industry player sponsorship for events such as conference.

So what's in it for you?

As mentioned before, NZ has been an active member of IFATCA since joining. We are currently elected to members on the CAC, PLC and TOC Standing Committees and one of our members has chaired Committee A at conference in recent years. Through this involvement we get a chance to bring New Zealand's voice to the international stage and to represent you.

Through our attendance and discussion with other MAs we get to:

- **Compare working conditions, pay, technology, etc.,**
- **Access information regarding new technologies and procedures**
- **Obtain or provide mutual support from/to other MAs**
- **Form alliances and co-operation (e.g. Civil Air Australia)**
- **Gain a closer understanding of global ATC operations.**

Another very important function of our attendance is that through IFATCA we are able to provide input into the ICAO process. As a relatively small employee representative body it would be very difficult for us to do this successfully on our own. It is important that we have an ability to provide a balance between the state and service provider at this global level.

IFATCA today is working hard on the major issues that are affecting the ATC environment. These include:

- **Commercialisation and corporatisation of ATC**
- **Technology such as new surveillance methods, remote towers, CPDLC**
- **Consolidation of service providers - including the Single European Sky project and the contracting of ATC by one State to another**
- **Accidents and incidents - IFATCA looks at the treatment of controllers, the process of investigation into causes, and the thoroughness of investigations. For example IFATCA recently sent a team to Brazil for the investigation of the crash between a GOL Boeing 737 and a Legacy business jet. This team monitored the treatment of and supported the controllers involved.**
- **On-going involvement with ICAO and regional aviation organisations. IFATCA is one of only 3 organisations with official observer status at ICAO. We are also playing an increasingly important role in several regional organisations such as Eurocontrol.**

Don't think that you're unaffected by the issues outlined above.

- **Airways is one of the world's leading corporatised ATS providers.**
- **Airways is investing in multilateration in the short term and ADS-B in the long term and uses CPDLC extensively in oceanic operations.**
- **Airways already contracts to provide oceanic control for Samoan airspace and AirServices Australia has boldly stated in the past that it could run NZ's ATC from Brisbane.**
- **New Zealand's accident investigation process is increasingly geared towards police involvement and prosecution. Maintaining your protection from the adverse effects of such an environment is critical to our long term health.**

- **Having regulatory documentation, guidelines and procedures that consider and protect us as a group is increasingly important in a country where the local regulatory authority appears to play a decreasingly active role.**

IFATCA is important to you and more directly than you think. The ATC Council and the NZALPA Board are keen to continue our participation given the benefits they see resulting from the work which our own people perform.

For further information, see the IFATCA web site (<http://www.ifatca.org>). Of particular interest to Air Traffic controllers is the IFATCA statement on the future of ATM.