

## **First-Hand Accounts From Controllers Choosing To Leave the FAA**

Many air traffic controllers who have either retired early (before the mandatory age of 56) or resigned, all because of the FAA's imposed work rules and pay bands, have chosen to express their thoughts on paper. Below are excerpts from five of these letters that NATCA has obtained:

### **Albuquerque Air Route Traffic Control Center Resigned October 16, 2006**

*"I am hereby resigning from the FAA effective the 16th of October 2006. I am returning to my previous position with Midwest ATC Services. After comparing my experiences with both employers, the choice was simple. Under the FAA's new imposed work rules I can not justify staying with the agency. I do not feel I can continue to work in an environment that is so vindictive or for an employer who is more worried about the bottom line rather than safety.*

*"My take home pay will go up, my quality of life will improve, and my workload will decrease. My only regret is the time I have wasted making this move to Albuquerque, coupled with expense, only to find out I will not be making the money that the FAA told me I would be making. This was the number one factor that prompted my decision to take what I thought would be a career with the FAA. Therefore, this new pay scale is the number one reason for my leaving the FAA."*

### **New York Terminal Radar Approach Control From a former Navy air traffic controller Resigned February 28, 2007**

*"I am writing to regretfully inform you that I'm resigning my position as an air traffic control specialist at the New York TRACON effective close of business February 28, 2007.*

*"The pay and compensation changed dramatically from the time I submitted my application until I was hired in November 2006. While much of what transpired between the FAA and NATCA in the intervening time does not concern me, the reduction in pay has had a dramatic negative effect on my ability to remain in this profession.*

*"The cost of living in New York is too great to survive adequately on the new pay scale. I have explored every alternative, including forgoing health coverage to save the additional money. I therefore find myself facing one of the most difficult decisions of my life; to leave the career that I love to regain financial stability."*

**Minneapolis Air Route Traffic Control Center  
Retired October 2, 2006**

*“Solely as a result of what I perceive to be hostile and intolerable working conditions, I have elected to retire from my position as an air traffic controller effective Monday, October 2, 2006. Although it would be financially beneficial to continue working until the mandatory retirement age (56), recent well-documented changes in the national and local work environment have compelled me to accelerate my retirement plans.*”

*“After learning of some of the details of the FAA’s “best and final offer” back in late July, I elected to begin the process of preparing my retirement forms. Even as I did so I continued to hold out hope that a more fair and rational agreement could be reached. Unfortunately for all parties on September 3, 2006 the FAA elected to impose the terms of what is becoming known among controllers as the ‘Non-Tract’.”*

**Boston Air Route Traffic Control Center  
Resigned after less than a year on the job**

*“I was hired well over a year ago by the FAA. My initial hire letter stated that I would have a salary of almost \$46,000, which included locality. Upon completion of my A sides, I was told I would receive a raise of approximately \$20,000, which would be given to me within about two months. Throughout the course of my first year and completion of my D sides, I was told I was going to get additional raises, which by the end of my first year would put me at over \$90,000.*”

*“Before I left for Oklahoma, I purchased a townhouse in New Hampshire close to the center, basing my budget on all the figures I had previously been told. I left a job in Florida, where I was making a considerable amount of money, but based on all the benefits of the FAA and the salary I was promised, not to mention how much I loved the opportunity of starting such an amazing profession, how could I be anything but ecstatic about what was about to happen.*”

*“Shortly after arriving to the center I sat in on a briefing where I learned that there were many changes being forced on all the controllers, taking away and changing their benefits. When the topic of pay came up no concrete answers were given. It was a series of “I don’t know’s” or “They’ll be a pay briefing in a few weeks.”*”

*“During my initial group meeting with Fran Bujak, the Director of Training, he asked if we had any questions or concerns. Half-joking I said, “Yea, how am I*”

*going to pay my mortgage?" He said that I wasn't looking at the big picture. I was told that in 3-5 years when I am fully checked out and after nights, Sunday pay, holidays and locality, I would be making around \$82,000. With no warning I went from making \$90,000 in the first year to \$82,000 after three to five years. Then he basically said if anyone doesn't like it they could leave. The comment wasn't directed at me, and it was said rather nonchalantly, but it got me thinking.*

*"No one could justify to me the fact that trainees who had been there a year were making over \$90,000 and frozen there, but it would take me three to five years to get even close to that number and after being fully checked out I wouldn't even reach that. I chose this career because it is highly rewarding and there is so much responsibility, but I also wanted to be financially secure. In order to make ends meet I would have to get a second job, which would be nearly impossible, due to the fact that my schedule would constantly fluctuate and there is so much to learn the first few months I felt I would get behind. Mainly I took this job and moved up North to have a better way of life and to be able to see my family. Working seven days a week and struggling to pay my bills is not a way I feel comfortable living. If there was a light at the end of the tunnel I would suck it up, but there seems to be no one who can give me a definite answer about the future, and after being misled from the beginning I wouldn't know what to believe anymore."*

### **Albuquerque Air Route Traffic Control Center**

*"In November 2005, I accepted an offer to work for the Federal Aviation Administration. I voluntarily left the Department of Defense, resulting in a reduction in pay and benefits. However, I was expecting that as outlined in my initial offer I could anticipate seeing this as temporary and I would be able to progress through training and receive compensation accordingly.*

*"Having completed my training in Oklahoma, I arrived at Albuquerque ARTCC to begin training as an En Route Controller. As I was training, I was watching what was developing between the Agency and the Union regarding contract negotiations. The entire time, I and other developmentals were informed that we would be "grandfathered" in and would not be negatively impacted with our pay, regardless of the outcome of the negotiations.*

*"I began to understand that the Agency had no intention of protecting developmental pay. We were informed in April that the negotiations had reached an impasse and the final offers were sent to Congress. I was able to locate and interpret the information and began to worry that I might not be compensated in accordance with what I had expected when I transferred to the FAA. As the developmentals began to ask about our pay, management at the facility level*

*became resentful for our inquiries. It appears to me that we were not "allowed" to ask what we would make and that there might be reprisal. I have never been treated so badly by an employer. It should be appropriate for an employee to ask what they will be paid or compensated. People have families to feed and decisions to make.*

*"In June I began to seek a transfer back to my position at the DOD. I was not surprised that the DOD immediately provided me with all pay and benefits information when I requested them."*