

# skyTrack

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF PATCA

IFATCA APRM &  
CBTA 2025

TEN NOTEBOOKS AND A  
DECADE OF HOPE

THE HEALTH AND  
WELLNESS ERA OF AIR  
TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS



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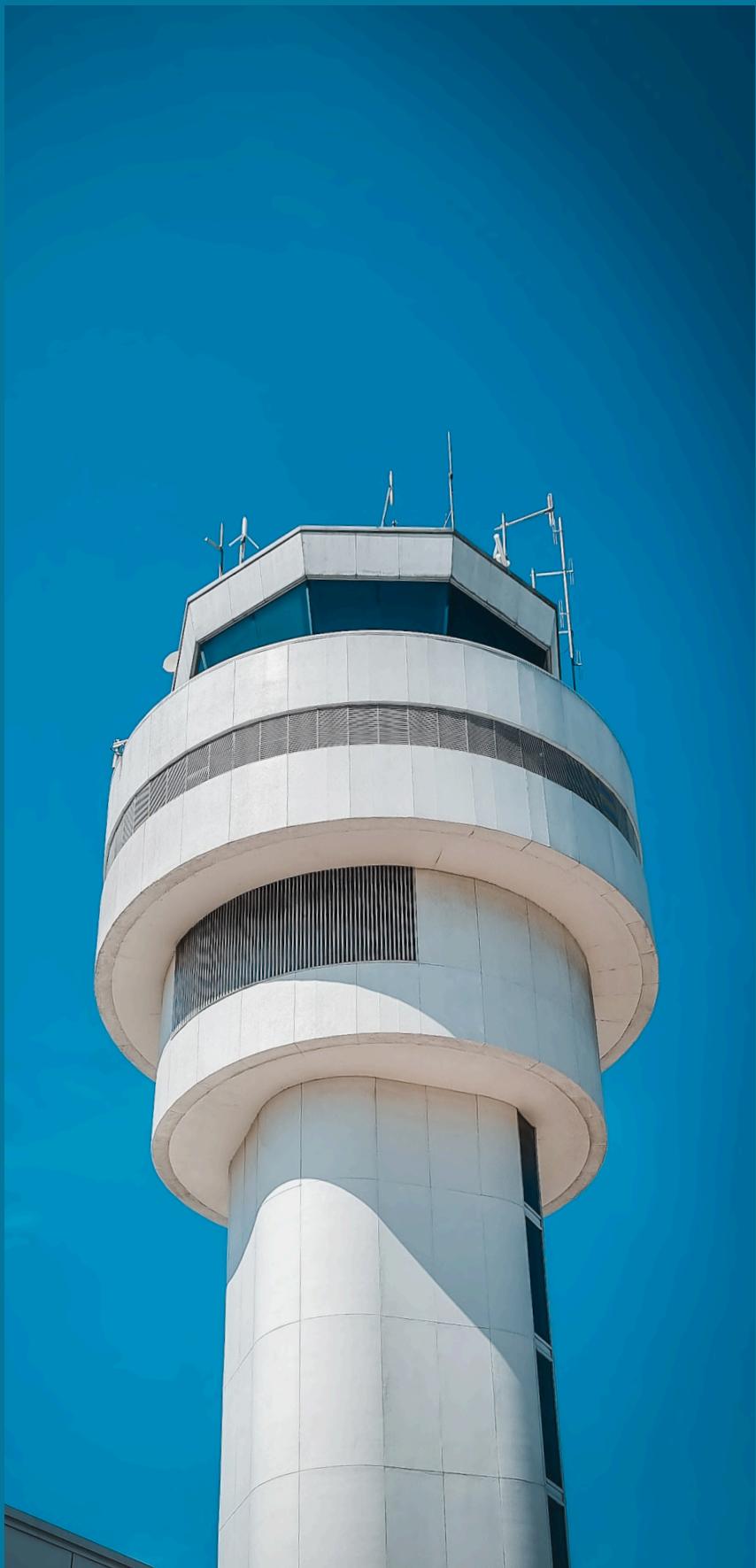
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The brightest paths begin right here at home. Giving back to her community means empowering children to soar higher than she ever could.



# From the Editor

Who would've thought we're already approaching the end of 2025? The year has moved swiftly, almost quietly, as if carried by the very winds that guide our aircraft. Perhaps this is what happens when one's days are spent in service: that time seems to fly when we do work that matters. And in air traffic control, where shifts blend into holidays and responsibilities extend beyond the calendar, the passage of time feels uniquely different.

For most people, the Christmas season is all about going home. Everyone's catching flights, reuniting with family, and celebrating long-awaited traditions. But in our profession, the holidays look a little different. While passengers fill terminals and aircraft crisscross the skies, air traffic controllers remain at their posts. We guide each flight with vigilance and calm, ensuring that every traveler reaches the people waiting for them. While others board planes home, we keep watch.

The Yuletide season is often called the season of giving, and rightly so. Yet giving is a concept we sometimes misunderstand. Many of us give everything. We give our time, effort, and energy until nothing remains for ourselves. That is why, in this issue of **SkyTrack**, I'd like to reflect on three meaningful forms of giving: giving back to the world, to the community, and to ourselves.

Giving takes many forms in our profession. We give back to the world by upholding the highest standards of safety, continuously improving our skills, and honoring the responsibility entrusted to us.



We give back to the communities that shaped us by sharing our knowledge, supporting local initiatives, and inspiring those who dream of joining aviation someday. And most importantly, we give back to ourselves by recognizing that rest and well-being are essential to sustaining the demanding work we do. Through these three forms of giving, we strengthen not just our profession, but the people and places that ground us.

At the end of the day, the magic of this profession reveals itself in the simplest moments. It's in the quiet satisfaction of handing off an aircraft safely. It's in the relief of pilots thanking us after a turbulent sector. And most of all, it's in knowing that somewhere, in terminals across the country and around the world, passengers are embracing their loved ones because we guided them safely home. Those reunions, though we witness them from afar, are the most fulfilling reminders of why we do what we were trained for.

From all of us at **SkyTrack**, thank you for keeping the skies safe. And thank you for giving, not just during Christmas, but every single day you serve the flying public.

**RENZ MARIONE BULSECO**

Editor-in-Chief



# Sweet Skies and Fun Signs

BY SAMANTHA MEI ARTIGA | PHOTOS BY PATCA

**The Philippine Air Traffic Controllers' Association (PATCA) proudly concludes another successful edition of the "Sweet Skies & Fun Signs" Photo Contest. This annual event continues to showcase the creativity, humor, and lively spirit of our ATC community.**

Building on the excitement and imagination of previous years, this year's contest once again demonstrated how our PATCA Member Chapters across the country can turn everyday ATC moments into works of art and fun stories. From aviation-inspired cakes to witty signs that reflect the realities of ATC life, participants submitted entries filled with teamwork, originality, and pride.

After a thorough judging process and eager public participation, we are excited to announce this year's winners:



## Funniest Sign Award (Best Fun Sign)

Caption/Message: Inside a Controller's head is a busy airspace of responsibility, jokes, and sarcasm that is (arguably) 100% anchored in truth. Here's how our mind wanders!

### Contributors: RPLK ATCs

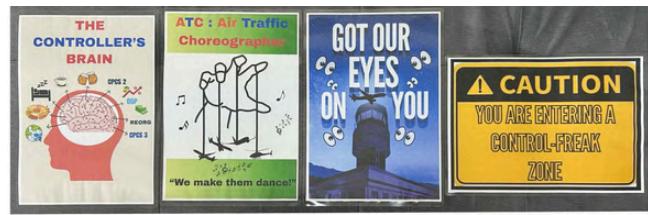
## Double victory for RPLK TWR/APP!

Bicol TWR/APP proudly takes home two major awards this year, sweeping both the Sweetest Sky Award (Best Cake Design) and the Funniest Sign Award. Their aviation-themed cake impressed judges with its creativity and detailed craftsmanship, while their witty collection of ATC-inspired fun signs captured the perfect blend of humor and tower life. RPLK's entries stood out for their originality, teamwork, and strong ATC spirit, earning them well-deserved recognition in both categories.

### Sweetest Sky Award (Best Cake Design)

Caption/Message: You asked for a cake? We give you a tableful of visual delights! At Bicol Tower/Approach, we always go the extra mile.... But wait! WHERE'S THE CAKE?

### Contributors: RPLK ATCs





## People's Choice Award – Tower Pride

### RPUX TWR

Plaridel Aerodrome Control Tower captured the hearts of the ATC community with its vibrant, playful cake design, earning the People's Choice Award in the Best Cake category. Their entry featured an adorable replica of the RPUX control tower, surrounded by colorful elements and charming characters positioned on dynamic, runway-themed lanes.

Set against the background of their actual airfield, the cake beautifully combined creativity with local tower pride, making it not only visually appealing but also deeply meaningful to their unit. With a large number of likes and reactions on Facebook, RPUX's entry stood out as a clear community favorite, showcasing both artistry and team spirit.

#### **Caption/Message: FLY-RIDEL**

Fly and Ride at Plaridel — Where Dreams Rise at Sweet Skies

From ramp to departure, ATC's got your back! Experience the thrill of flight and feel your dreams take off at Plaridel — where every call, every climb, and every cloud inspires.

**Name of Contributors: Plaridel Aerodrome Control Tower ATS Personnel**

## People's Choice Award – Fun Sign

### RPMR TWR/APP

Tambler TWR/APP won the People's Choice Award in the Fun Sign category with a humorous and cleverly relatable entry that quickly became a crowd favorite. Their sign, "Even Big Birds Can't Beat a Single Dog on the Runway," perfectly captured a memorable reality in airport operations.

The team's presentation added charm: posing proudly in the tower, all signaling "STOP" as they showcased their witty sign. The combination of humor, authenticity, and a situation every ATC can relate to helped the entry gain the most reactions on Facebook, making RPMR's submission the clear community winner.



**United in purpose, we are the indispensable force, safety steering our skies.**

Contributors: General Santos Chapter Members

Edgardo C. Cueto, Gaspar F. Figueroa, Radjie A. Rivera, Myra P. Caga-anan, Melvin R. Sajenes, Patrick Henry S. Cole, Ralph Luke L. Oljol, Mario Louie F. Nievares, Kelvin Troy V. Bariñan, Albert A. Pepito, Leslie Marie N. Mangonon, Toni N. Abiera



## A Showcase of Talent in the ATC Community

This year's contest proved how creative and lively our ATC units are, balancing our serious duties with moments of joy and self-expression.

We thank all participating towers and approach units, our panel of judges headed by Ms. Marlene Singson, and the ATC community that supported and celebrated each entry.

Your energy and creativity made Sweet Skies & Fun Signs a meaningful and memorable event.

PATCA remains dedicated to organizing activities that strengthen camaraderie, highlight talents, and celebrate the unique culture of Philippine ATCs.

Stay tuned for next year's event, and once again, congratulations to all our winners!

# The 41<sup>st</sup> IFATCA Asia Pacific Regional Meeting & CBTA Workshop

The 41<sup>st</sup> IFATCA Asia Pacific Regional Meeting

ALL WEATHER OPERATIONS IN AERODROME



WORDS AND PHOTOS BY  
ETHAN JAN ORTIZ



Participants of the 41<sup>ST</sup> IFATCA APRM held in Macau SAR, China



From Manila gusts to Macau glitz, overcast clouds and gusty winds in Manila offered an energetic prelude that mirrored my excitement as we took off to attend my first IFATCA-Asia Pacific Regional Meeting (APRM) in Macau and the Competency-Based Training and Assessment (CBTA) in Hong Kong.

The IFATCA-Asia Pacific Regional Meeting is an annual conference for Air Traffic Controllers across the Asia Pacific region. Delegates discuss the current challenges faced by ATCs, provide updates on new strategies, and harmonize regional standards to ensure the safety of air travel.

Arriving in Macau, we dragged our formal-attire-filled suitcases through the grand hotel lobby of the Galaxy Hotel—not to check in, but merely to reach the venue for a casual pre-conference dinner with other IFATCA delegates. Beyond the radar screens and headsets, Air Traffic Controllers can truly bond over good food and an even better conversation. That night, I met ATCs from Japan and Taiwan, and we shared our enthusiasm for aviation and exchanged random stories about stressful days and post-work rituals. Suffice to say, I slept well, genuinely excited to meet the rest of the ATC delegations.

**“...with discussions that underscored the indispensable role of meteorology in ensuring the safe and efficient control of air traffic.”**



The 41st IFATCA Asia Pacific Regional Meeting has the theme “All Weather Operations in Aerodrome”. With an approaching tropical storm, T.S. FengShen, it couldn’t be any more timely. The three days of the APRM were incredibly informative, with discussions that underscored the indispensable role of meteorology in ensuring the safe and efficient control of air traffic. It was a great experience to appreciate exactly how real-time meteorological information empowers both ATCs and pilots to navigate the unpredictability of weather.

Beyond the technical discussions, one of the aspects I most anticipated was hearing the updates from other Member Associations (MAs). Being informed about the activities of our regional counterparts makes IFATCA Asia Pacific truly cohesive. We not only compared struggles and identified similar challenges, but also learned about interesting initiatives, such as that certain MAs visit another MA’s facilities, which I hope we can adopt in the Philippines.



# The 41<sup>st</sup> IFATCA APRM Gala Dinner & MATCA 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner



Perhaps one of the most notable parts of the APRM was the Gala Dinner, held on the first evening. The atmosphere was immediately more relaxed than the day's sessions, offering the perfect opportunity to socialize and informally bond with fellow ATCs. I happened to sit beside an ATC couple from Hong Kong who shared an unforgettable story: during the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo in the 90s, they handled a memorable shift involving countless diversions and deviations. Our conversation flowed seamlessly, ranging from highly technical ATC specifics to knowing the names of their cats.

On the last day of the APRM, next year's host, the Japan Federation of Air Traffic Controllers, provided an extensive and highly informative heads-up for the upcoming 42nd APRM. The Japanese delegation presented an amazing preview of what to expect, and their presentation, delivered while they charmingly wore traditional Happi coats, only intensified the anticipation for next year's meeting.

After the 41st APRM officially closed, the Macau Air Traffic Controllers' Association generously offered a tour of the city. We visited the A-Ma Temple, the Ruins of St. Paul's, and Senado Square. Following the tour and bidding farewell to the other delegates, Team Philippines gathered for a debriefing dinner, sharing laughs and reflecting on how positively eventful this year's APRM had been. After dinner, we wasted no time heading to Hong Kong for our next agenda: the Competency-Based Training and Assessment workshop.



(top) Aldrin Rogado presented the MA report of PATCA

(mid) Delegates of the APRM attended the cultural tour in Macau

(bottom) Japan presented their initial plans for the APRM 2026 to be held in Tokyo, Japan

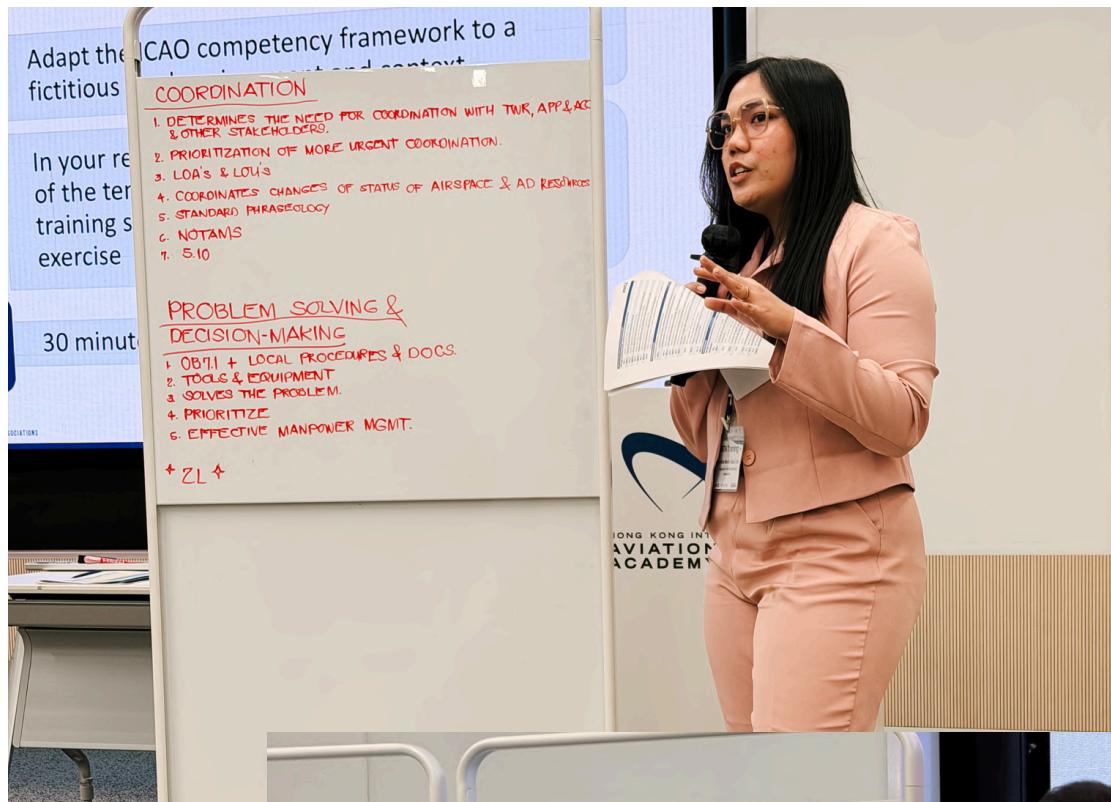




The Competency-Based Training and Assessment (CBTA) Workshop, co-hosted by the Hong Kong International Aviation Academy, is an IFATCA training program specifically designed for ATCs and ATC trainers. The program focuses on implementing strategies for efficient training, emphasizing the overall performance of trainees, and effectively addressing critical gaps in current training methods.

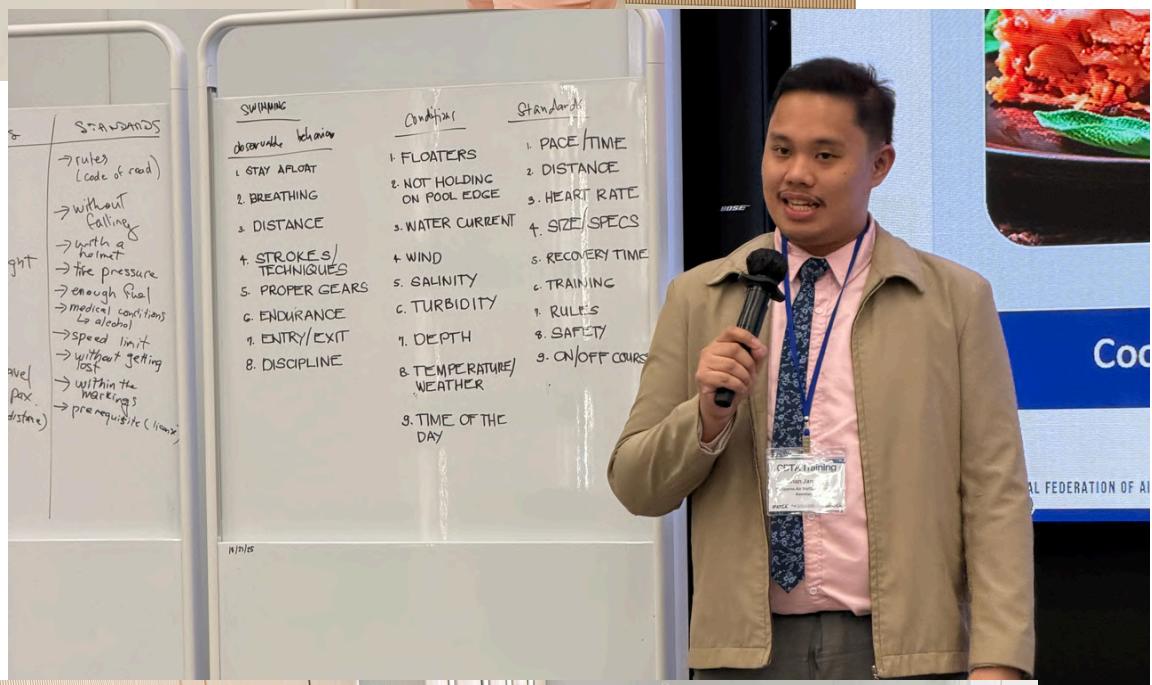
The two-day workshop solidified my appreciation that while no single solution is perfect for training air traffic controllers, Competency-Based Training and Assessment (CBTA) is truly a game-changer. CBTA enables trainers to determine training gaps, assess overall trainee performance holistically, and generate improved, targeted training plans. Although I am not yet a trainer, I can apply the CBTA framework in my operational role. This allows me to make my self-assessment, feedback digestion, and professional conversations more structured and effective. The workshop also featured several group activities, which I eagerly anticipated as a chance to collaborate with fellow ATCs. I even had the opportunity to present our group's output to everyone in the workshop once.

The five-day journey, from the IFATCA APRM in Macau to the CBTA Workshop in Hong Kong, was a profound investment in my professional life. The APRM reinforced the reality of regional unity and strengthened my network. Crucially, the CBTA workshop provided a game-changing methodology that, even as an operational controller, I can now apply to make my self-assessment and performance analysis more structured and effective. I returned home equipped with both a wider professional community and a renewed, data-driven perspective on air traffic management.



(top and mid) Elle dela Cruz and Ethan Ortiz from Kalibo Approach sharing their insights in one of the CBTA activities

(bottom) Team PATCA actively participates in the CBTA workshop held at Hong Kong



# Strengthening Global Voices: Why Representation Matters in IFATCA

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY  
RENZ MARIONE BULSECO



When the Philippines hosted the IFATCA Asia Pacific Regional Meeting (APRM) in Cebu three years ago, I had no idea that the experience would alter the course of my professional journey. After the event, Cheryl and JF encouraged me to join what would eventually become the IFATCA Communications Team, back when “Comms Team” wasn’t even a formal concept yet. Despite the work being entirely voluntary, I knew it was an opportunity I couldn’t afford to miss. The energy that the APRM gave, like meeting colleagues from across the region, exchanging ideas, and witnessing the vibrancy of our profession, opened my eyes. If one regional event could be this inspiring, how much more on the international stage?



Fast forward to today: I am one of the pioneer members of the IFATCA Communications Team. We built the team from scratch, managing the federation's social media channels and supporting the broader objectives of the 2030+ Task Force. None of us had formal training in communications; everything was learned through trial, error, and a lot of research. Some plans succeeded, others did not. But what struck me most was the synergy. Despite differences in culture, background, and time zones, everyone was united by one purpose. It was in that teamwork that I felt, with certainty, that I belonged.

Colleagues often ask what I gain from these extra responsibilities. There are no allowances, no stipends, just work freely given. My answer has always been the same: networking is more valuable than money. It cannot pay the bills, yes, but it expands one's world in ways nothing else can.

Understanding how deeply interconnected our profession is, and how our roles resonate beyond our individual facilities, impacts how we see ourselves as air traffic controllers. Representation, especially for the Philippines and our region, matters. It amplifies our presence, our perspectives, and our contributions.

Decades ago, IFATCA called itself an international federation, but representation was far from global. Europe and North America were undeniably instrumental in shaping the technologies and procedures many of us use today, but voices from Asia Pacific, Africa, and the Middle East were noticeably fewer. That imbalance was one of my motivations for getting involved. Because, a truly international federation must reflect the diversity of its membership.

**“...networking is more valuable than money. It cannot pay the bills, yes, but it expands one’s world in ways nothing else can. “**



In 2023, I was invited to become a corresponding member of the Technical and Operations Committee (TOC). Our work involves taking on job cards aligned with our technical expertise and developing working papers on issues central to our profession. I still recall my first TOC meeting in Melbourne. To say it was intimidating was a huge understatement. But with unwavering support from fellow TOC members and encouragement from PATCA, I eventually presented my first working paper at the Annual Conference in Singapore in 2024, the same year I was elected to the committee.

Now, nearly three years into serving the committee, with two consecutive terms as an elected member, I carry with me an immense sense of growth and gratitude. The learning has been profound. I've gained a deeper understanding of the technical complexities of our work, strengthened my networking and public speaking skills, and found lifelong friends from every corner of the world. Most importantly, I've been able to represent my home country on an international platform. That's something that fills me with pride every single time.

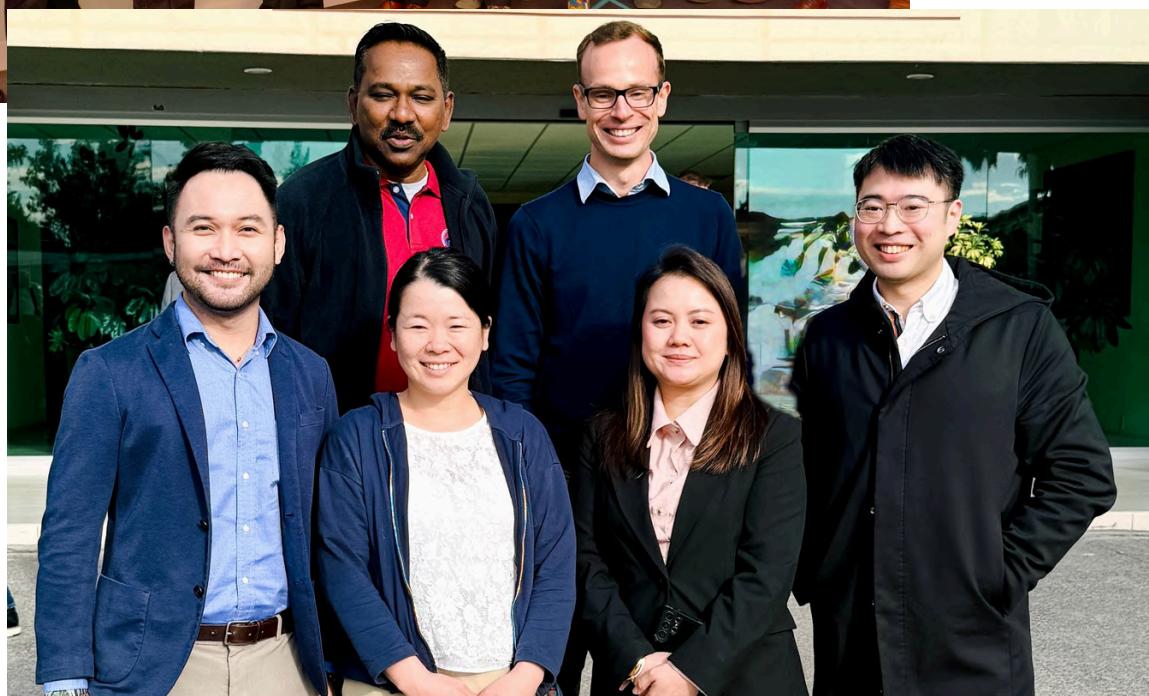
Today, IFATCA's committees truly embody diversity, welcoming more member associations into the fold each year. They mirror the world we serve: varied, dynamic, interconnected. And that, at its core, is what representation means. This ensures that every voice, culture, and region has a place in shaping the future of our profession.

It is a privilege to contribute to a federation that upholds values aligned with both IFATCA and PATCA: inclusion, collaboration, diversity, and global solidarity. This is the work that keeps our community strong, and I am grateful to be part of it.

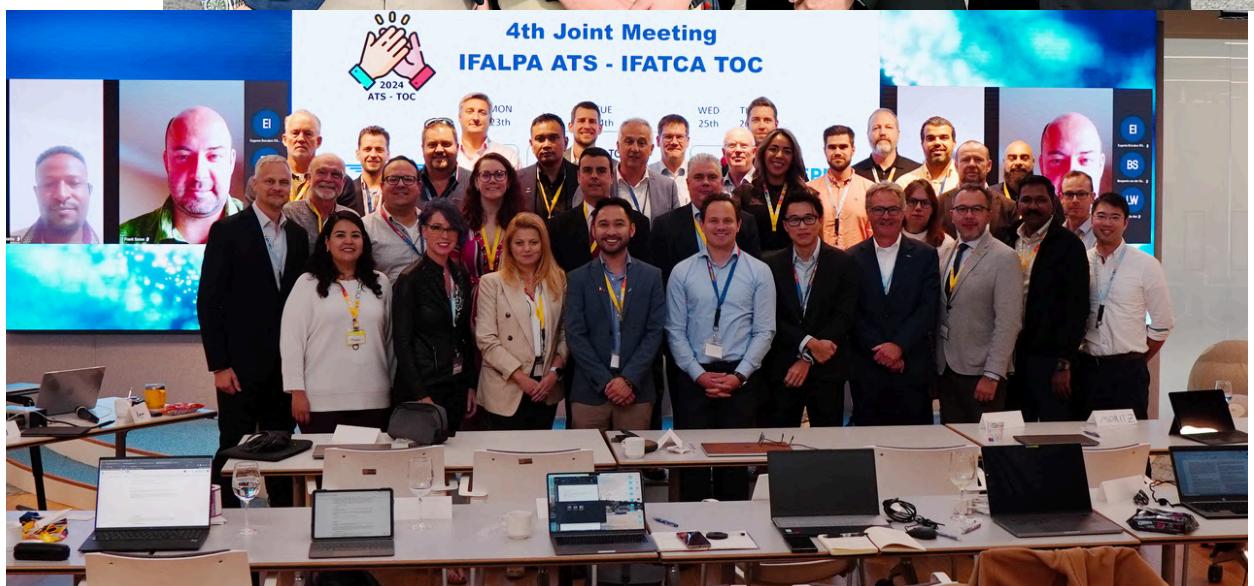




(top) IFATCA TOC  
Meeting in Melbourne;  
October 2023



(mid) Team Asia Pacific  
during the TOC/PLC  
meeting in Mexico City;  
January 2025



(bottom) IFATCA TOC  
and IFALPA ATS Meeting  
in Madrid, Spain;  
September 2024

# Strengthening Regional Collaboration: My Experience at the ATMB & IATA Workshop in Xi'an and Lanzhou



WORDS AND PHOTOS BY RENZ MARIONE BULSECO

Attending the APAC ATCO Competency Enhancement and Collaborative Development Workshop in Xi'an and representing PATCA and IFATCA was one of the most enriching professional experiences I've had in recent years. Hosted by the Air Traffic Management Bureau of China (ATMB) and the International Air Transport Association (IATA), the workshop gathered air navigation service providers, airlines, and aviation experts from across the Asia-Pacific region for four days of intensive discussion on training modernization, operational resilience, and collaborative traffic flow management.

Although I arrived expecting a primarily technical event, the workshop turned out to be much more than that as it offered a rare opportunity to understand how our neighboring states are navigating the same challenges we face, and how our collective future depends on deeper communication and coordination.



## A Region Expanding Faster Than Training Can Keep Up

The discussions opened with an overview of China's air traffic landscape, which remains one of the most complex and fastest-growing in the world. ATMB now manages more than 17,000 daily flights across its FIRs, supported by 13,600 licensed controllers with an average age of just 31. The scale alone was impressive, but what struck me most was the long and rigorous training pipeline. We're talking six to seven years from ab-initio student to fully validated controller.

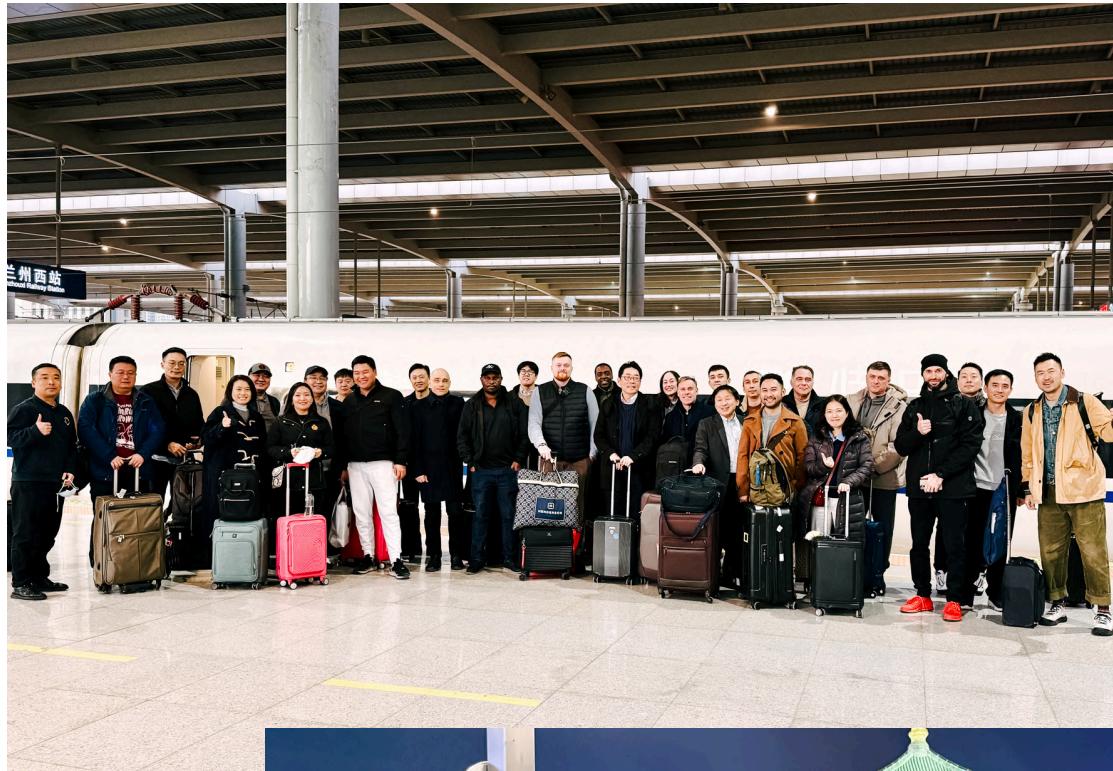
Hearing these figures made me reflect on the shared challenges across APAC: rapidly increasing traffic, evolving technology, and the constant need to grow and modernize our workforce. It reminded me that every improvement we make in training, not just in the Philippines, but across the region, directly contributes to the safety and stability of international air traffic flows.

## Competency-Based Training and the Future of ATCO Development

One of the most insightful discussions focused on the shift toward competency-based training and assessment (CBTA). While the concept isn't new, hearing how various ANSPs are implementing, adapting, and even struggling with it made the conversation incredibly relevant.

CBTA requires instructors to look beyond technical accuracy and assess cognitive, behavioral, and interpersonal competencies—attributes that matter most in abnormal or high-pressure situations. Many participants shared concerns that academic and operational training aren't always aligned, and that instructors themselves often need retraining to evaluate CBTA-aligned behaviors properly.

But the solutions presented were equally compelling: AI-powered speech labs to refine radiotelephony skills, cloud-based simulators accessible even outside training centers, and long-term performance curve tracking to map how trainees develop over several years. These innovations made me realize that CBTA isn't simply a technical shift—it's a cultural one.



(top) Delegates of the ATMB and IATA Workshop at Lanzhou Station.

(mid) Took a quick tour around Xi'an after the meeting.

(bottom) The author together with some senior managers from various airlines.

## Fatigue, Human Factors, and the Unseen Risks

### Behind the Console

Another topic that resonated with me was fatigue risk management. Unlike mechanical failures or procedural deviations, fatigue is subtle, quietly influencing situational awareness, decision-making, and communication clarity. ATMB's multimodal fatigue detection system, which includes voice stress analysis, facial recognition, and biometric wearables, initially sounded like science fiction. But as the experts explained how these tools help identify early signs of fatigue before they become operational risks, I understood the importance of individualized fatigue monitoring in today's 24/7 operations.

It reminded me that while technology continues to advance, the human element will always remain central to safety.

### GNSS Interference and the Importance of Fallback Resilience

One of the more sobering discussions centered on GNSS interference. It is a growing regional challenge. China reported over 7,000 interference events in 2024 alone. Hearing real case studies involving navigation degradation, surveillance inconsistencies, and communication disruptions made the risk feel very real.

What impressed me most, however, was the layered response system: national-level coordination, regional management, and local ATC units equipped with quick-response protocols. Their continued investment in fallback systems such as VOR/DME networks and multilayer surveillance reinforced an important principle: resilience is built on redundancy.

### Runway Safety, Voice Communications, and the Human Factor

Runway incursions and wrong-surface operations remain globally persistent risks, and Shanghai Hongqiao's comprehensive safety upgrades offered practical solutions: Runway Status Lights, advanced surface surveillance, electronic flight strips, and even optoelectronic identification tools to accurately track aircraft movements.

Communication safety was another highlight. Despite decades of harmonization, phraseology errors remain a leading contributor to incidents. The workshop emphasized that communication quality must be monitored, trained, and continuously reinforced—especially in regions with high volumes of non-native English-speaking pilots and controllers.

### Toward a Digital Future: Datalink and Trajectory-Based Operations

The workshop also offered a glimpse of the future with China's ongoing datalink trials in Guangzhou and Zhengzhou. Watching demonstrations of STAR clearances, taxi instructions, and delays transmitted digitally, and seeing a "similar callsign warning" function in action, felt like witnessing the next chapter of air traffic control. Their dual-aircraft TBO validation showcased how flight intent data can be integrated more seamlessly with ATC planning.

## A Journey from Xi'an to Lanzhou—and a Glimpse of China's Newest ACC

After the sessions in Xi'an concluded, our delegation boarded a high-speed train to Lanzhou. The journey across northwest China's dramatic winter landscape was a welcome break from the technical discussions—a moment to reflect on the magnitude of what we had learned.

We spent an overnight stay in Lanzhou before visiting the newly opened Lanzhou Area Control Center, which began operations in March 2025. Touring the facility, meeting the controllers, and seeing how they manage the Lanzhou FIR firsthand offered a deeper appreciation of China's commitment to modernization. The visit also highlighted how interconnected our region's airspace structures truly are—what happens in one FIR inevitably affects its neighbors.

### Final Reflections

As I traveled back home, I felt grateful to have witnessed the region's collective movement toward a more modern, data-driven, and resilient ATC environment. The workshop reminded me that our profession is evolving rapidly. And that our strength in Asia Pacific lies not only in technological advancement, but in collaboration, shared learning, and the continuous exchange of ideas.

In the end, Xi'an and Lanzhou taught me that while our systems may differ, our mission remains the same: to keep the skies safe, efficient, and ready for the future.



# Ten Notebooks and a Decade of Hope



**WORDS AND PHOTOS BY IMELEE FUENTES**

When I handed out my first set of notebooks and pencils to ten pupils in 2015, I had no idea I would still be doing it eight years later.

My mom is a teacher, and growing up, she would bring us to the elementary school where she taught in a rural community in Arakan. At a young age, we were exposed to the realities faced by pupils in remote parts of North Cotabato: long walks to school, worn-out bags and slippers, or none at all, families struggling with basic needs, and how poverty and distance often led to frequent absences and high dropout rates. For years, my mom initiated small projects to help ease these challenges.

In 2013, she launched Balay Sagip Eskwela, a bayanihan project that built a small nipa hut so children could stay near the school rather than walk for hours every day. Parents cooked meals, teachers pitched in, and for a time, it worked beautifully. But eventually, donations slowed, and the project could no longer be sustained.

**Every year, I would spend five leave credits for this outreach. Every year, I always say it will be the last. But knowing how many people wanted to help, I couldn't deprive these kids of what they looked forward to just because I was tired.**



In 2015, my mom asked if I could try looking for donations for school supplies. So I did, casually, with nothing more than a simple post. A ₱500 budget per pupil should be enough, I thought. I didn't expect that something so small would matter. What began as help for ten pupils became twenty the following year. By 2025, we were able to distribute bags filled with school supplies to 220 children across three schools in our municipality. I lost count, but I am certain we have given out more than 1,000 backpacks and school supply kits to more than 10 schools.

It hasn't been easy. For many years, I handled everything myself, from posting, budgeting, buying, packing, to distributing. Family and friends helped, but I tried not to burden people with a mission I chose. Every year, I would spend five leave credits for this outreach. Every year, I always say it will be the last. But knowing how many people wanted to help, I couldn't deprive these kids of what they looked forward to just because I was tired.

Over time, I realized something beautiful: people want to help; they just need a way to do it. Donors, most of whom are my fellow air traffic controllers, would reach out each year, not to ask if I would do the outreach again, but when.

In 2024, something special happened. My fellow air traffic controllers volunteered to come with me to Mindanao.

Watching them witness firsthand the joy of the children, the shy glances, the quiet excitement, the small thank-yous, reminded me that compassion grows when we see what hope looks like on a child's face.

Writing this piece is difficult because I never want to romanticize poverty. But acknowledging reality also means honoring the light these children carry, the sparkle in their eyes, the pride in owning something new, the smile that blooms simply because someone cared. Their happiness over such simple things deserves to be seen.

In an ideal world, no child should have to be excited over things that should already be theirs. Education should be a right, not a privilege. We cannot solve poverty or fix education alone, but we can choose to care. As long as there are children walking miles to school with bags that hold nothing, there is work to be done, and always space for more hearts to help.

I won't make promises, but I will make this a mission for as long as I am able and for as long as people are willing to help. I could never do it without those who have chosen to believe with me. Whether through donations, volunteering, praying, or simply sharing this story, even the smallest act can make learning a little lighter and a child's smile a little brighter.





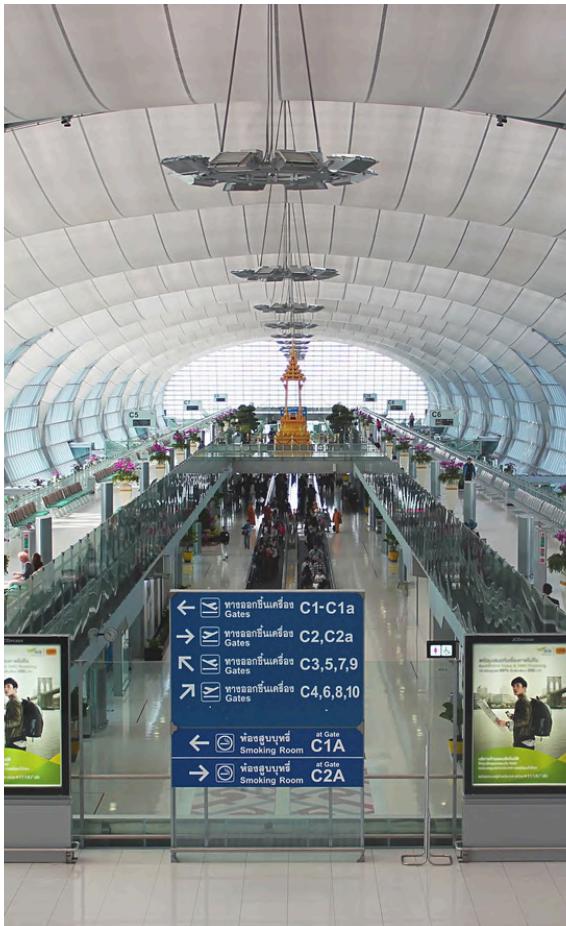
# K.A.B.O.G. ProMax: Your Holiday Rush Checklist



BY NEIL JOAZ LAGUNDINO

Howdy earthlings! Welcome to Alfa Oh ho ho's daily dose of reminders. With the holidays coming right around the corner, here's what you should remember:

**Plan for variability, build buffers, and remember:  
‘tis the season for  
“updated departure times.” It won’t cost you a  
fortune to look at the  
screen for your updated  
gate or boarding time.**



## **K- Keep Calm and Crosscheck Yourself**

Holiday chaos? Delays? Passengers asking if reindeer count as emotional-support animals? Take a breath, stabilize your attitude and altitude, then proceed with holiday operations. Health check? You might as well take all things in moderation.

## **A- Adjust Expectations to Seasonal Turbulence**

Weather, over-bookings, and gate changes move faster than a tug on caffeine.

Plan for variability, build buffers, and remember: ‘tis the season for “updated departure times.” It won’t cost you a fortune to look at the screen for your updated gate or boarding time.

## **B- Brief Clearly, Brief Often**

Crew, passengers, family - everyone needs the holiday briefing. Short, sharp, and safety-forward... with just a hint of “try not to lose your suitcase or your spirit.” Of course, try not to forget your NO-GO items (passports, medicines, and extremely important skincare). It’s your choice.



## **O- Organize Like You're Pre-Flighting Santa's Sleigh**

Gifts? Check. Schedules? Check. OOTD fresh and FOD-free? Check. The more organized you are, the less likely you are to declare a personal emergency. Not unless you wanna end up hanging by the sleigh... Uncheck!

## **G- Ground Yourself Before You Burn Out**

Even the best people need rest. Hydrate, sleep, and take a moment to enjoy the view -preferably not from the jump seat during a boarding stampede. You can always approach the occasion again once you feel better after the go-around. You got this!

Be merry on the holidays the KABOG way! From your resident elf, Alfa Oh ho ho!



# Almost-Tenerife: Hearing from Mike Hotel's Experience

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY  
NEIL JOAZ LAGUNDINO

Safety in the aviation industry has evolved throughout the years due to the emergence of incidents and accidents both on ground and in-flight. While it is a hard pill to swallow, the occurrence of such incidents and accidents are necessary to revisit rules and regulations when it comes to safety of the crew, passengers, and even the aircraft, and to mitigate such occurrences by re-calibrating procedures and processes.

November 4, 2025 during the first leg of the evening shift of the Manila Control Tower, a serious runway incursion incident happened when a Boeing 787 middle-eastern airline entered the active runway towards the final approach while an Airbus A320 was on short final on landing on the runway in use. Chilling as it may have seemed to those who were on duty at that time but the Aerodrome Controller, together with his vigilant coordinator managed to handle the situation very well.

**“We are always reminded to put ourselves in a position where catering to each traffic must be done with extra care because our friends, loved ones, or even our families could be on board.”**



The man behind the calm voice that handled the situation is Mr. Edcel Celestino (Mike Hotel), part of CAOCSP Batch 3 (CATS 12), who has been assigned to the Manila Control Tower since 2018. A former barista prior to becoming an ATC, he is a coffee connoisseur and also balances his life outside of work with activities such as competitive cycling, joining marathons, and photo walks.

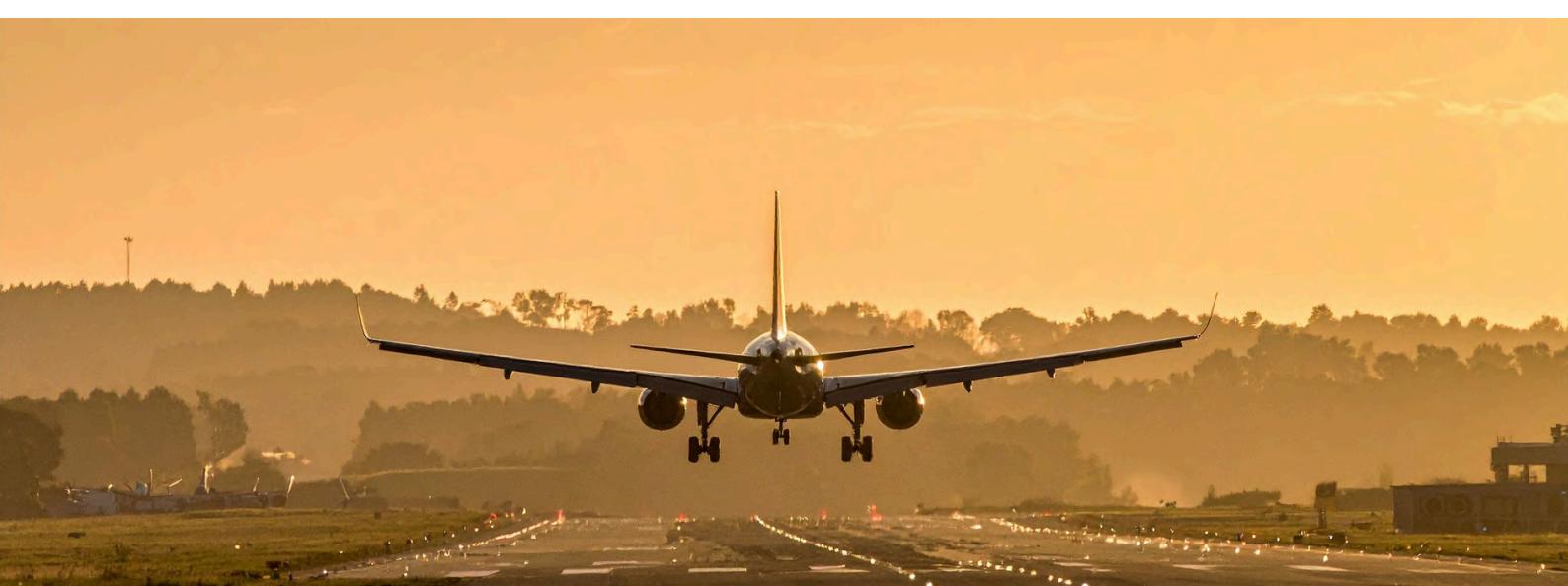
In a coffee session with Mike Hotel, with the hopes of gaining insights from his experience and never to remind him of what could have been, he kept on repeating the importance of training. Here's what he said when asked:

You were praised for handling the situation very calmly, as if it were just a normal scenario in the shift. Why so?

“At that specific moment, I knew that the best thing to do was to be rational. There was just no point in reiterating the mistake or calling out the involved. There were more important and more immediate things to do. I would also commend my coordinator, Emman (Alfa Bravo) that time because he was able to observe first-hand the aircraft's movement while I was busy handling other traffic, and advised me immediately about it. I believe that it all boils down to how we were trained back in CATC intensely, and that having a room for mistakes was never carved in our minds. When faced with situations such as this, all those ‘tough love’ from our laboratories and routines made us solve one problem after the other and not linger too much with whatever mistake we made for as long as we did the necessary evasive action to avoid it, if not eliminate it next time. We are always reminded to put ourselves in a position where catering to each traffic must be done with extra care because our friends, loved ones, or even our families could be on board.”

“More than all the trainings that have equipped us with the right knowledge to handle non-routine situations or occasions as such, what made us all efficient in decision-making is the fact that we value the lives that we handle in each flight, in each traffic, and in each of the clearances we deliver, traffic information that we relay, or the limits that we revise. I believe that should be the mindset that we always implore in this job.”

As an entity that values training and emphasizes proficiency and updated rating skills, may we never let the holes in the Swiss cheese align. In this world where safety and security are no longer a myth or an idea, rather a reality that each of us must consider in order to avoid incidents and fatal accidents, may we never settle for comfort but strive for service. As aviation professionals in air traffic service, may we never let our guard down but instead permeate the energy and grit that has been accumulated from the intense training under the roof of the Civil Aviation Training Center. Accidents and incidents happen - that is a fact. However, the stronger fact we must always remember is that we have to be prepared in all forms and that we are always in control. Air traffic controllers, without a doubt, value the lives of the flying public and, even so, value the mission of ensuring a safe, secure, and orderly Philippine sky.



# The Health and Wellness Era of Air Traffic Controllers



ATMC Radar Boys enjoying their fun run in Manila, as part of their efforts to achieve a healthier lifestyle.

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY CECILE HURTADO

It's no secret that being an air traffic controller ranks among the most stressful jobs in the world. Picture this: multiple aircraft flying in different directions, voices on the radio calling out nonstop, and every decision you make must be right — instantly. It's intense, demanding, exhilarating, and overwhelming all at once.

But Filipino ATCs are known for something special — resilience. Despite the pressure, we have found creative and healthy ways to keep our composure and take care of ourselves. These days, we are embracing the growing health and wellness trend, proving that even those who keep the skies safe need a good dose of work-life balance.

## Running the Distance

If your social media feed is full of friends posting their marathon medals and finish-line selfies, you're not alone. Running has become a huge part of the wellness wave and craze, and many ATCs are joining in.

Running isn't just about keeping fit — it's therapy in motion, because running builds endurance—something every ATC needs both on and off duty.

## Travel Therapy

Working in a high-pressure environment can sometimes make ATCs feel isolated, especially when we spend hours in enclosed spaces watching blips on radar screens. That is why traveling has become our favorite escape.

Exploring new destinations, trying local cuisines, and meeting people from different cultures can be deeply refreshing. Whether it's a quick weekend beach trip, a mountain hike, or a long-awaited vacation abroad, travel offers a powerful sense of renewal. It's like hitting the reset button.



*APRM 2024 Delegates  
enjoying the majestic  
view of Taj Mahal in India  
after the conference.*



(top) CAOCSP Batch 2 friends enjoying the winter weather in Japan

(mid) Renz, SkyTrack's EIC, enjoying his birthday trip in Switzerland.

(bottom) CATS 6 besties Nievie, Jery, and Hana, catching up in Sydney, Australia



((top) Cecile enjoys yoga during her free time..

(mid) Che Avengoza has scaled a lot of mountains in PH, and Mount Apo is one.

(bottom) Arlene and Beverly, ATC batch mates also enjoy playing Badminton.

## Stretch, Sweat, and Breathe

Another popular wellness path for controllers is hitting the gym or joining yoga sessions. Working out not only keeps the body strong but also helps manage the mental load that comes with the job.

Yoga, in particular, has found a growing following. The combination of stretching, deep breathing, and mindfulness helps ATCs disconnect from work stress and reconnect with themselves.

Some have discovered other fun and unique hobbies, too — from pickleball, a fast-rising racket sport, to freediving and surfing for sea lovers. Others find relaxation in learning new languages or taking short courses that keep their minds active and curious.

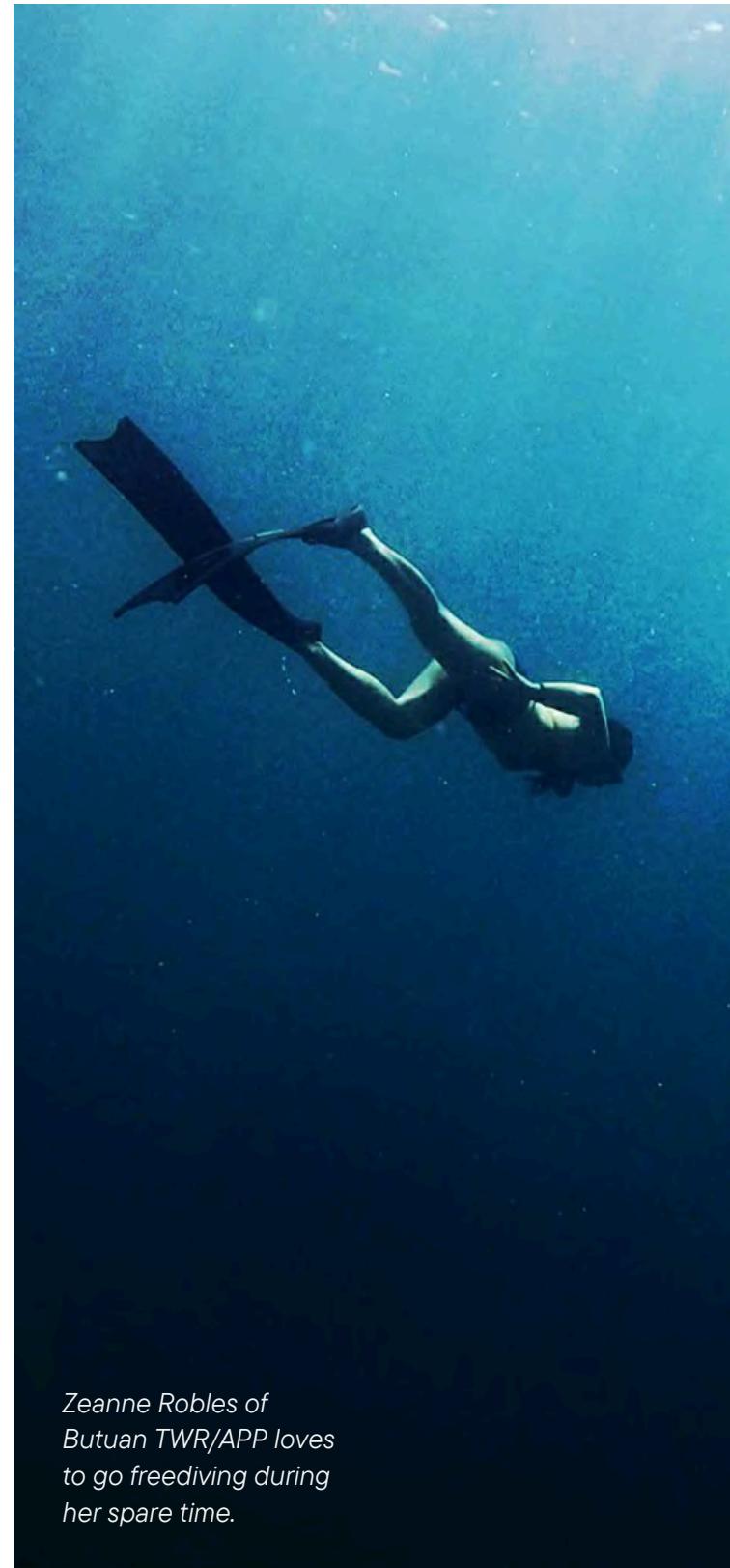
## Sharpening the Saw

All these efforts tie back to a timeless principle from Stephen Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*: "Sharpen the saw." It means taking care of your greatest asset — yourself. Self-renewal, Covey says, should cover four key areas: physical, social/emotional, mental, and spiritual.

For ATCs, this balance isn't just a luxury; it's a necessity. To perform at our best, we must learn to listen to our bodies, nurture our minds, connect with others, and find inner peace.

## A Healthier Takeoff for the New Year

It's never too late to begin. As one year ends and another begins, many ATCs are choosing to invest in themselves—whether through fitness, travel, or simply taking more mindful moments each day.



*Zeanne Robles of Butuan TWR/APP loves to go freediving during her spare time.*

As another year approaches, I'd like you to make yourself a priority. Don't just plan it — start it. So, lace up your running shoes, roll out that yoga mat or book that long-overdue trip. Get up, show up, and take that first step toward a healthier you. Your body, mind and heart will thank you later.

# Welcome CATS 18!



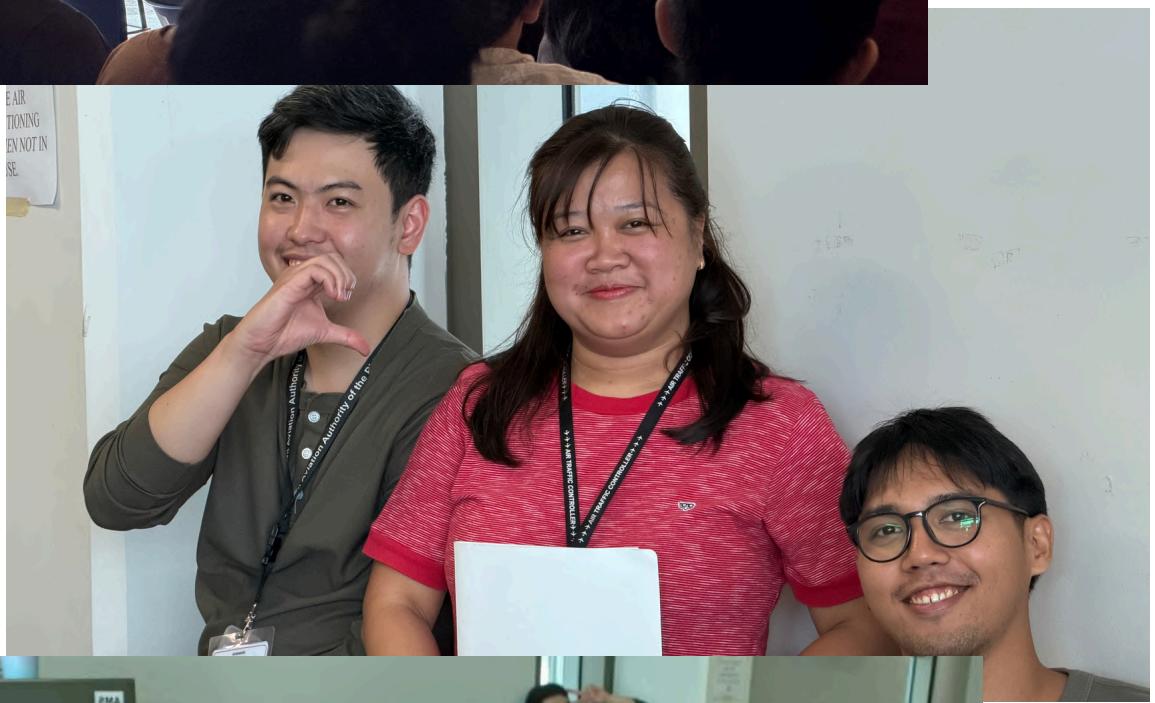
## WELCOMING THE NEXT GENERATION: PATCA INTRODUCES CATS 18

The Philippine Air Traffic Controllers Association (PATCA) recently welcomed its newest members from CATS 18. This is an important milestone not just in their professional journey, but also in the continued strengthening of the air traffic control community in the Philippines.

During the induction program, PATCA officers and committee heads delivered concise presentations showcasing their respective areas of work. Each segment highlighted the value of active engagement, the spirit of volunteerism, and the strong sense of solidarity that defines PATCA's membership.

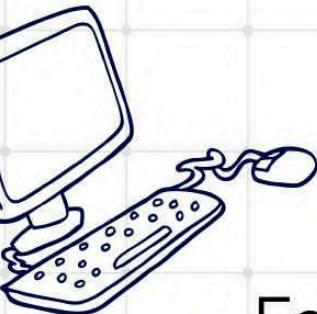
Speakers also emphasized PATCA's expanding role in the international arena, particularly through its collaboration with global air traffic management partners and its long-standing commitment to IFATCA. As the recognized voice of Filipino controllers, PATCA continues to champion professional growth, operational excellence, and the welfare of its members while contributing to broader regional and global dialogue.

For CATS 18, the event served as both an orientation and an invitation to embrace the responsibilities of the profession, to participate in the collective work of the association, and to take their place within a community committed to the safe, efficient, and future-ready management of the skies.





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