

# SkyTrack

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF PATCA

FROM THE PILOT'S  
PERSPECTIVE

PATCA SPORTSFEST  
2025

TRAINING THE NEXT  
GENERATION OF AIR  
TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS





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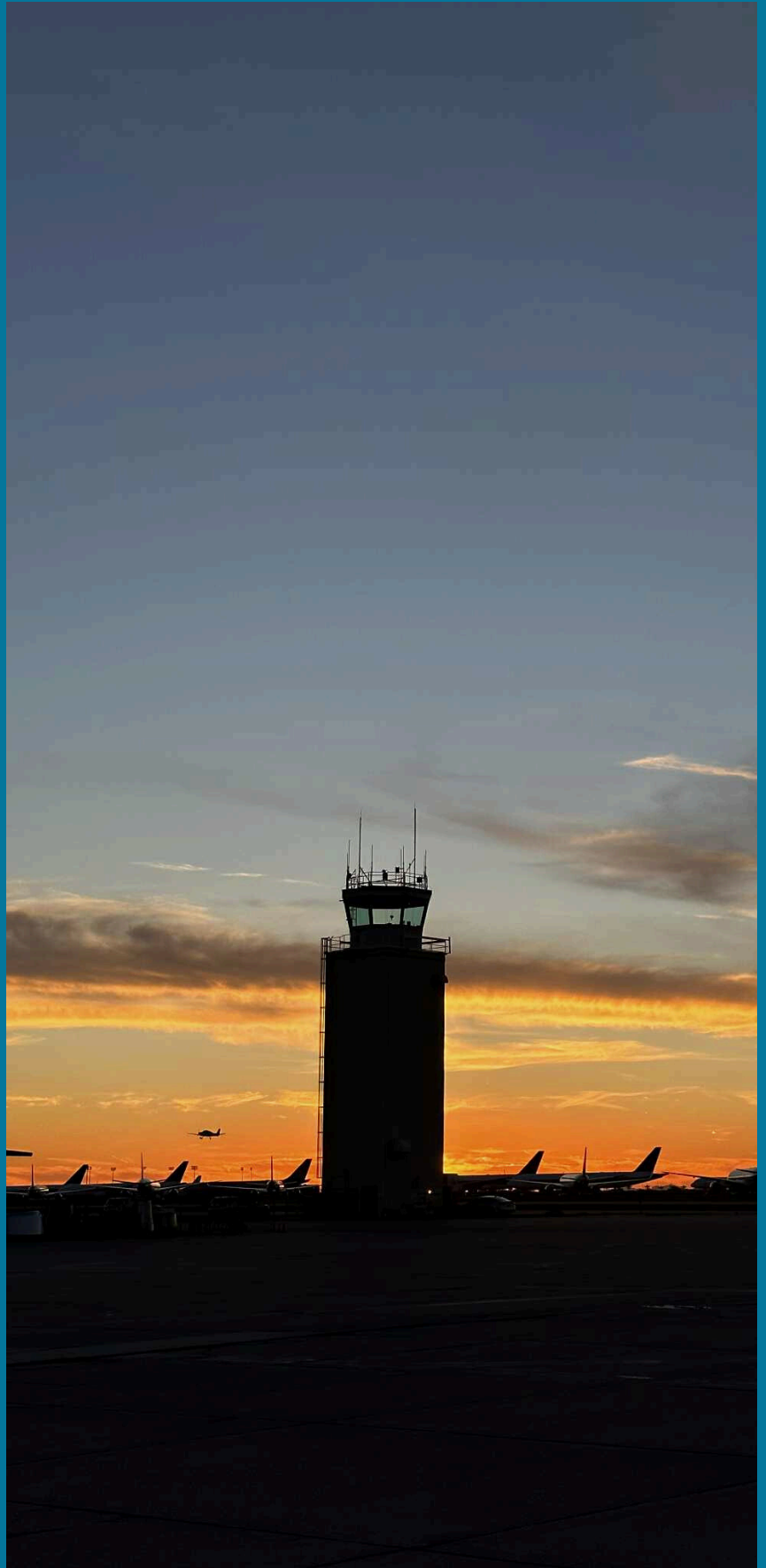
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A seasoned commercial pilot taking us to  
the other side of the frequency.





# From the Editor



Time always seems to move faster than we expect. One moment, we're starting a new year, and the next, we're in the final stretch of 2025. For air traffic controllers like us, that pace feels familiar. The skies mirror the rhythm of our lives—fast, demanding, and relentless. As the year winds down, we prepare for the surge of holiday traffic and busier schedules. But beyond the procedures and rosters, there's something that never changes: our shared duty to guide the next generation, to look out for one another, and to remember that this profession is defined not only by the technology we use but also by the people behind it.

That was clear in the recent On-the-Job Training for Instructors at the Civil Aviation Training Center. More than just meeting ICAO standards, it was about preparing mentors who can pass on not only technical skills but also the kind of judgment that only comes with experience. Knowing when to trust your instincts, hearing urgency in a pilot's voice, or recognizing when a colleague needs support—these are lessons no manual can fully teach.

And, of course, teamwork isn't built solely in classrooms. Sportfest 2025 once again reminded us of that. Air traffic controllers from across the country gathered on basketball and volleyball courts, and even in a cheerleading competition. The inclement weather tried to interfere, but just like in our work, we pressed on. It wasn't just about winning games; it was about building bonds, strengthening trust, and celebrating the community that makes our job lighter and stronger.

As Captain Patrick Roa, a commercial pilot with decades of experience, reminds us that we don't do this work alone. Pilots and air traffic controllers share the same goal: keeping the sky and every flight safe. That trust, built shift after shift, is what keeps the system running.

The skies will never quiet down, but together with training, teamwork, and trust, we'll always guide every flight safely home.

**RENZ MARIONE BULSECO**

Editor-in-Chief



# PATCA Sportsfest 2025

BY CLARENCE JAN JIMENEZ | PHOTOS BY PATCA

**Intense and calculated – that’s the vibe that hung in the air at the chess tournament of the annual sporting event. Controllers aren’t new to making tactical decisions on the fly, and that clearly showed when tabletop masters clashed to see who had the best strategy and adaptability under pressure**

What distinguishes humans from the rest of the animal kingdom is the unquenchable thirst for improvement, which has proven to be instrumental in the survival and propagation of the species. This latent drive has manifested itself in various facets, and competition is no stranger to such moments.

Speaking of such, PATCA hosted an avenue for air traffic controllers to showcase their prowess in sports – the PATCA Sportsfest 2025! PATCA called out to ATC facilities all over the country to come forward with their coveted picks and represent the various teams to compete in Manila in the hottest sporting event of the year.

ATCs prepped between gruelling shifts to train for their respective events: basketball, volleyball, table tennis, chess, badminton, darts, mobile legends, and the annual cheerleading competition. Make no mistake, these events drew a mix of veterans and newcomers alike – showing that youth is a state of mind, especially in activities that holistically enrich controllers.

The event got off to a strong start with the cultural showcase of talent and confidence in the cheerleading competition. Each team had to come up with a theme to present to the crowd on judgment day.





With little than a month to prepare, not to mention doing it on top of back-to-back shifts, it showed how air traffic controllers are more than just thinking beings – they feel as well, and loudly at that! Reigning champion ATMC Approach took us back to the ‘70s with their concoction of ABBA hits and a surprise crowd number that captured the hearts of the judges.

Basketball is second nature to Filipinos, and it’s no surprise that it was one of the events most awaited by competitors and spectators alike. Everybody on and off the court was fixated on the ball and the basket, but it was the best at controlling the game who saw victory at the end of the final bout. Sweat poured, and spirit was exhibited in both the men’s and women’s categories by the Tower/Luzon team. Talk about complete domination?

Moving on. Peak athleticism and boundless energy were established from the get-go in the volleyball games of the PATCA Sportsfest 2025. Staying true to the name of the game, onlookers witnessed breathtaking volleys that left them wondering who would take the point. Spikes of pure explosiveness, blocks that were comparable to fortresses, and saves that made every difference in the game – the showmanship and sportsmanship displayed were unparalleled. Ultimately, ATMC Approach bagged the men’s event win while the ladies from Manila ACC made sure to bring home the bacon.

Now on to badminton. Nimbleness, agility, and precision were key in securing much-needed wins here. You know ATCs take fitness seriously when you see how these players move on the court. The rhythmic squeaks on the floor were followed by whistling whacks of the racquets; each mixed double team urged every fiber of their bodies to secure a win for their respective teams. And thus, the Vis/Min tandem emerged triumphant, second to none.

Another racquet sport, but make it table top – make no mistake, however. Things were just as vicious on the wooden stage as they were on the hard court in the table tennis event. Reflexes are everything in this sport, as displayed by the athletes of ATMC Approach, who bagged the men’s event, and the ladies’ category was dominated by Tower/Luzon. As for the mixed doubles, coordination magic was made a reality by team Vis/Min.



*(top) Arlene and Beverly, both from Team Visayas, struck a pose after the intense Badminton game (bottom) Volleyball players and that winning spike.*





Going into some serious focus and aim now. The darts event mainly saw veterans compete for the bull's-eye, familiar faces and lethal reputations in the sport shook hands as the event commenced. A flick of the wrist and an aim worthy of a marksman, ATMC Approach showed its indomitable prowess by bringing home the crown.

Encouraged by previous successful runs, the PATCA Sportsfest 2025 also held an esports event with its very own Mobile Legends leg. Teams scrambled to get into position, securing kills, getting the high ground, and plowing through defences to get the ultimate victory. Manila ACC proved to be the top team of the night, knocking down every competitor off the ranks and securing their win.



Intense and calculated – that's the vibe that hung in the air at the chess tournament of the annual sporting event. Controllers aren't new to making tactical decisions on the fly, and that clearly showed when tabletop masters clashed to see who had the best strategy and adaptability under pressure. Team Vis/Min showed their mettle in the battle of wits as no prisoners were taken during the showdown.

As the three-day event concluded, every shred of emotion was on display as every competitor and spectator wore their hearts on their sleeves. Scores were tallied, and the results showed that APPROACH/ATFM were the rightful victors. Coming in at their respective ranks are ACC, Luzon/Tower, and Vis/Min. As the fire of competition eventually flickered down and camaraderie was shared through laughs and bottles, it just showed how the PATCA Sportsfest 2025 was more than a sporting event: it was an avenue for connecting with fellow controllers, fostering bonds, and creating memories lasting a lifetime.

*(top) Team Approach showing their cheer  
cheerdance moves (bottom), game face on in  
one of the Table Tennis games.*





(top) Luzon Tower group in action.

(mid) Chess players from various teams.

(bottom) Cheerdance Competition champion with PATCA Committee Heads& Officers and the ATS Chief, Ms. Marlene Singson





# On-the-Job Training for Instructors (OJTI) Course for Air Traffic Control



**WORDS AND PHOTOS BY  
ARLENE D. PASAJE**

*Featuring the air traffic controllers on duty of Davao  
Radar Approach Control.*





*Participants of the first OJT Course conducted at the Cibil Aviation Training Center.*



**Manila, Philippines – June 24, 2025.** A milestone in aviation training is underway at the Civil Aviation Training Center (CATC) as twelve experienced air traffic controllers participate in a two-week On-the-Job Training (OJT) course for Air Traffic Control designed specifically for Facility Training Officers (FTOs). The program, which began on June 16, 2025, marks a critical step in developing the next line of mentors and evaluators in the air traffic control (ATC) community.

This specialized training focuses on equipping participants with the instructional and supervisory skills needed to serve as effective OJT Instructors (OJTIs) and FTOs within their respective air traffic service units. The curriculum covers principles of adult learning, human factors, OJT course preparation, performance monitoring, feedback techniques, and assessment and report writing—essential elements for training air traffic controllers in operational environments.



**“We are preparing these ATC trainers not just to supervise, but to mentor with authority, empathy, and technical excellence competently.”**

OJTIs are responsible for guiding trainees through live, operational environments where real-time decisions are crucial. Their duties include supervising on-the-job performance, providing structured feedback, ensuring adherence to standard and recommended practices (SARPS), correcting procedural lapses, promoting a robust safety culture, and evaluating whether a trainee is ready to assume full air traffic controller duties. They also ensure training documentation and act as frontline quality assurers in the ATC training system.

The training is being conducted by qualified OJTI instructors, Arlene Pasaje and Chadel Villabert, who have received advanced training abroad, are certified by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), and partner with civil aviation authorities in Thailand and Malaysia. These instructors bring international best practices and standards, ensuring that the course aligns with global aviation training benchmarks.







The pioneer class dubbed as PANTAS OJTI Batch 01/25, has twelve participants from the aerodrome, approach and enroute control divisions namely: Harold A. Balucating (ATMO IV, Manila Approach), Ariel E. Bonus, (ATMO III, Manila Enroute Control), Anthony Darwin T. Cruz, (ATMO IV, Kalibo Approach), Mary Grace M. Dalumpines, (ATMO IV Clark Approach), Melody B. Madrona, (ATMO III, Manila Tower), Antonio B. Pergamino, (ATMO IV, Panglao Tower), Maricor L. Singco, (ATMO III, Clark Approach), Henson A. Sorreda, (ATMO V, Manila Enroute Control), Philip C. Sullivan, (ATMO III, Manila Tower), Cherry V. Tempongko, (ATMO III, Davao Tower), Renato C. Tiu, Jr, (A ATMOV, Manila Enroute Control), Edgar Ricardo S. Tolentino, (ATMO IV, Mactan Approach).

“This course is more than a training requirement—it is an investment in the future of Philippine air traffic management,” Arlene Pasaje, one of the CATC OJTI training instructors, shared. “We are preparing these ATC trainers not just to supervise, but to mentor with authority, empathy, and technical excellence competently.”

The two-week training, which includes both classroom instruction and scenario-based simulated exercises, is part of the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines’ (CAAP) broader effort to strengthen training capacity in response to the country’s growing air traffic demand. As airspace operations become increasingly complex, the role of qualified FTOs and OJTIs remains crucial in maintaining safety and operational efficiency across Philippine skies.







# ICAO Workshop in Yogyakarta Strengthens Asia-Pacific Capacity Planning for Safer Skies

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY  
RENZ MARIONE BULSECO

**June 5, 2025 – Yogyakarta, Indonesia.** A four-day workshop hosted by the ICAO Asia Pacific Regional Office in partnership with AirNav Indonesia concluded in Yogyakarta on June 5, bringing together aviation stakeholders across the region to tackle one of the most urgent challenges facing aviation today—capacity assessment. With air traffic in the Asia Pacific projected to grow faster than any other region, the event underscored the need for States to adopt robust tools, frameworks, and collaborative practices to manage increasing demand safely and efficiently.

The ICAO Capacity Assessment Workshop focused on strengthening States' ability to evaluate both airspace and airport capacity, a critical foundation for effective Air Traffic Flow Management (ATFM). Participants discussed ICAO's global requirements under Annex 11 and Doc 4444, while aligning their efforts with the Universal Safety Oversight Audit Program (USOAP) obligations.







Roundtable discussions revealed that while some States, including the Philippines and Malaysia, have yet to conduct formal capacity assessments, there is a growing recognition of their importance. Challenges identified included limited technical expertise, fragmented coordination, and infrastructure bottlenecks. Delegates highlighted that capacity data is vital not only for ATFM but also for infrastructure planning, safety improvements, and operational efficiency.



The workshop showcased methodologies ranging from Aerodrome Arrival Rate calculations to advanced simulation tools like CAPAN and fast-time simulations. Collaborative Decision Making (CDM) practices were also emphasized as essential for improving predictability, optimizing resources, and managing both planned and unplanned disruptions.



Case studies, including lessons from New York's LaGuardia Airport, offered practical insights on handling congestion through measures such as wake turbulence reclassification and time-based separations.

By the end of the workshop, ICAO urged States to adopt regular capacity assessments, invest in ATFM systems, and strengthen collaboration among stakeholders such as airlines, airport operators, and ANSPs. Training air traffic controllers and planners in modeling, CDM, and flow management was identified as a key next step.

Deliverables included national roadmaps for capacity monitoring, increased awareness of collaborative frameworks, and stronger regional cooperation. ICAO emphasized that capacity building is not merely a technical exercise, but a shared responsibility essential to ensuring the safety and efficiency of the Asia Pacific's rapidly expanding skies.

**Collaborative Decision Making (CDM) practices were also emphasized as essential for improving predictability, optimizing resources, and managing both planned and unplanned disruptions.**





# Coffee Sessions with the Oscars: AO & OO

BY NEIL JOAZ LAGUNDINO (AO) & JETHRO MATTHEW ANTENOR (OO)



Whoever said that money cannot buy happiness, or that the beach is the only place for solace and retreat, hasn't been caffeinated in a coffee shop. One or two could never go wrong with a major, major 'educational' gossip with a heart and 'responsible' opinion-sharing for the world, the universe, rather, in a loft at the nook of a cafe while sipping a good cup of Joe, double shot, and an iced oat milk latte.

**AO:** Has it been more than a year since you joined the workforce?

**OO:** Yes, sir!

**AO:** You are relatively new in the environment, and surely you have something in mind to share. How has it been? Tell me.



**“You guys make one of the most stressful jobs in the world look like it is just a walk in the park with your calming voice guiding the vast sky.”**



**OO:** Well, it has been a pretty challenging year, especially right after graduation. With all the licensing and rating stuff, I believed I had lost so many hair strands from all the thinking and contemplating if I would make it or not. Thankfully, I have managed despite the odds.

**AO:** Congratulations! And no pressure, of course. Now you get the “perks” of being rated already. Just kidding! Well, things have pretty much changed over the years, and the workplace isn’t how it was envisioned and embraced as it was in the past. How did you feel working in our (home)court?

**OO:** Hmmmm, I actually have managed to draw the line between ‘work in’ and ‘working’; the former being my truth, and the latter being my reality.

**AO:** Oh, so deep, tell me more.

**OO:** Working in this industry, more specifically in the air traffic service, has made me put myself out there and be involved in ways I could explore myself and unleash my skills, though calculatedly, as efficiently as possible.

**AO:** So, like in simpler terms...

**OO:** I mean, “I work in the control tower, and I am working on myself to be better each day in my craft.” I never felt so distant and unwanted in this job, and that’s because I feel accepted and included despite the imperfections I may occasionally showcase. Actually...

**AO:** Oh, this is the exciting part, *sino ang pulutan natin for today’s video? Kanina pa ako napapaitan dito sa kape ko.*  
\*hey siri, translate the italicized words



In sports and ramp modelling, height, weight, and BMI, respectively, definitely do matter. One can't simply guard and block balls if he or she is twice as short as the offense. And definitely, no one in the crowd will notice a fashion emblem arranged on the front row if at college you don't simply equate your age vertically. "Nobody is tall, it just depends on who's beside you," you might say. Plus sizes haven't been so considerably striking and editorial like magazine shoots and featured mannequins while window-shopping. How offensive would that be? But that's true, however, did you know that there are jobs out there that are not too critical about your vertical statistics, nor your physical uniqueness, nor your fancy curves. Yes, you are right, ATC for one.

Juliet Uniform (JU) of RPLS briefly shares, "I think I'm doing okay, still polishing my skills. I haven't felt any height stigma since the visibility from the tower is generally good. During low visibility, since we handle some military aircraft, your height won't help in spotting them as they tend to blend into the skies, but your sharp and observant eyes do. I feel seen and heard since my teammates listen to my suggestions, which is nice as a newbie."

Oscar India (OI) of RPVP, on the other hand, said, "I never realized there was a stigma at all. I mean, I can see the 360 view from the tower without issue, and if anything obstructs my view, I can easily move around the cab. I have feet, you know. My height has never been an issue with my colleagues either. We're all treated equally at work, and I don't think height will ever influence whether I'm a good teammate in air traffic control or whether I want to be seen, valued, and heard as a controller."







Hotel Zulu (HZ) of RPLL, the ever-positive and radiant woman, said, “I have always been confident about my physical attributes; however, I can’t underestimate what others might perceive about me. And I am speaking not just for myself but also for those who share the same physical uniqueness. I believe that in this job, even though we are recognized through our voices and not our appearance, we are valued for our efficiency and capability. This is one thing I appreciate about the work: as long as I get the job done, I attract positive things as well. I have been included in planning and activities under the supervision of Manila Tower, and beyond the appreciation, I firmly believe that I am being prepared for something better. I’m truly excited about that!”,

**AO:** Oh wow, thank you for sharing about your batchmates’ sentiments in the workplace. It’s amazing how you guys have had experiences, varying, I may say, that are worthwhile. I commend you guys for being you. Keep on!

**OO:** Actually, I was a little hesitant to ask them about it because I know each workplace is different in terms of dynamics and mechanics. But I, too, appreciate their honesty in answering my mini survey.

*[Fast Cars by Tracy Champan playing]*

**AO:** Listen to that...

*{And I-I had a feeling that I belonged*

*I-I had a feeling I could be someone, be someone, be someone}*



**“You guys make one of the most stressful jobs in the world look like it is just a walk in the park with your calming voice guiding the vast sky.”**

A sense of belonging is a two-way street. You need to feel you belong in a group, a crowd, or a setting. The other side involves accepting others and showing generous tolerance for differences without indifference. There is still a long way to go between achieving equality and understanding the discipline that comes with rights and privileges, but the world is moving forward, as is the effort to create better workplaces and workspaces.

In a world where your very presence must be felt, and you need to find a place where you can solidify your position, knowing you matter, do you still feel like yourself? Do you act like yourself? Are you being yourself? After all, working in this job isn't just about the money. It's not even about the comfort of knowing that this job is so cool you don't bring work home—unless you do something wrong. Instead, it's about you being able to avoid constricting yourself based on society's controls—what you can and cannot do. You are far more than that; you just need to be yourself.

*Shirley-B: Venti Pumpkin Spiced Latte for the Oscars! Venti Pumpkin Spiced Latte for the Oscars is ready! At the counter, please!*

This is for YOU, readers. *Kape na ta!*







# From the Pilot's Perspective

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY  
PATRICK ROA

**Air traffic controllers guide every flight with precision, keeping skies safe through constant communication with pilots. But what happens when the headset comes off —what's it really like to stand in their shoes?**

In the cockpit, there's a quiet moment before every takeoff when the world seems to pause. The checklist is complete, the runway stretches ahead, and all the preparation comes down to this: trust — trust in the aircraft, in ourselves, and in the people working behind the scenes to get this flight off the ground and keep the skies ahead safe.

Welcome to the aviation ecosystem — or as we simply call it, 'The System.'



**Whether it's the measured cadence of Singapore Approach, the calm authority of Oakland Oceanic, or the crisp precision of London Center, every ATC I've spoken to carries the same responsibility: to guide us safely and keep order in the busiest skies on Earth.**



For us pilots, controlling the aircraft is our primary responsibility. But control of the skies? That belongs to a much larger team — one we share with the men and women of Air Traffic Control. From the moment we push back to the instant the parking brakes are set at our destination — whether it's a short hop or a faraway time zone — ATCs are there, working with us to manage the invisible highways above.

### **One Sky, One Mission**

Every pilot knows the feeling of being fully in command — hands on the controls, eyes on the horizon, focused on the mission ahead. But even as we make decisions in the cockpit, we rely on ATCs to ensure separation, manage traffic, and provide the clearances that keep the entire system moving safely.

And make no mistake — they face enormous challenges. Weather disruptions, diversions, in-flight emergencies, downgraded approaches, airport closures, FIR restrictions, traffic congestion — sometimes all happening at once while hundreds of aircraft carrying thousands of passengers traverse their airspace.

So what is it like to be in their seat? Imagine playing a live, three-dimensional game of Tetris — with blocks of different sizes, speeds, and directions. Only these “blocks” have people in them.

There's an unspoken partnership between pilots and controllers, built on mutual respect and deep trust. Simple instructions — “Cleared for takeoff,” “Climb and maintain Flight Level 350,” “Proceed direct,” “Free speed (EU),” “Block FL100 to FL160 (Flight Test),” or “Cleared to the corridor at time XXX Zulu (Supersonic)” — carry far more weight than just operational meaning.



Each phrase reflects confidence: trust that someone is watching, coordinating, and protecting everyone in their sky.

## Crossing Oceans, Crossing Boundaries

Over the years, I've been fortunate to fly across continents and oceans — from commercial operations to long-haul ferry flights and test missions. I've crossed countless Flight Information Regions: Manila to Melbourne, Phoenix to Keflavik, China to Dubai, Cairo to London, Honolulu to Bogotá — and no matter where I go, I've found the same thing: ATCs worldwide share the same professionalism and dedication to safety. Accents may change, but the mission never does.

Whether it's the measured cadence of Singapore Approach, the calm authority of Oakland Oceanic, or the crisp precision of London Center, every ATC I've spoken to carries the same responsibility: to guide us safely and keep order in the busiest skies on Earth.

These seamless handoffs from one FIR to another remind me that aviation is truly a global community. Different roles, different cultures, but one shared purpose — to get everyone to their destination safely.



## Teamwork That Transcends the Radio

I've had my share of 'situations' over the years:

- Cutting a fuel injector line on takeoff from MNL Runway 13 — and getting cleared back to 31 in a heartbeat instead of becoming a smoking crater in Merville (aka The Impossible Turn)
- Losing all hydraulics in the Aleutians and making it back to Adak on an NDB-DME approach in weather.
- A time-critical medical emergency en route to Sydney that forced a sudden diversion to Darwin.
- Losing HF comms over the Pacific — saved only by a SatCom miracle.

In every one of these moments, I was never alone. There was always a voice on the other side — calm, composed, clearing the way ahead. Their professionalism steadied mine.

We may be separated by thousands of feet and hundreds of miles, but through radio calls, CPDLC texts, or SatCom relays, we work as one team. Pilots bring the aircraft home; controllers clear the path to get us there — safely and efficiently.

## A Day the Skies Went Silent

On January 1, 2023, while much of the country celebrated the New Year, something unthinkable happened. In an instant, the entire Philippine Air Traffic Control system — covering every inch of our national airspace — went dark.

An uncontained power outage blanked every screen, silenced every frequency, and rendered controllers suddenly blind, deaf, and mute. Backup systems failed to engage. No radar. No radios. No procedures for what came next.



This was a Black Swan event — the kind of crisis no manual anticipated, no simulator prepared for. Yet, outside, dozens of aircraft continued flying, unaware of the unfolding catastrophe, waiting for instructions that would never come. Some were on dangerous converging trajectories, separated only by minutes.

Inside the darkened ATC room, there was no time to hesitate. The duty supervisor acted instantly, dispatching a controller on his personal motorbike to Manila Tower to deliver instructions in person: recover those within the control zone, divert ALL flights, and stand down operations.

Stripped of their tools and technology, controllers reached for their personal cellphones, calling neighboring ATC centers one by one — Singapore, Hong Kong, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, Taipei — explaining the crisis and asking them to recover every flight in Philippine skies.

For a moment, it felt like the early hours after 9/11: uncertainty, grounded flights, and an eerily silent sky. But through ingenuity, composure, and teamwork, a handful of ATC professionals averted what could have been a global aviation catastrophe.

### **Unsung Heroes of the Sky**

In the days that followed, headlines swirled. Politicians issued statements. Promises were made. But in all the noise, there was little mention of the small team who faced the unthinkable — and prevailed.



There were no grand ceremonies. No big names. Just a simple, quiet recognition attended by a few, where these men and women were thanked and recognized for their extraordinary actions.

But make no mistake: their work that day saved countless lives. They held the line when everything else failed. They proved that even when the systems go dark, human skill, judgment, and calm under pressure remain our greatest safeguard.

To me — and to every pilot who has ever entrusted their life to the voice on the other end of the radio — these are heroes. And their story deserves to be remembered, not just within aviation, but by a grateful nation.

### **Shared Goals, Shared Responsibility**

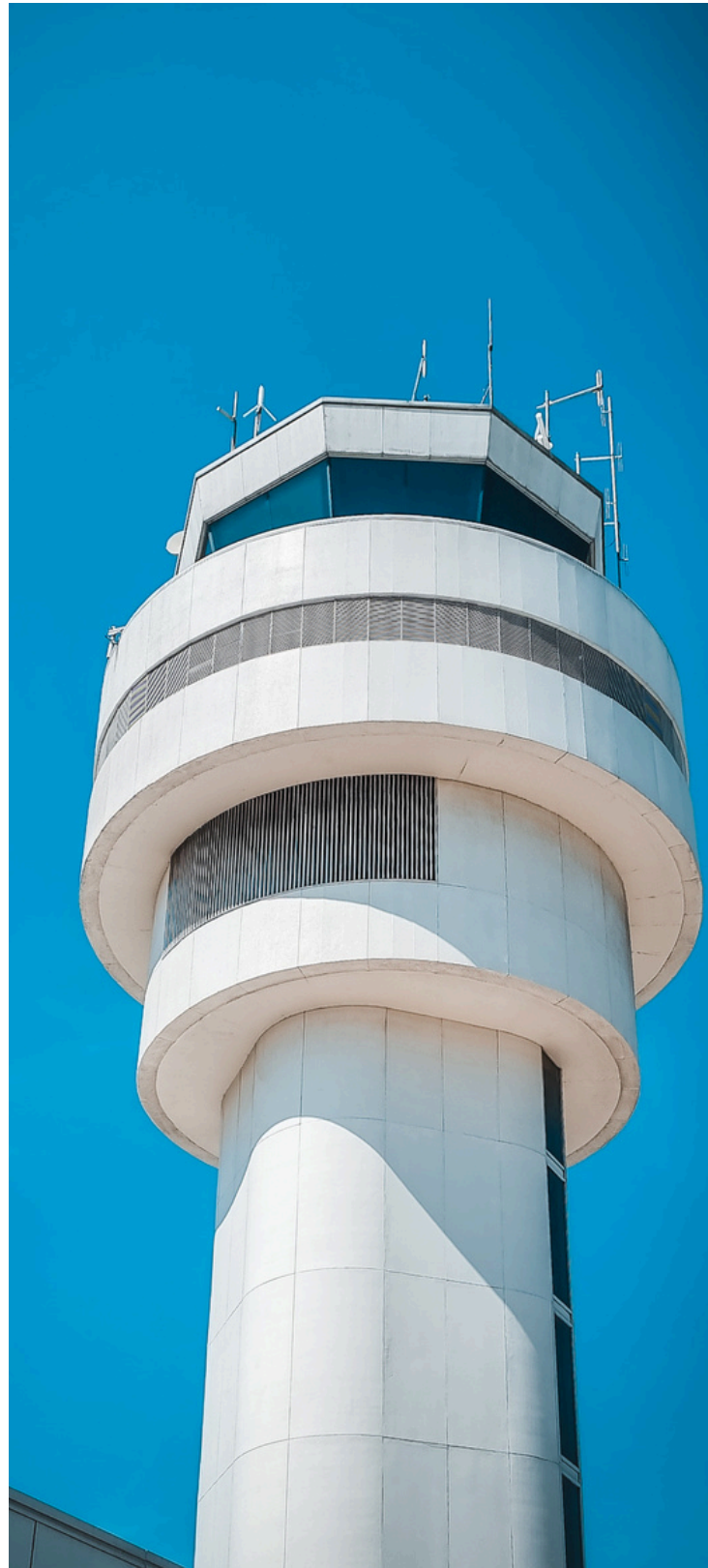
At the end of every flight, whether it's a short hop or a transoceanic crossing, our mission is the same: bring everyone home safely. That's the promise we make as pilots, and it's the same promise ATCs help us fulfill every single day.

For those of us who've been privileged to fly — and for the professionals who keep watch from the ground — we are all part of “Rhe System”: one mission, one sky, one shared responsibility.

The trust between pilots and ATCs isn't just procedural — it's personal.

To all my colleagues in PATCA: thank you for the professionalism, the calm voices, and the countless unseen actions that keep our flights safe. From one pilot's perspective, we couldn't do it without you.

*...Requesting direct...* 😊





# My IFATCA APRM 2024 Experience



**WORDS BY JUNNAMIN D. LATIP | PHOTOS BY JOY MORILES**

*Plane tickets - check!*

*Slacks and barong - check!*

*Passport - uh oh, passport...*

Travelling all the way from Cotabato City—arriving in Pasay two days earlier before our flight to India—I thought I had all the essentials packed in my bags. But just when I was about to get off the bus at NAIA Terminal 2, panic started creeping in when I realized that the most essential item of them all—my passport—was not in my bag and was left at home in Cotabato City.

What about the event currently taking place in India?

The three-day event—from 9th to 11th November 2024—in New Delhi, India, gathered Air Traffic Controllers, members of the ICAO, various aviation professionals, and key stakeholders from across the Asia Pacific region for the 40th IFATCA Asia Pacific Regional Meeting.

With a theme “Safety in Future Air Traffic Management”, discussions revolved around technologies and innovations affecting airspace operations, their recent status and possible future developments, as well as their impact to safety and its management. Drone operations, Free Route Airspace operations, and spoofing were among the topics discussed.

Drone—a technology commonly used in agriculture, photography, videography, mapping, law enforcement, reconnaissance, and surveillance—is evolving and is now even being used for logistics such as delivery of packages and transport of medical supplies. Imagine a future where packages are flying over your head, moving from multiple directions, being controlled by operators who are in contact with an air traffic controller who then is monitoring every drone movement to ensure safe operations and prevent collisions, which could cause fatal injuries due to debris or packages falling over someone’s cranium. Well, while that isn’t exactly the case yet, current State policies and regulations regarding drone operations may change in the future to address new safety issues and adapt to the evolving capacity and advancements of drone technology.







*(top) Philippine delegates with ATCs from India*

*(mid) Quick discussions during the conference.*

*(bottom) Alfred Hermosilla presenting the MA Report*



From low-altitude logistic operations using drones, the discussion also covered the future of supersonic and hypersonic transport through the Free Route Airspace (FRA) Operations.

As its title suggests, Free Route Airspace Operations mean operations in an airspace where users can freely choose and plan a route from defined entry and exit points. It's like direct routing, but doesn't necessarily have to be a single path from one point to another. It may have other waypoints as necessary and as indicated in the filed flight plan. With FRA, supersonic and hypersonic aircraft can cross multiple regions or countries with a more seamless route. Most of Europe's airspace has already implemented FRA, with its final stage of implementation expected to be completed by December 2025. This innovation in airspace design aims to improve flight efficiency and promote sustainable aviation through reduced fuel consumption and emissions. However, this innovation also presents new and unique challenges when it comes to deviations due to weather, coordination between adjacent area centers, and conflict management at the borders.

GNSS Jamming and Spoofing, a critical safety concern in aviation, was also addressed on the first day of the 3-day event. GNSS Jamming occurs when unwanted signals interfere, overpower, or block satellite signals, leading to loss of positioning, navigation, and timing (PNT) service, while spoofing occurs when counterfeit signals are used to mislead a receiver into indicating false PNT information. Spoofing—a highly alarming safety concern—risks deviation from the intended route, loss of separation, and entry into restricted or prohibited airspace.

The first day of the event was packed with knowledge and insights from the technical discussions presented by the expert panelists. The day was made fun and lighter by the local dance troupe when they showcased their Bollywood-like choreographies and amazed the crowd with an exhilarating performance of their various cultural Indian dances. Only, it's sad that I wasn't there to groove with the dance moves but thankfully, I made it just in time for lunch. As a cheese-lover, I was excited to eat anything with paneer!

The second day of the event focused on discussing the welfare of Air Traffic Controllers (ATCOs). Following the Haneda crash, every Member Association (MA) in the Asia Pacific region was asked to present their State's process for accident and incident investigation. Ms. Cheryl Chen, Executive Vice President Asia Pacific, strongly emphasized in her speech that Air Traffic Controllers shall have immunity from prosecution, and no punitive action shall be taken for acts done in good faith in the performance of official duties. Instead, inputs from ATCOs during investigation shall be used to improve safety procedures and strengthen training programs. Moreover, staff shortages—a common concern among the MAs—remain reportedly prevalent. The day ended cheerfully after the re-election of Ms. Cheryl Chen as the EVP Asia Pacific and was even more exciting after the announcement of the hosts of the next Asia Pacific Regional Meetings—Macau for 2025 and Japan for 2026. A special dinner gathering was arranged for ATCOs to dine, celebrate, have fun, and get to know more fellow ATCOs from different MAs.



The 3rd day marked the success and the culmination of the event. The afternoon was spent with a tour of New Delhi, visiting landmarks with historical significance and architectural splendor—one is the Rashtrapati Bhavan, official residence of the President of India which was built in 1912 during the British rule, and the other is India Gate, a war memorial built to honor the 70,000 Indian soldiers of the British Indian Army who lost their lives.

Finally, one must not leave India without visiting its most famous landmark, designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and recognized as one of the New 7 Wonders of the World—the Taj Mahal. Decorated with Makrana marbles and exquisitely carved pietra dura inlaid with precious stones, this marvelous monument is a manmade manifestation of love and the glorious Mughal age. Fun fact!—The Taj Mahal is a mausoleum and not a mosque. It was built by the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan in commemoration of his favorite wife, Empress Mumtaz Mahal. Their tombs are chambered inside this majestic wonder.

This event in India, to me personally, is one for the books—or the magazine, in this case. Thankfully, my passport was delivered immediately, the next day, allowing me to catch the next available flights and become part of this historical event.

United by common goals, dreams, and aspirations, IFATCA embraces advancements in ATM technologies while recognizing the vital role and inputs of ATCOs in the implementation of any significant changes to procedures, policies, or regulations. Most of all, IFATCA continues to protect the welfare of ATCOs, and—towards a safer skies—IFATCA highlights how our voices should be used to strengthen training programs and enhance safety procedures.



# Welcome CATS 17!



## A NEW GENERATION OF AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS, WITH SAME GOALS

The Philippine Air Traffic Controllers Association (PATCA) recently welcomed its newest members from CATS 17, marking an important milestone in their journey as aviation professionals. During the event, PATCA officers and committee heads gave short presentations introducing their respective communities, highlighting the value of active participation and the strong sense of solidarity that membership brings.

They also underscored PATCA's vital role not only in advancing the welfare and professional development of controllers in the Philippines, but also in representing the country on the international stage through collaboration with global air traffic management organizations. The event served both as an introduction and an invitation for the new members to embrace their responsibilities and opportunities as part of a community dedicated to the safe and efficient management of the skies.







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