

U.S. Secret Service

9





1999 U.S. Contract Tower Association (USCTA) POLICY BOARD

Bryan Elliott, A.A.E. (Charlottesville, Virginia), Chairman
James Hansford, A.A.E. (Mosinee, Wisconsin), Vice Chairman
Jack Schelter, A.A.E. (Phoenix, Arizona)
Tim Rogers, A.A.E. (Salina, Kansas)
Ted Soliday (Naples, Florida)
Richard Baird (Hailey, Idaho)
Steve Stockam (Joplin, Missouri)
Ron Craft (Jefferson City, Missouri)
Roger Engstrom, A.A.E. (Mobile, Alabama)
Glenn Januska, A.A.E. (Waukesha, Wisconsin)
Shane Cordes (Midwest ATC)
Jim Chappell (Salinas, California)
Jim McCue, A.A.E. (Glendale, Arizona)
Richard Howell, A.A.E. (Albany, Georgia)
Jon Mathaisen, A.A.E. (Harlingen, Texas)

2000 U.S. Contract Tower Association POLICY BOARD

James Hansford, A.A.E. (Mosinee, Wisconsin), Chairman
Jack Schelter, A.A.E. (Phoenix, Arizona), Vice Chairman
Bryan Elliott, A.A.E. (Charlottesville, Virginia)
Tim Rogers, A.A.E. (Salina, Kansas)
Ted Soliday (Naples, Florida)
Rick Baird (Hailey, Idaho)
Steve Stockam, (Joplin, Missouri)
Roger Engstrom A.A.E., (Mobile, Alabama)
Glenn Januska A.A.E., (Waukesha, Wisconsin)
Shane Cordes (Midwest ATC)
Jim Chappell (Salinas, California)
Jim McCue, A.A.E. (Glendale, Arizona)
Richard Howell, A.A.E. (Albany, Georgia)
Jon Mathaisen, A.A.E. (Harlingen, Texas)
Bill Gatchell, C.M. (Hobbs, New Mexico)
Jerry O'Sullivan (Lewisburg, W. Va.)

USCTA Washington Consultants

The Honorable Linda Hall Daschle and Bert Randall—Baker, Donelson, Bearman & Caldwell
Larry Barnett—AB Management Associates
Patrick McCann—The Wexler Group

Spencer Dickerson, Executive Vice President, AAAE and Executive Director, USCTA

Charles Barclay, President, AAAE

601 Madison Street, Suite 400

Alexandria, VA 22314

Phone (703) 824-0504

Fax (703) 820-1395



Table of Contents

FAA Contract Tower Program Overview	7
1999 USCTA Members	9
1999 USCTA Activities	10
List of FAA Contract Towers	18-19
USCTA Rebuttal on NATCA's View of Contract Tower Program	20
Airport Management and Users Praise Contract Tower Operations	21-23



ATA

~~FAA Contract Tower Program~~

Since 1982, FAA has contracted air traffic control (ATC) services to the private sector at a number of visual flight rule (VFR) airports. The program, officially named the FAA Contract Tower Program, has received positive reviews from all involved, including FAA, the DOT Inspector General (IG), local airport management, Congress and, most importantly, the users of the aviation system.

A total of 186 airports are currently participating in the program. Airports with VFR contract towers universally have expressed support for the program, particularly in light of the fact that FAA budget constraints could force the closure of many of these facilities if they were not part of the contract tower program.

The primary advantages of this program are enhanced safety, improved ATC services and significant VFR ATC cost savings to FAA. The private sector can operate a Level I VFR tower for about 50 percent of what it costs the federal government (FAA's annual cost per Level I tower is \$508,000 versus approximately \$253,000 for contract towers). Accordingly, annual VFR ATC savings to FAA as a result of this program are estimated at approximately \$30 million. Members of Congress and DOT/FAA have pointed to this program as an example of how FAA, in cooperation with local governments, can provide an important service to aviation users at a substantially reduced cost to the taxpayers.

The American Association of Airport Executives (AAAE) created the U.S. Contract Tower Association (USCTA) in 1996 to promote the contract tower program and to enhance aviation safety at smaller airports. The USCTA coordinates contract tower issues on a regular basis with DOT/FAA, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), the General

Accounting Office (GAO) and the DOT IG.

In 1999, USCTA received oversight from a Policy Board comprised of the following members:

Bryan Elliott, A.A.E. (Charlottesville, Virginia), Chairman
James Hansford, A.A.E. (Mosinee, Wisconsin), Vice Chairman
Jack Schelter, A.A.E. (Phoenix, Arizona)
Tim Rogers, A.A.E. (Salina, Kansas)
Ted Soliday (Naples, Florida)
Richard Baird (Hailey, Idaho)
Steve Stockam (Joplin, Missouri)
Ron Craft (Jefferson City, Missouri)
Roger Engstrom, A.A.E. (Mobile, Alabama)
Glenn Januska, A.A.E. (Waukesha, Wisconsin)
Shane Cordes (Midwest ATC)
Jim Chappell (Salinas, California)
Jim McCue, A.A.E. (Glendale, Arizona)
Richard Howell, A.A.E. (Albany, Georgia)
Jon Mathaisen, A.A.E. (Harlingen, Texas)

The 2000 U.S. Contract Tower Association Policy Board

James Hansford, A.A.E. (Mosinee, Wisconsin), Chairman
Jack Schelter, A.A.E. (Phoenix, Arizona), Vice Chairman
Bryan Elliott, A.A.E. (Charlottesville, Virginia)
Tim Rogers, A.A.E. (Salina, Kansas)
Ted Soliday (Naples, Florida)
Rick Baird (Hailey, Idaho)
Steve Stockam, (Joplin, Missouri)
Roger Engstrom A.A.E., (Mobile, Alabama)
Glenn Januska A.A.E., (Waukesha, Wisconsin)
Shane Cordes (Midwest ATC)
Jim Chappell (Salinas, California)
Jim McCue, A.A.E. (Glendale, Arizona)
Richard Howell, A.A.E. (Albany, Georgia)
Jon Mathaisen, A.A.E. (Harlingen, Texas)
Bill Gatchell, C.M. (Hobbs, New Mexico)
Jerry O'Sullivan (Lewisburg, W. Va.)

Spencer Dickerson, executive vice president of AAAE, serves as executive director of the USCTA. Consultants to the association are **Linda Hall Daschle** and **Bert Randall** of Baker, Donelson, Bearman & Caldwell; **Patrick McCann** of the Wexler Group, and **Larry Barnett** of AB Management Associates.



Members of USCTA as of January 15, 2000

State of Alaska
Mobile Downtown Airport (Ala.)
City of Phoenix Aviation Department (Ariz.)
Mesa/Williams Gateway (Ariz.)
Glendale Municipal Airport (Ariz.)
Flagstaff Pulliam Airport (Ariz.)
Chandler Municipal Airport (Ariz.)
Laughlin/Bullhead City International Airport (Ariz.)
Tucson Airport Authority (Ariz.)
Sacramento County Department of Airports (Calif.)
San Carlos Airport (Calif.)
San Luis Obispo County Airport (Calif.)
Modesto City-County Airport (Calif.)
Los Angeles County Aviation Division (Calif.)
Ramona Airport-County of San Diego (Calif.)
Redding Municipal Airport (Calif.)
Salinas Municipal Airport (Calif.)
Eagle County Regional Airport (Colo.)
Boca Raton Airport (Fla.)
Craig Airport (Fla.)
Kissimmee Airport (Fla.)
Martin County Airport (Fla.)
Naples Municipal Airport (Fla.)
Titusville-Cocoa Airport (Fla.)
Page Field (Fla.)
Lakeland Linder Regional Airport (Fla.)
Vandenberg Airport (Fla.)
Southwest Georgia Regional Airport
Glynco Jetport (Ga.)
Friedman Memorial Airport (Idaho)
Pocatello Regional Airport (Idaho)
Waukegan Regional Airport (Ill.)
Meigs Field (Ill.)
Quincy Municipal Airport (Ill.)
Southern Illinois Airport
St. Louis Regional Airport (Ill.)
Williamson County Regional Airport (Ill.)
Columbus Municipal Airport (Ind.)
Municipal Airport, Delaware County Airport (Ind.)
Johnson County Municipal Airport (Kan.)
Salina Municipal Airport (Kan.)
Manhattan Regional Airport (Kan.)
Garden City Regional Airport (Kan.)
Barkley Regional Airport (Ky.)
Hagerstown Regional Airport (Md.)
Salisbury-Ocean City-Wicomico Regional Airport (Md.)
Martin State Airport (Md.)
Westfield Barnes Airport (Mass.)
Worcester Regional Airport (Mass.)
Minneapolis-St. Paul Metropolitan Airports Commission
(Anoka County Airport)

Joplin Regional Airport (Mo.)
Jefferson City Memorial Airport (Mo.)
Cape Girardeau Regional Airport (Mo.)
Columbia Regional Airport (Mo.)
Glacier Park International (Mont.)
Gallatin Field (Mont.)
Missoula Airport (Mont.)
Central Nebraska Regional Airport
Henderson Executive Airport (Nev.)
Lebanon Municipal Airport (N.H.)
Lea County Airports (N.M.)
Kinston Regional Jetport (N.C.)
Hickory Regional Airport (N.C.)
Ohio State University Airport
Bolton Field (Ohio)
Burke Lakefront Airport (Ohio)
Cuyahoga County Airport (Ohio)
Max Westheimer Field (Okla.)
Redmond Municipal Airport (Ore.)
Rogue Valley International Airport (Ore.)
Greenville Downtown Airport (S.C.)
Hilton Head Airport (S.C.)
Smyrna Rutherford County Airport (Tenn.)
Jackson Madison County Airport (Tenn.)
Stinson Municipal Airport (Texas)
Laredo International Airport (Texas)
Harlingen Valley International Airport (Texas)
Brownsville/South Padre Island International (Texas)
Grand Prairie Municipal Airport (Texas)
Charlottesville-Albemarle Airport (Va.)
Spokane Department of Airports (Wash.)
Walla Walla Municipal Airport (Wash.)
Olympia Airport (Wash.)
Wheeling-Ohio County Airport (W.Va.)
Greenbrier Valley Airport (W.Va.)
Milwaukee Timmerman Airport (Wis.)
LaCrosse Municipal Airport (Wis.)
Central Wisconsin Airport (Wis.)
Waukesha County Airport (Wis.)
Cheyenne Airport (Wyo.)
Jackson Hole Airport (Wyo.)
Midwest Air Traffic Control Services Inc.
COMARCO Airport Services
Serco Management Services,
RVA Inc.
Hoyle, Tanner and Associates Inc.
Unitech

For information on USCTA membership, please contact
Spencer Dickerson at the AAAE/USCTA office at (703)
824-0500, Ext. 130, or e-mail sdickerson@airportnet.org.

USCTA Activities and Contract Tower Dispatch 1999

FAA's contract tower cost-sharing program will be funded at \$5 million in fiscal year 2000 as part of the DOT appropriations bill signed by President Clinton.

Contract towers and non-federal towers with benefit/cost (b/c) ratios below 1.0 are eligible for the program, which provides federal funds for contract towers based on the airport's b/c ratio. "We commend Congress for once again including funds for the contract tower cost-sharing program," said Spencer Dickerson, executive vice president of AAEE and executive director of USCTA. "This innovative partnership between FAA and local airports enhances air traffic safety in a very cost-effective manner."

The fiscal year 2000 appropriations bill also includes language on whether the contract tower program should be expanded to the 70 remaining Level II and III VFR FAA-operated contract towers. The final language states, in part, "the draft (FAA) report indicates that annual savings of \$30 million to \$50 million are achievable (from contracting Level II and III VFR towers) except for a provision in the current labor agreement which requires the agency to employ a minimum level of 15,000 government air traffic controllers. The DOT Inspector General (IG) recently reported, 'FAA has a responsibility to operate in a cost-effective manner. By concluding that no net savings related to further expanding the contract tower program will occur, FAA is denying itself an opportunity to reduce operations costs and/or offset potential cost increases... FAA should revise the (draft) study's conclusions and recognize the substantial savings that expanding the federal contract tower program offers.'"

In the conference report on the legislation that was approved by Congress, the appropriations conferees requested that DOT's IG review the feasibility and benefits of expanding the FAA contract tower program, "notwithstanding the current minimum staffing agreement," and report to the Congress no later than March 1, 2000.



In an Oct. 14, 1999, letter to FAA, DOT's Inspector General announced the launch of a new audit of FAA's Contract Tower Program.

The new review has two purposes, according to David Dobbs, acting deputy assistant IG for aviation. First, the IG will follow up on previously identified safety concerns regarding staffing at contract towers that were identified in a 1998 report. At that time, the IG concluded that not all contract towers were staffed according to contract requirements.

Second, Dobbs said, the conference report for DOT's fiscal year 2000 spending bill directed the IG to review the feasibility and benefits of expanding the contract tower program, notwithstanding the current minimum staffing

agreement between FAA and the National Air Traffic Controllers Association.

In addition, Dobbs said, the IG will evaluate the accuracy and completeness of FAA's study of expanding the contract tower program to ensure that all relevant costs and benefits were appropriately identified and considered.



As 1999 ended, airports were waiting for Congress to return in January to continue work on multi-year FAA reauthorization legislation, which was left unsettled in a final House-Senate conference committee. The Senate on Oct. 5 approved by voice vote legislation that authorizes FAA for fiscal years 2000-2002. The bill, S.82, also provides for continuation of the cost-sharing program for contract towers. Language in this measure would authorize \$6 million for a cost-sharing program for Level I towers that are not eligible for participation in the FAA Contract Tower Program.

The bill specifically states that FAA must give priority in selecting facilities to participate in the program to: towers that are participating in the contract tower program now but have been notified that they will be terminated because their benefit/cost ratio is less than 1.0; towers that have a b/c ratio of at least .50; FAA towers that were closed due to the controllers' strike in 1981; towers located at airports that are prepared to assume partial responsibility for maintenance costs, and towers that are located at airports with safety or operational problems related to topography, weather, runway configuration or mix of aircraft.

The Senate bill also requires FAA to develop a national policy and related procedures concerning the Terminal Automated Radar Display and Information System (TARDIS) and sequencing for VFR control towers. This provision was sponsored by Sen. James Inhofe (R-Okla.)

AAEE/USCTA last year urged FAA to adopt a national policy for the installation of TARDIS at VFR air traffic control towers, saying that this program is an example of how FAA and airport sponsors can partner in order to improve ATC services and safety. FAA Administrator Jane Garvey replied that the agency was attempting to resolve issues regarding TARDIS deployment.

The program is on hold with seven installations across the country and some 10 additional sites in the planning stages. AAEE/USCTA told Garvey that the demand for TARDIS is likely to grow, adding that airports want FAA's Air Traffic and Airways Facilities branches to resolve any differences concerning the system's installation.

In her response, Garvey also noted that while TARDIS is being used in some low-activity VFR towers as an aid to controllers in visually locating aircraft, the system is not cer-

tified for provision of radar services. "Since TARDIS interfaces with terminal and en route surveillance systems, security of surveillance and flight information questions surrounding the integrity of the interface have arisen," she said. Garvey pledged that FAA is making every effort to resolve these issues "and provide the air traffic control work force the tools needed to provide safe and efficient services."

An FAA reauthorization bill passed earlier in 1999 by the House (H.R.1000) also provides for continuation of the pilot cost-sharing program for contract towers with a \$6 million authorization for Level I towers. Language in the House bill would require FAA to give priority to the following characteristics when selecting towers to participate in cost-sharing: towers already participating in the contract tower program that have a benefit-to-cost ratio of less than 1.0; towers that have a b/c ratio of at least .85; FAA towers that were closed as a result of the 1981 controllers' strike; towers located at airports at which an airline is receiving compensation from DOT's Essential Air Service program; towers located at airports that are prepared to assume partial responsibility for maintenance costs, and towers located at airports with safety or operational problems related to topography, weather, runway configuration or mix of aircraft.



FAA on Oct. 1, 1999, converted the remaining 22 agency-operated Level I VFR control towers to the FAA Contract Tower Program. They are: Kenai Municipal, Alaska; Capital City, Pa.; Lancaster, Pa.; Trenton, N.J.; Bloomington/Normal, Ill.; Danbury, Conn.; Lebanon Municipal, N.H.; Grand Junction, Colo.; Medford, Ore.; Missoula International, Mont.; Renton, Wash.; Spokane Felts Field, Wash.; Smith Reynolds, N.C.; Macon, Ga.; Melbourne, Fla.; Opa Locka, Fla.; Rio Grande Valley International, Texas; Lawton Municipal, Okla.; Chico Municipal, Calif.; Kona/Keahole, Hawaii; Redding Municipal, Calif., and San Diego/Brown Field, Calif.

A total of 186 towers are now in the program.



DOT Inspector General Kenneth Mead told FAA Administrator Jane Garvey in a Sept. 27, 1999, letter that he has "immediate concerns" with FAA's conclusion in a draft report that there would be no net savings related to further expansion of the agency's contract tower program.

"We believe this conclusion is based on flawed assump-



Rep. John Duncan (R-Tenn.), chairman of the House aviation subcommittee, is presented a plaque by USCTA officials for his support of the contract tower program and the cost-sharing initiative. Shown with Duncan are (left to right) Rodney Hendrix, executive director, Jackson Madison County (Tenn.) Airport; Bryan Elliott, A.A.E., executive director, Charlottesville Albemarle County (Va.) Airport Authority and 1999 USCTA Policy Board Chair; USCTA Executive Director Spencer Dickerson; Loretta Scott, A.A.E., director, Grand Prairie (Texas) Municipal Airport, and Linda Daschle of Baker, Donelson, Bearman & Caldwell.

tions and ignores several key factors that should have been more fully considered," Mead said.

He pointed out that the agency's program has, so far, been "extremely successful" in providing ATC services to low activity airports at a savings of about \$250,000 per tower annually. "In addition, we have found that the quality of service provided by contract towers is comparable to the quality of service by FAA-operated towers," he said.

FAA was directed by Congress to determine whether additional savings could be achieved by expanding the program to other FAA-operated towers without radar capability.

Although FAA, in its draft study, concluded that it could realize annual savings of \$787,000 per tower if the program were expanded, a significant part of that savings would be from lower personnel costs. However, the agency said, there would actually be no savings from expanding the contract tower program because a July 1998 agreement between FAA and the National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NAT-



DOT Inspector General Ken Mead was interviewed by AAAE's ANTN Dicast on contract tower issues.

CA) prohibits a decrease in the number of FAA personnel.

Mead disagreed with that conclusion, saying that the baseline staffing level of 15,000 controllers mandated under the FAA-NATCA agreement misinterprets the authority of Congress, which has sole power to appropriate federal funds and determine the terms and conditions under which those monies may be used. "While the agreement with NATCA may represent an expression of policy between the signatory parties and reflect their objectives, Congress is not bound by its terms," Mead said.

Further, Mead said that although FAA's draft study recognizes that FAA controllers from the converted VFR towers would provide the agency with a skilled labor force to replace retiring controllers and supplement staffing at larger facilities, this benefit was not adequately considered in reaching the study's final conclusion. "Contracting out VFR towers would provide the agency with an opportunity to realign its limited resources in a more efficient and effective manner and help to reduce overtime at understaffed facilities," he stated.

Finally, Mead said that FAA's study "erroneously assumes that the air traffic control infrastructure will remain static." While there are no current plans to expand the existing number of FAA facilities, he noted that air traffic demands may require additional air traffic infrastructure in the future. "FAA's study should give greater merit to the potential impact that controllers from contracted VFR towers could have in offsetting potential future increases in system demands," he told Garvey.

FAA has a responsibility to operate in a cost-effective manner, Mead stated. "By stating that no net savings related to further expanding the contract tower program will occur, FAA is denying itself an opportunity to reduce operations costs and/or offset potential cost increases associated with future demand for air traffic control services." He urged Garvey to revise the study's conclusions "and recognize the substantial savings that expanding the federal contract tower program offers."



Over 75 airport executives, FAA representatives and other aviation officials participated in the annual FAA/AAAE/U.S. Contract Tower Association (USCTA) Contract Tower Workshop, July 25-27, 1999, in Washington, D.C. A number of top industry officials briefed delegates on the new national contract for the program, insurance issues, the future of the program, and provided case studies of contract towers, among other topics.

Ron Morgan, FAA's director of air traffic services, reflected on advances in the federal contract tower program, telling workshop delegates that, "We have come a long way over a relatively short time."

Morgan noted that FAA on July 23 issued its request for bids on the new tower contract, adding that the contract will

Ron Morgan, director of FAA's Air Traffic Services, addressed delegates at the USCTA Contract Tower Workshop in July.



provide for the same "high quality services" for air traffic control but with fewer dollars spent. He described the program as "a benefit all the way around for government and the economy in general."

"I want to lend my support to USCTA; you are doing a great job," Morgan said. "We will continue to be there to work with you, to work on issues that need to be jointly addressed. We look forward to a long and beneficial relationship."

In a question and answer session, Morgan noted that the contract tower cost-sharing program now being launched has received "tremendous interest" from members of Congress. He said FAA has received some criticism from Congress that it isn't adequately marketing the cost-sharing aspect of the contract tower program. However, Morgan said FAA is now "actively" seeking airports to participate in the cost-sharing program. "We are actively looking for those folks," he said. "We have adequate dollars for that if we have locations."

In an update on the status of the contract tower program, FAA Contract Tower Manager Willie Card outlined the timetable for adoption of the new contract.

Card said that as of June, the program included 163 contract towers. Six new airports this year qualified to enter the contract tower program—Alexandria (La.) International; Salisbury-Ocean City-Wicomico (Md.); Gallatin Field-Bozeman (Mont.); Laughlin/Bullhead City (Ariz.) International; Waukesha County (Wis.), and Saipan International. All of these airports entered the program in April except for Gallatin, which joined in March, and Saipan, which was slated for start-up on Oct. 1.

In a review of the implementation of the new cost-sharing provision of the program, Card said participation was offered to Salinas (Calif.) Municipal; Olympia (Wash.); Central Nebraska/Grand Island; Alexandria Esler (La.) Regional; Grand Strand/Myrtle Beach (S.C.); Cape Girardeau, Mo.; Bolton Field (Ohio); Hickory (N.C.) Regional; Knoxville (Tenn.) Downtown; Greenwood Lefore (Miss.); Jackson, Tenn., and South Lake Tahoe. Several more airports are actively pursuing participation in the contract tower program through cost-sharing or have adequate b/c ratios and don't presently have a tower, Card said.

On-going issues facing the contract tower program include the level of pay for controllers at facilities with different activity levels, and the possible expansion of the pro-

Michael McNally, president of the National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA), outlined his organization's perspective on the contract tower program during the USCTA Contract Tower Workshop in July.



gram, Card said.

Michael McNally, president of the National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA), outlined for delegates his organization's perspective on the contract tower program, stressing, "Our position is ATC services are inherently governmental." Beyond that underlying belief, McNally said NATCA remains concerned about the potential for expansion of the program. He said NATCA takes the position that if Congress ultimately plans to privatize the ATC system, "do it as one entity. Don't do it piecemeal. It has an effect on the homogeneous management of the structure." He added that, "We are pushing on the Hill for no more expansion. It is a mistake to go down that road."

McNally said NATCA does support cost-sharing as a way to introduce air traffic services at airports now without it.

Wally Burnett, majority clerk of the Senate transportation appropriations subcommittee, discussed the contract tower program from the perspective of Congress. He noted that for fiscal year 1999, the panel asked FAA to study what expanding the contract tower program to Level II and III towers would mean for the safety and efficiency of the system. He said the subcommittee would seriously consider contracting out these towers "if we can go forward comfortably without risks and with savings."

On the cost-sharing program, Burnett commented, "My concern with it is FAA is not implementing it very quickly. It's a hard program for anyone to complain about. It's a win-win all the way around."

During a question and answer session, Burnett discussed issues in the pending FAA/Airport Improvement Program reauthorization legislation, particularly the concept of taking FAA off-budget. In response to a question about what the aviation community should do to continue funding for the contract tower program, Burnett said, "What you are doing is what you need to do. Run a very successful program. We have testimony from airports that say it works. The IG (DOT Inspector General) says it saves money and improves safety. These are compelling arguments. There is no substitute for making sure people know about that."

Among several case study presentations, Robert Bryant, A.A.E., manager of Salisbury-Ocean City-Wicomico (Md.) Regional, described the process of becoming a new start fa-

cility in the contract tower program. Salisbury constructed its own \$700,000 tower, which opened May 1, 1999, with RVA as the contractor. Bryant said the contract tower program has been well received by the airport's users. Issues that impacted the airport's tower construction program included the site selection process, FAA's process for approving the site, and an environmental assessment, Bryant said.

David Dobbs of DOT's IG staff said FAA is now regularly reviewing the staffing of contract towers following recommendations in last year's IG audit of the program. Staffing issues will become more critical as the program continues to develop, Dobbs added.

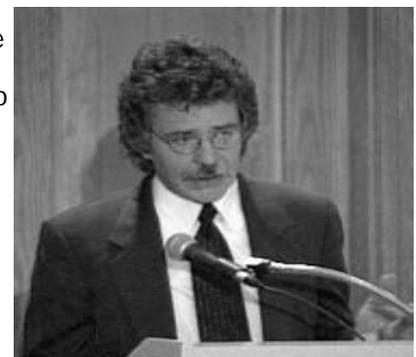
Dobbs described the contract tower program as one "that works," adding that the IG's office would encourage FAA to evaluate ways to expand the program "as long as it is cost effective and doesn't compromise safety."



The USCTA policy board met on July 26, 1999, at the opening of the AAAE/USCTA/FAA Contract Tower Program Workshop held in Washington, D.C.

Among actions taken at the meeting, policy board members voted to urge the AAAE Board of Directors to support making tower construction eligible for the Airport Improvement Program (AIP). Further, the board decided to remain silent on the possible expansion of the contract tower program to Levels II and III VFR towers.

Wally Burnett (right), majority clerk of the Senate transportation appropriations subcommittee, spoke to delegates at the USCTA Contract Tower Workshop in July about the Hill's perspective of the federal contract tower program. David Dobbs of DOT's Office of the Inspector General (bottom photo) also addressed workshop delegates.





FAA in 1999 replied to questions from Virginia Republican Rep. Frank Wolf, chairman of the House transportation appropriations subcommittee, concerning the contract tower program.



FAA Contract Tower Manager Willie Card provided an update on the status of the contract tower program at the USCTA Contract Tower Workshop in July 1999.



FAA earlier in 1999 replied to questions from Rep. Frank Wolf (R-Va.), chairman of the House transportation appropriations subcommittee, concerning the contract tower program.

Among his questions, Wolf asked why the agency proposed to discontinue the contract tower cost-sharing program in fiscal year 2000. FAA replied, "Funds to continue the cost-sharing program included in the agency's original budget submission were not included in the fiscal year 2000 congressional budget submission since the administration does not support subsidizing the operation of contract towers where the costs exceed the benefits. The administration strongly supports the existing FCT program at locations that meet criteria."

Wolf also asked whether the contract tower program is expanding too fast to ensure a consistent level of safety. FAA replied that, "No, the program is not expanding too fast to ensure a consistent level of safety at these facilities. Over the years, this program has successfully demonstrated that contractors provide air traffic control services with the same high regard for aviation safety as the FAA does. Since its inception, the program has expanded at a consistent rate that does not compromise safety at the affected towers."



Willie Card, manager of FAA's Contract Tower Branch, updated USCTA members on the progress of the program during the 71st AAE Annual Conference and Exposition, held May 16-19, 1999, in Phoenix.

During his presentation, Card noted that the present contract with ATC companies expired Sept. 30, 1998, but was extended through Jan. 13, 2000, to permit time for a replacement contract to be put out for bids.

Card described the status of FAA's cost-sharing program for contract towers, which was launched in 1999 with a \$6 million congressional appropriation. Participation in the new program was first offered to the following towers, which are already in the contract tower program: Salinas Municipal (Calif.), Olympia (Wash.), Central Nebraska-Grand Island, Alexandria Esler Regional (La.) and Grand Strand/Myrtle

Beach (S.C.). FAA also extended invitations to participate in the program to Bolton Field, Ohio; Hickory Regional, N.C., Knoxville Downtown, and Greenwood Leflore, Miss., all of which have applied for inclusion in the contract tower program. Card added that Jackson, Tenn., and South Lake Tahoe were offered cost-sharing as well due to their status as former federal contract towers.

Card said that other on-going issues for his office include insurance for the new contract, the new FAA controller pay scale and the pay of contract controllers. He described the progress of the lawsuit filed against the contract tower program by the National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA), relating that FAA completed the court-required A-76 study in February.

NATCA did not appeal the results of the study but objected to some of the language in the commercial determination, Card said. FAA and NATCA signed an agreement in April and contracting of the final 22 facilities will occur later in 1999, he added.

Card also noted that DOT's Inspector General issued a report in May supporting the results of the contract tower program. The IG specifically praised the program's safety, management, user acceptance and controller proficiency. The IG did make four specific recommendations for improvements, Card said.

In addition to the general session for USCTA members at the AAE annual conference, the USCTA Policy Board met as well.



Monte Belger, FAA associate administrator for air traffic services and nominated by President Clinton to be FAA deputy administrator, told delegates May 18, 1999, at AAE's Annual Conference and Exposition in Phoenix that the contract tower program is "a success that was brought about because of the collaboration and the partnership between the FAA and the industry." Belger commented, "I've been a big proponent of the contract tower program. It is a program which has proven to be cost-effective. It is a program that has stood the test of review by the Inspector General's office and the General Accounting Office and they are now supporting vigorously the contract tower program and it is a program which has been very well funded by the Congress. We think it's a great example of finding the right balance between what government and private industry can provide in terms of services. I think it's a terrific example. I think we

can use it as an example for other activities in the FAA where we can work more closely with private industry. We will continue to bring in other towers at other locations where there right now may not be air traffic control capability and bring those into the contract tower program as we go along. So, again another super example. I think some kudos should go to the AAE folks and maybe more particularly to the Contract Tower Association. They have worked very closely with us and with the Congress and done a very good job promoting the potential for these types of activities.”

In an interview with Spencer Dickerson that aired Dec. 17, 1999, on AAE’s ANTN Digicast *Aviation News Today*, Belger described the contract tower program as “a tremendous success. It’s allowed us to reduce our costs to operate the towers. I think it’s not resulted in any decrease in service and the safety level is the same or better than with using our own controllers. That allows us to free up our air traffic controllers to put at the busier facilities where we need the staffing. All in all it’s been a good success, in terms of economics, safety and service. It’s an example where FAA and industry work together to try to reduce the cost to the taxpayers—after all, the FAA is funded through various types of taxes—and at the same time maintain the safety level that we’re accustomed to.”



FAA’s oversight of and funding for capital development at general aviation airports came under congressional scrutiny at a June 9, 1999, hearing of the House aviation subcommittee.

General Accounting Office (GAO) Director of Transportation Issues John Anderson told the subcommittee that while federal grants for airports, including GA facilities, increased last year, “Federal funding for general aviation capital development still represents only about 35 percent of these airports’ planned capital development that is eligible for federal funding.”

During the hearing, Gary Shafer, manager of Southern Illinois Airport, testified that his facility is “just one of 2,764 similar airports nationwide that depend on the federal government for capital funding assistance in order to sustain us.” The passage of H.R.1000 (which was passed by the House of Representatives on June 15) will benefit small airports in a number of ways, he told subcommittee members, including the likelihood of providing more discretionary AIP funds, the creation of an entitlement provision for GA airports, continuation of the state block grant program and continued support for FAA’s Contract Tower Program. “The continued support of the Contract Tower Program by the subcommittee and committee is very much appreciated,” Shafer testified.

“This program has been proven to yield significant financial benefits to the FAA while providing important services at nearly 170 small airports. Included among these are many general aviation airports, like ours, which experience signifi-

Monte Belger, FAA associate administrator for air traffic services and nominated by President Clinton to be FAA deputy administrator, was interviewed by USCTA’s Spencer Dickerson for an AAE ANTN Digicast program. Belger praised the contract tower program as “a tremendous success.”



cant amounts of traffic that require it to be separated and managed by air traffic controllers.”



In response to a March 2, 1998, ruling by Judge Ann Aldrich of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Ohio, FAA completed studies in 1999 that officially conclude (1) VFR air traffic control is a commercial function, rather than an inherently governmental function, and (2) agency cost analyses of the contract tower program “clearly” show that a formal cost comparison is not required to substantiate the conversion of FAA towers to the contract tower program.

In determining that VFR air traffic control is a commercial function, FAA stated that relevant laws, regulations and agency orders “demonstrate that such activities do not require air traffic controllers to exercise the level and nature of discretion intrinsic to inherently government activities. As a result, VFR Air Traffic Control is a commercial activity, which private commercial sources outside the federal government may perform.”

FAA noted that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) establishes federal policy regarding the performance of commercial activities in Circular No. A-76, which states that it is the policy of the federal government to achieve economy and enhance productivity. The circular directs agencies to accomplish that goal by comparing the cost of commercial performance and government performance for activities that are not inherently governmental and then to rely on commercial sources when the products or services are less expensive through that means. Further, the circular describes an inherently government function as those that normally fall into two categories: the act of governing, such as management and direction of the armed forces, selection of program priorities and the regulation of industry and commerce; and monetary transactions and entitlements, such as tax collection and revenue disbursements.

While pointing out that all air traffic control positions “re-

quire a significantly high level of mental and physical abilities,” FAA nevertheless ruled that, “The activities performed by any air traffic controller, whether contractor or government employee, at a comparable airport tower, will be the same, and will be guided by the same regulations and policy directives.” Nowhere does the execution of these functions rely on the controller being a government employee “or possessing governance skills, such that his or her actions would commit the government to one course of action over another, a basic prerequisite to finding such a function to be inherently governmental,” FAA found.

FAA also underscored that, “The discretionary functions related to air traffic control belong to the FAA administrator. VFR air traffic control is one of her operational tools in achieving the policy goals of safe, navigable airspace.” Additionally, FAA said, “the agency maintains more than 150 VFR towers that direct hundreds of flights per day. However, if relinquished to a commercial source, the FAA could establish control over VFR flights by appropriate inspection and certification of all VFR controllers and sites.”

In the second analysis that found the contract tower program qualifies for a waiver from A-76 formal cost comparisons, FAA relied on two provisions in the circular.

The first provision for a waiver states that the conversion of a federal program to a commercial one must result in a significant financial or service quality improvement.

FAA pointed to historical cost data showing that the contractors’ operating costs of Level I towers “are consistently significantly lower than those of the FAA.” The cost comparison for the 109 towers in the federal contract program at the time shows an estimated savings of \$33 million annually. Further, the cost comparison for the 22 towers scheduled to be included in the contract tower program in fiscal year 1999 shows potential cost savings of another \$6 million annually.

Further, FAA said, evaluations of towers in the contract program show that contractor-provided ATC services “have consistently earned evaluation scores comparable to those for corresponding type FAA-staffed towers. Feedback from users and performance indicators monitored through evaluations indicate that the service level remains high at FCT locations. We have not experienced and do not anticipate any reduction in quality of ATC services at FCTs.”

The second provision to qualify for a waiver requires the agency to show that there is no reasonable expectation that the in-house organization could successfully win a bid competition against the private sector to operate the tower.

FAA pointed to the projected savings of \$33 million annually from use of private contractors for the Level I VFR towers and noted, “Such a large differential precludes any possibility of the government winning a cost competition with the private sector for providing ATC services at low activity ATCTs.”



Tim Rogers, A.A.E., a member of the USCTA Policy Board and chairman of AAAE’s Non-Hub/General Aviation Committee, testified in February 1999 on behalf of the two organizations at a House aviation subcommittee hearing on funding and infrastructure issues at small and medium sized airports.



Tim Rogers, A.A.E., a member of the USCTA Policy Board and chairman of AAAE’s Non-Hub/General Aviation Committee, testified in February 1999 on behalf of the two organizations at a House aviation subcommittee field hearing in Kansas on funding and infrastructure issues at small and medium sized airports.

Rogers outlined the background of FAA’s Contract Tower Program, noting that it has enhanced safety and provided cost savings to the federal government. He expressed appreciation to House aviation subcommittee Chairman John Duncan (R-Tenn.) for his support in 1998 of the contract tower cost-sharing program and urged him to include authorization language continuing this innovative program in the multi-year FAA reauthorization bill being debated in Congress.

Rogers told the congressmen that DOT’s Inspector General in 1998 determined that contract towers provide a high quality of service comparable to FAA-operated towers and are staffed by controllers who meet the agency’s training requirements. “The IG report reaffirms our position that the contract tower program is cost-effective and provides safe, high-quality air traffic control services that enhance aviation safety overall,” Rogers said.

The seven members of the House aviation subcommittee who attended the hearing, which was held in Wichita, Kan., posed numerous questions about the needs of small airports and pledged to consider their concerns during 1999’s debate over FAA reauthorization legislation. They also inquired about specifics of the contract tower program, especially the aspects of the program that result in ATC financial savings to the federal government.

In addition to Duncan, the subcommittee members who attended the hearing were Reps. Asa Hutchinson (R-Ark.), John Thune (R-S.D.), Edward Pease (R-Ind.), Leonard Boswell (D-Iowa), Jerry Moran (R-Kan.) and Todd Tiahrt (R-Kan.).



The failure of the pilots to maintain visual separation between their aircraft is the probable cause of a fatal mid-air collision on July 17, 1997, three miles south of Chicago's Meigs Field, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) determined. All seven persons aboard the Cessna and the Beech Bonanza were killed.

According to NTSB investigators, the pilot of the Cessna was cleared to pass southbound through Class D airspace and was directed to report her position. However, the Cessna pilot did not report her position as directed by the air traffic controller, which was a factor in the accident, NTSB said.

Meigs has an FAA contract tower operated by Midwest ATC. NTSB indicated no fault on the performance of the controller.



USCTA responded on Oct. 6, 1999, to FAA's draft Advisory Circular 90-93A concerning operating procedures for non-federal air traffic control towers.

Among other recommendations, the association stated that an air traffic manager should not suspend airport operations without specific authorization from airport management. Instead, USCTA said, language in the circular should state that the air traffic manager, upon becoming aware of conditions that are hazardous to safe operations, should immediately notify airport management.

USCTA also suggested that the air traffic manager be provided with a current copy of the airport certification manual or specifications and the current airport emergency plan as approved by FAA, and that communication should be required between the non-federal tower and the specific agency that serves as the primary emergency response organization for the airport.



USCTA on Sept. 17, 1999, wrote to Willie Card, manager of FAA's Contract Tower Program, stating that FAA's advisory circular on minimum equipment standards for contract towers is adequate (Advisory Circular-90-93).

USCTA noted, however, that, "Some airports may add more equipment based on their own unique circumstances, but USCTA believes the current advisory circular is an appropriate list of minimum equipment that should be required for contract towers."

The Minimum Equipment List For ATC Services For

Contract Towers is comprised of: operable two-way radio equipment with a backup power source, consisting of a minimum of one transmitter and receiver for each frequency published; one operable backup two-way multi-channel transmitter and receiver with a reliable backup power source; wind indicator system certified by either FAA or the National Weather Service (NWS); at least two aneroid altimeter setting indicators (ASI) or one ASI and a mercurial barometer (*Note—a digital ASI (DASI) system is considered as one aneroid ASI.*); visibility charts, prepared and maintained by the ATM, in conjunction with the NWS, where an ATCT takes weather observations; a voice recorder system that, during the period the ATCT is in operation, continually records the synchronized time with the recording of each radio frequency and interphone line used for receiving/transmitting ATC clearances, or instructions; a minimum of one signal light gun, with a reliable back-up power source; accurate facility drawings of the wiring and layout of the equipment; two sets of 7 x 50 power binoculars; an airfield lighting control panel, if applicable, and a telephone/interphone system to communicate with the parent Approach Control Facility/Air Route Traffic Control Center.



~~Top Secret List of Airports~~

(as of January 2000)

AIRPORT NAME	FAA REGION	STATE	AIRPORT NAME	FAA REGION	STATE
Bethel	AAL	AK	Ohio State University	AGL	OH
Kenai Municipal	AAL	AK	Cincinnati Mun./Lunken	AGL	OH
King Salmon	AAL	AK	Cuyahoga County	AGL	OH
Kodiak	AAL	AK	Rapid City Regional	AGL	SD
Dubuque Iowa	ACE	IA	Appleton	AGL	WI
Forbes Field	ACE	KS	Central Wisconsin	AGL	WI
Hutchinson Mun.	ACE	KS	Kenosha Municipal	AGL	WI
Johnson Co. Exec.	ACE	KS	Lacrosse	AGL	WI
Philip Billard Mun.	ACE	KS	Rock County	AGL	WI
Salina Municipal	ACE	KS	Timmerman (Milwaukee)	AGL	WI
Columbia	ACE	MO	Waukesha County Airport	AGL	WI
Joplin Regional	ACE	MO	Wittman Regional	AGL	WI
Rosecrans Mem'l/St. Joseph	ACE	MO	Bridgeport	ANE	CT
Central Neb./Grand Island	ACE	NE	Danbury	ANE	CT
Martin State	AEA	MD	Groton-New London	ANE	CT
Washington Co. Reg'l/Hagerstown	AEA	MD	Hartford-Brainard	ANE	CT
Salisbury-Wicomico	AEA	MD	Tweed-New Haven	ANE	CT
Trenton	AEA	NJ	Barnes Municipal	ANE	MA
Tompkins County	AEA	NY	Beverly	ANE	MA
Niagara Falls	AEA	NY	Hyannis	ANE	MA
Oneida County	AEA	NY	Lawrence	ANE	MA
Stewart	AEA	NY	Martha's Vineyard	ANE	MA
Capital City	AEA	PA	New Bedford	ANE	MA
Lancaster	AEA	PA	Norwood	ANE	MA
Williamsport/Lycoming Co.	AEA	PA	Worcester	ANE	MA
Charlottesville-Albemarle	AEA	VA	Boire Field/Nashua	ANE	NH
Lynchburg	AEA	VA	Lebanon Municipal	ANE	NH
Greenbrier Valley	AEA	WV	Eagle County	ANM	CO
Morgantown	AEA	WV	Grand Junction	ANM	CO
Parkersburg	AEA	WV	Friedman Memorial	ANM	ID
Wheeling Ohio Co.	AEA	WV	Idaho Falls	ANM	ID
Bloomington/Normal	AGL	IL	Lewiston-Nez Perce Co.	ANM	ID
Decatur	AGL	IL	Pocatello Municipal	ANM	ID
Meigs Field (Chicago)	AGL	IL	Gallatin Field/Bozeman	ANM	MT
St. Louis Regional	AGL	IL	Missoula International	ANM	MT
So. Illinois/Carbondale	AGL	IL	Klamath Falls	ANM	OR
Waukegan Regional	AGL	IL	McNary Field	ANM	OR
Williamson County	AGL	IL	Medford	ANM	OR
Gary Regional	AGL	IN	Pendleton Municipal	ANM	OR
Battle Creek	AGL	MI	Redmond	ANM	OR
Detroit City	AGL	MI	Troutdale (Portland)	ANM	OR
Jackson	AGL	MI	Ogden-Hinckley Mun.	ANM	UT
Anoka (Minneapolis)	AGL	MN	Bellingham Int'l	ANM	WA
Minot	AGL	ND	Felts Field	ANM	WA
Burke Lakefront	AGL	OH	Olympia	ANM	WA
			Renton	ANM	WA

(continued on following page)

AIRPORT NAME	FAA REGION	STATE	AIRPORT NAME	FAA REGION	STATE
Tacoma Narrows	ANM	WA	Farmington Municipal	ASW	NM
Walla Walla Regional	ANM	WA	Lea County/Hobbs	ASW	NM
Yakima	ANM	WA	Santa Fe Co. Mun.	ASW	NM
Cheyenne	ANM	WY	Ardmore Municipal	ASW	OK
Dothan	ASO	AL	Enid Woodring Mun.	ASW	OK
Brookley (Mobile)	ASO	AL	Lawton Municipal	ASW	OK
Tuscaloosa Municipal	ASO	AL	Univ. of Oklahoma/Westheimer	ASW	OK
Albert Whitted	ASO	FL	Wiley Post	ASW	OK
Gainesville	ASO	FL	Brownsville Int'l	ASW	TX
Hollywood	ASO	FL	Easterwood	ASW	TX
Jacksonville/Craig	ASO	FL	Grand Prairie	ASW	TX
Key West	ASO	FL	Laredo International	ASW	TX
Kissimmee	ASO	FL	McAllen	ASW	TX
Lakeland Municipal	ASO	FL	McKinney Municipal	ASW	TX
Melbourne	ASO	FL	Redbird	ASW	TX
Naples	ASO	FL	Rio Grande Valley International	ASW	TX
Opa Locka	ASO	FL	San Angelo	ASW	TX
Page Field	ASO	FL	Stinson Municipal (San Antonio)	ASW	TX
Panama City/Bay Co.	ASO	FL	Tyler	ASW	TX
Pompano Beach	ASO	FL	Chandler	AWP	AZ
Stuart/Whitham	ASO	FL	Flagstaff Pulliam	AWP	AZ
Titusville/Cocoa	ASO	FL	Glendale	AWP	AZ
Athens Municipal	ASO	GA	Goodyear (Phoenix)	AWP	AZ
Fulton County	ASO	GA	Laughlin/Bullhead City	AWP	AZ
Gwinnett County	ASO	GA	Mesa/Williams Gateway	AWP	AZ
Macon	ASO	GA	Ryan	AWP	AZ
McCollum	ASO	GA	Chico	AWP	CA
SW Georgia/Albany-Dougherty	ASO	GA	Fullerton	AWP	CA
Valdosta Municipal	ASO	GA	Hawthorne	AWP	CA
Barkley Regional	ASO	KY	Modesto	AWP	CA
Owensboro/Daviess Co.	ASO	KY	Oxnard	AWP	CA
Greenville Municipal	ASO	MS	Palmdale	AWP	CA
Hawkins Field	ASO	MS	Redding Municipal	AWP	CA
Meridian/Key Field	ASO	MS	Riverside	AWP	CA
Kingston	ASO	NC	Sacramento Executive	AWP	CA
Smith Reynolds	ASO	NC	Salinas Municipal	AWP	CA
Isla Grande	ASO	Puerto Rico	San Carlos	AWP	CA
Grand Strand/Myrtle Beach	ASO	SC	San Diego/Brown Field	AWP	CA
Greenville Downtown	ASO	SC	San Luis Obispo	AWP	CA
Smyrna	ASO	TN	Santa Maria	AWP	CA
Alexander Hamilton (St. Croix)	ASO	Virgin Islands	Whiteman	AWP	CA
Fayetteville	ASW	AR	William J. Fox	AWP	CA
Texarkana Mun./Webb Field	ASW	AR	Agana	AWP	Guam
Acadiana Regional	ASW	LA	Kona/Keahole	AWP	HI
Esler Regional Reg'l	ASW	LA	Lihue	AWP	HI
Houma	ASW	LA	Molokai	AWP	HI
Alexandria	ASW	LA	Elko	AWP	NV

Rebuttal to NATCA's report on the US Air Traffic Control System

By Glenn S. Januska, A.A.E.

The National Business Aviation Association (NBAA) printed a guest editorial from Glenn Januska, A.A.E., manager of Waukesha County (Wis.) Airport, in its October 1999 newsletter, NBAA Digest. Januska provided a rebuttal to an earlier guest editorial by Michael McNally, president of the National Air Traffic Controllers Association, that outlined NATCA's viewpoint on FAA's Contract Tower Program. The following is the full text of Januska's editorial.

In the August 1999 NBAA *Digest*, you printed an editorial written by Michael P. McNally on NATCA's views of the FAA Contract Air Traffic Control Tower Program. While I respect Mr. McNally's views, I would say that most of his statements are misleading at best, and not grounded in fact at worst. His comments do not give an accurate representation on the state of the FAA contract tower program.

Mr. McNally states that FAA controllers worked at all air traffic control facilities across the country until 1994. The FAA contract tower program was actually initiated in 1982, and Waukesha County Airport has contracted out ATC services since 1974. There are currently 165 FAA contract towers, 110 of them former FAA-operated towers.

Controllers at contract towers are not "substantially under-trained" as Mr. McNally states. Controllers at contract facilities are held to the same standards as FAA controllers and are FAA certified before they begin controlling traffic. Many controllers at contract facilities are former military or FAA controllers with significant years of experience. Waukesha controllers have an average of 14 years of experience, 10 years as FAA and/or military controllers. Mr. McNally states that contractors "are not adhering to the FAA's rigid safety regulations." The contractors are held to the same standards and comply with the same safety regulations as FAA facilities, with continuous FAA oversight.

Mr. McNally states that a high turnover rate exists because these controllers often cannot support their families or themselves. The Department of Labor establishes the wage rate the controllers are paid, and I'd be willing to bet that most people would believe the wages are anything but unfair. If, in fact, the wages offered could not support a controller, there would be a shortage of controllers and the wages offered would have to increase. It is called a free market system and it seems to work pretty well in both the private and public sector.

Mr. McNally states that by contracting out facilities, "Congress is saying that saving money is more important than ensuring the safety of the flying public." The reason there is bipartisan support for the program is that it saves money, approximately \$30 million annually, without degrading the safety of the flying public. A comprehensive audit by the Department of Transportation Inspector General (IG) in 1998 found that the contract tower program provides comparable service to FAA-operated towers and is an important

contributor to safety. The IG reviewed aviation safety data at 84 contract towers and concluded that there was little difference in the number of incidents in towers operated by contract or FAA controllers.

Regarding safety, Mr. McNally states that the contract tower issue "is of particular interest to the business flyer ... since smaller or regional airports....will fall victim to privatization first." Without the contract tower program these very airports would begin to face tower closure in light of FAA budget constraints and the high cost of providing ATC services. How could that lead to anything but a lower level of system safety?

Mr. McNally asks whether you (the business flyer) "deserve to have the best controllers—the FAA controllers—working your flight." While I'm not questioning the quality of the FAA controllers, I find it presumptuous to assume without question that FAA controllers are the best controllers. Airports, fixed base operators, air carriers, regional airlines, and pilots express very high satisfaction with the quality of contract tower services, many saying the level of service is higher than at FAA facilities.

Mr. McNally makes reference to ill-equipped towers. The vast majority of contract facilities are former FAA facilities where the tower and equipment remain FAA owned and maintained. I fail to understand how these facilities suddenly became "ill-equipped" when the only difference is who employs the controllers. Mr. McNally seems to be confusing the fact that the contract tower program contracts out controller services, not the tower or equipment. At airports where someone other than the FAA owns the tower and equipment, the FAA has established tower construction and equipment standards.

Mr. McNally makes several statements which are intended, I believe, to show how the contract tower program has and will continue to bring about division in the airspace system, making reference to Europe. It appears that Mr. McNally believes that when a contractor begins providing service at a tower, the contractor establishes a sovereign state where the contractor establishes whatever control and equipment standards the contractor wishes. Forgive my confusion, but I thought we lived in the United States where there is already in place the "one system" Mr. McNally states the European countries are fighting for. Nothing in the program changes or alters in any way the existing ATC system operates.

The simple fact is that under the contract tower program the only thing that has changed is who is employing the controllers. The NBAA, Air Traffic Control Association, National Air Transportation Association, General Aviation Manufacturers Association, Regional Airline Association, Cargo Airline Association, Air Transport Association and National Association of State Aviation Officials all support the program. Contract tower controllers are as committed to the safety of the flying public as are the controllers on the FAA's payroll.

Airport Authority's Contract Tower Operations and the Safety of the Air

“The level of service is far superior to the previous FAA tower operation. Our current tower personnel make an extra effort to work with flight schools like Diamond. Of course, there are occasional problems, but they address them and resolve them immediately...As the owner of a flight school, I was most concerned when I found out we were going to a contract tower operation. Now I would say, it is an advantage!” *(Letter from Karen Morss, owner of Diamond Aviation at San Carlos (Calif.) Airport, to Gary Petersen, airport manager.)*

“As you know, West Valley Flying Club operates 65 aircraft and has 1,250 members. We average over 2,400 hours of flight monthly. Therefore, we interface many times daily with the tower. It is our impression that the San Carlos tower operation is a cut above most other towers with which we come in contact. If we did not know that it was a contract tower we would never guess it since the operation is seamless...Safety is our major operational concern at the club. San Carlos has a potentially dangerous South/West arrival procedure and we feel much more comfortable with it than we did with the previous FAA tower. This tower seems more on top of potentially dangerous situations, more able to give timely, concise directions to pilots.” *(Letter from Ann*



Elsbach, general manager, West Valley Flying Club at San Carlos (Calif.) Airport, to Gary Petersen, airport manager.)

“It has been nearly three years since the control tower began operations at Grand Prairie Municipal Airport (GPM)...American Eurocopter Corp. (AEC) conducts flight operations at GPM in support of customer flight training, demonstration flights, production test flights and experimental test flights. The tower has been of great assistance to us in traffic management by providing us with traffic call-outs, separation, clearances and, most recently, weather. Our operations are high tempo and the tower personnel continually

provide timely and accurate service. It is my opinion that the tower has increased the safety factor at the airport by a significant margin. AEC pilots have declared emergencies and requested other assistance and have always been helped by those manning the tower. It would be difficult to imagine going back to the days of separate frequencies for airplanes and helicopters and no tower assistance.” *(Letter from Bill Force, chief pilot, American Eurocopter Corp. at Grand Prairie, Texas, Municipal Airport, to Loretta Scott, A.A.E., airport manager.)*

Mike Padgett, tower controller at McCollum Field, Cobb County, Ga., a contract tower facility, receives an award at the Cobb County Board of Commissioners' meeting for contributing to a successful FAA full-facility evaluation at the tower. Pictured are (left to right) Dan Dobry, Cobb County DOT director; Karl Von Hagel, airport manager; Padgett; Lou Butler, area manager C12, and Gene Wheeler, tower manager.



“I would once again like to express my sincere appreciation and express what a terrific job your air traffic control tower staff has done over the past several years. Not only has safety been substantially improved over past operations, but your guys have gone above and beyond the call of duty, not only to enhance safety but to provide a very courteous service, which is rarely seen in the existing ATC environment.” *(Letter from Lee Lauderback, Stallion 51 Corp. at Kissimmee, Fla., Municipal Airport, to Tim Shea, A.A.E., director of aviation.)*

“We have never been as impressed with any tower as we have with Kissimmee. The customer service has been exceptional on all accounts and the traffic flow has never been an issue, even with the great variety of aircraft and operations that take place here every day. We have on numerous occasions come up with requests way out of the ordinary and have always been accommodated without any difficulty.” *(Letter from Thom Richard and Graham Meise, co-owners of Warbird Adventures at Kissimmee, Fla., Municipal Airport, to Tim Shea, A.A.E., director of aviation.)*

“The Morgantown contract tower has provided us with excellent service, always maintaining the highest standards of separation with minimum delays. As with any diverse fleet, we have had in-flight situations requiring special handling and the Morgantown contract tower has always managed these situations with outstanding professionalism!” *(Letter from Robert Wilburn, president, Air Corps Services at Morgantown, W. Va., Municipal Airport to Charles Keener II, airport director.)*

“My personal observation is that the tower personnel have an active interest in aviation. It’s more than just a job. Tower personnel, on their own time, are active participants in the Civil Air Patrol and have made presentations to the

WVU Aero Club. During my tenure with the Morgantown Pilots Association, I can honestly say I’ve never heard one negative comment about the tower, tower personnel or the service provided.” *(Letter from Robert Last, president of the Morgantown, W.Va., Pilots Association, to Charles Keener II, airport director.)*

Nevada attorney and private pilot Craig Delk said he and his wife hold the contract air traffic controllers at Henderson (Nev.) Executive Airport “in very high regard. They are both competent and courteous, and as the air traffic at Henderson has increased (especially over the past year), we have not observed any reduction in flight safety operations whatever.” The controllers at Henderson Executive “have demonstrated every ability to maintain proper separation and flow of aircraft both in and out of the airport environment, with everyone’s safety their primary concern.”

Tim Shea, A.A.E., director of aviation at Florida’s Kissimmee Municipal Airport, received congratulations from tenant Marathon Flight School on the quality of the contract tower operation. School officials noted that, “With the high number of single engine training and business jets operating here, we can’t imagine operating without a tower to provide some sort of separation. The Kissimmee tower is the most professional and helpful tower in all of Florida, in our opinion.”

Kathryn Budde-Jones, a pilot who flies in and out of Kissimmee, told Shea that, “The tower personnel handle the traffic and the confusion we new inexperienced pilots create with great efficiency, so that all of our training flights are not only educational but also enjoyable.”

Tom Reilly, who owns the Flying Tigers Warbird Restoration Museum and an FBO at Kissimmee, told Shea, “Over the past decade and a half I have found the addition of a controlled field to have added to the safety and overall

operational efficiency of the airport. The tower staff are both very professional and helpful to both the tenants and transient traffic... The staff in the tower are some of the most professional that we have ever had the pleasure to work with.”

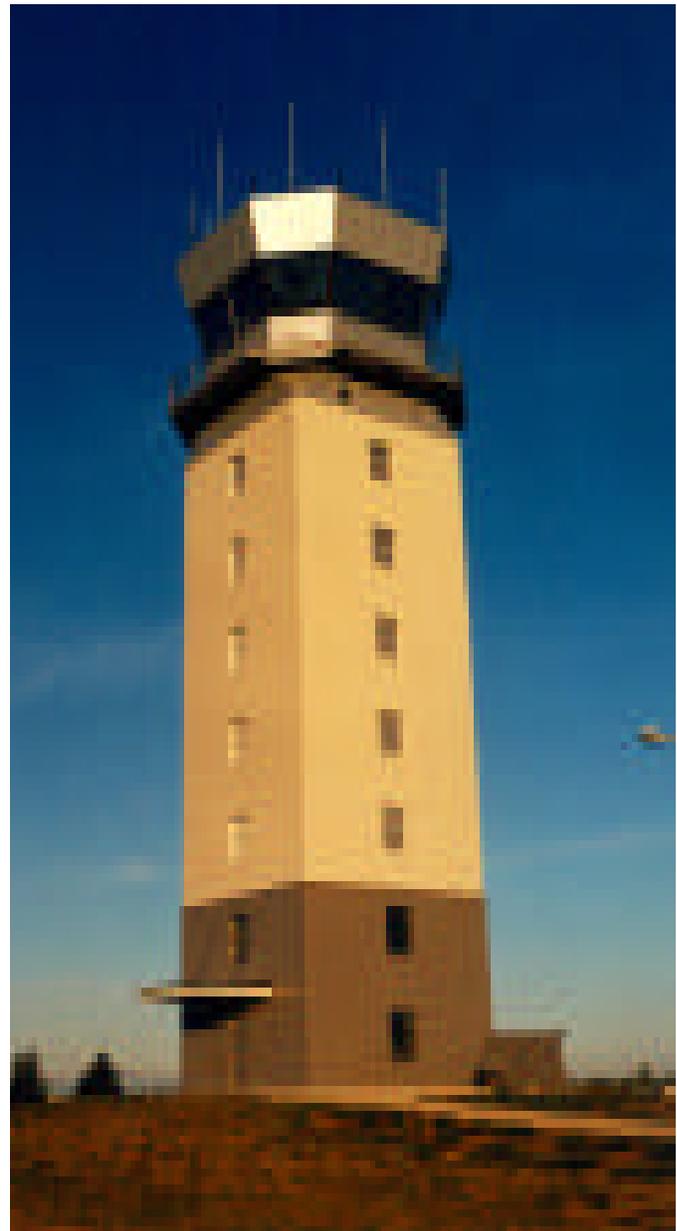
Thomas Loumankin, director of operations for SkyWay, a tenant at Kissimmee Municipal, wrote that, “As a vocal proponent to have a tower built and staffed, my concern was, and is, safety in the air. The level of safety at our airport has increased dramatically. The credits, of course, must be bestowed on the individuals and team effort of the air traffic controllers. The safe, smooth and accurate handling of the aircraft entering and leaving the Kissimmee traffic area is a compliment to their levels of expertise.”

Richard Baird, manager of Friedman (Idaho) Memorial Airport, praised Midwest Air Traffic Control Tower Services, saying the relationship between the company, the airport and the surrounding communities “has been nothing less than marvelous.” Baird specifically noted that, “While quality air traffic control service is Midwest ATCT’s forte, from an airfield management prospective, another philosophy of the company is just as important. Midwest ATCT believes that being part of a community and an airport is just as important as providing professional air traffic control service... Community leaders comment on numerous occasions that the single most important agency helping neighborhoods with aviation safety and good neighbor flying was the tower. Midwest ATCT was a goodwill ambassador for the airfield.”

Michael Daigle, manager of LaCrosse (Wis.) Municipal Airport, said the level of service his facility receives from Midwest ATC Services “far exceeds that required or even expected. These controllers are truly professionals...I receive comments on a regular basis from other aviation professionals who remark on what exceptional service they receive from the gentlemen who work at this facility.”

Robert Adkins, chief operating officer of Aero Services International, based at *West Virginia’s Morgantown Airport*, wrote to Airport Director Charles Keener, “The tower has been invaluable to our airport...Since Morgantown is a university town, there is a lot of traffic for athletic events, such as football and basketball games. We can’t imagine what it would be like on football weekends without a control tower taking command of all the aircraft. Many charter flights would avoid our airport if there were no tower.”

Officials from the Sun Lakes Aero Club at *Chandler (Ariz.)* wrote to endorse the work of Serco Management Services. “While the volume of traffic has grown, the professional performance of your tower operators has provided a consistent assurance of safe and efficient operations,” club officials said. “In addition, and very much appreciated, we have been accorded every consideration to accommodate to our piloting needs without compromise of the paramount focus on safety.”



Loretta Scott, A.A.E., director at Grand Prairie (Texas) Municipal, wrote to Midwest ATC to report that “without exception,” the comments that airport officials receive about Midwest are favorable. “I particularly appreciate your willingness to work with us,” Scott said. “The prompt response to requests for information or assistance is very much appreciated. In an environment such as GPM’s, the complicated mix of helicopters arriving and departing from three directions at once, coupled with the level of flight training, much of which involves students with English as their second language, requires a high level of patience and expertise. Midwest ATC employees meet those requirements without complaint. The presence of air traffic control service on our airport has resulted in significantly enhanced safety and reliability.”

U.S. Contract Tower Association
c/o American Association of Airport Executives
601 Madison Street, Suite 400
Alexandria, Virginia 22314
(703) 824-0504

<http://www.airportnet.org/depts/corppags/cta/index.htm>

