

VATSIM Board of Governors

Q1 2014 Meeting Minutes

April 26, 2000z

Open Meeting, Record Attendance and Proxies

Opening Business:

Record adhoc votes since last meeting - Kyle

Old Business:

- * Regions Update - Peter
- * Pilot Training Update - Pan
- * VAVSOA Update - Roger
- * Membership Update - Jim
- * Pilot and ATC Forum Badges - Luca
- * Development Update - Kyle/Luca
- * Vienna Convention Update - Steven

New Business

- * Founder's Feedback - Steven
- * Marketing & Strategic Development Update - Justin
- * GRP2 Evaluation for Effectiveness - Steven

Close Meeting and Adjourn

Attendees:

Steven Cullen (SC)
Peter Nielsen (PN)
Kyle Ramsey (KR)
Luca Benelli (LB)
Justin Freidland (JF)
Roger Curtiss (RC)
Norman Blackburn (NB)

Apologies: Jim Johnson (JJ) proxy to SC

Minutes:

The meeting was called to order at 20:12z by KR

KR recorded there were three BoG votes since the Q4 2013 BoG meeting:

ASIA Regional Director

Results: (10 votes cast)

Anastasios Stefopoulos	9
Eugene Lee	1

Motion	Proposed By	Seconded By	Votes cast for	Votes cast against
To amend CoR 3.10 3 to read: 3. The individual must have a VATSIM.net rating of Senior Controller or higher. HOWEVER, THE REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF THE PARTICULAR REGION IN WHICH THE REGIONAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION PANEL SITS MAY, IN HIS OR HER SOLE DISCRETION, WAIVE THE RATING REQUIREMENT AND ALLOW MEMBERS OF THE PANEL TO HAVE A RATING WHICH IS LOWER THAN SENIOR CONTROLLER. AN INDIVIDUAL FOR WHOM THE RATING QUALIFICATION IS WAIVED, HOWEVER, MUST STILL MEET ALL OTHER QUALIFICATIONS OF THIS RULE;	Norman Blackburn	Kyle Ramsey	9	0
To approve the minutes of the BoG quarterly meeting of Jan 26, 2014 @ 1900z, as emailed to all BoG members, for general release and publishing on the VATSIM website.	Kyle Ramsey	Roger Curtiss	10	0

Pilot Training Report – PL – (from written report submitted after the meeting)

- The VATSIM Pilot Academy (PTA) is ready and integrated to the VATSIM CERT. It can be accessed at <http://academy.vatsim.net> and it will provide the P1 and P9 ratings for the time being. The academy is led by Mr. Max Lye (1158009) who is

also the CFI for our ATO and has done a PHENOMENAL job. We have already hired a team of 5 Instructors:

- Sean Fox – 813579
- Davor Kusec – 990407
- Evert Rinkel - 1065710
- Elmar Schmied – 935730
- Callum Strawbridge - 1179882

Special mention goes to Evert Rinkel for creating the PTA youtube Videos. Great quality.

- The VATSIM Pilot Training Department (PTD) Web Application is live. It can be accessed at <http://ptd.vatsim.net>. My department owes a lot to Mr. Svilen Vassiliev for making this dream come true. The application is a one stop shopping point for everything related to the PTD.
- It's programmed in Ruby on Rails using all the latest security and programming techniques introducing the most modern technologies in web development. It's agile, flexible and easily expendable. The code is available on a git and it's open source for future development.
- Some of the benefits:
 - It includes CKeditor, making the whole application a CMS which allows us to generate frontend pages with HTML5/CSS3 from the backend. You can see an example on the Ratings description pages, where we transferred over the text from the old Typo3 pages.
 - It makes the usage of linksmanager obsolete. It generates a list of ATOs (can be seen in the ATOs listing). This table is automatically generated by the application. We introduced some elements that our experience has shown are necessary to a member looking for the proper ATO for his needs. For example, the languages the ATO offer their training, the platform they're using (FSX, XP etc, the type of ATO - VA based, division/acc based etc). The table can be filtered based on what the trainee is looking for.
 - A list of all the instructors and their corresponding ATOs
 - A list of all the certifications ensuring the transparency of the program. This list (like any other data of the application) can be exported through XML, JSON etc. That means that any webmaster can get this feed and create an RSS or any other widget like: "Congrats to this member for his new rating blah blah". This is also a nice feature for the promotion of the program. We could very easily add a widget like that on the frontpage of VATSIM if we decide so. Same can happen with the webpages of all of the ATOs.
 - Automatically extracted Statistics (this is self-explained I believe)
 - We also provide the webmasters with two APIs. You can read about them in the help page of the application.

- The first one (named public), allows someone to pull various data in programmatic forms so they can also generate their own table of ATOs, or a roster of people in their VA holding a Pilot Rating etc.
 - The second one is using the web standard - API key - authentication that allows an ATO to issue a pilot rating programmatically from their backend. This is an old request for many of our ATOs. The API is smart enough and does all the necessary checks from the backend.
 - Full backend admin with various roles and levels of access based on our current state needs, very easily expandable to the future.
- I've created a demo account with admin privileges for the BoG to have a look:

This is an automated email message, please do not reply!

Dear BoG Demo

You have been issued an instructor account in the [VATSIM PTD system](#).

Your current roles (level of access) are: Admin, Instructor.

Please note, that to use the PTD backend functionality you need an active Instructor or CFI role. If your role is currently Inactive or Suggested, your operational permissions will be limited, pending a PTD staff review of your account.

Your login credentials are as follows:

Email:

Password:

Thank you and have a great day!

VATSIM Pilot Training Department Team

- Remember that the application uses various different roles and levels of access. An ATO CFI/INS for example can only generate a list of his ATO's issued ratings and assign new ratings.
- Admins (the PTD staff) can create new ATOs, revert changes including ratings in case someone misclicks something or someone issues a rating maliciously (yes we're having some of those too...).
- The PTD also does all kind of sanity checks. eg. Does the member have a P1 before issuing a P2? Is the ATO permitted to issue P5? Does the member already have a P3. It may sound strange to you but we had none of those in the previous script system and we had to manually check the dbase and manually change it (Poor Luca... more on that later).
- The application also auto-generates all kind of e-mails. For new ATOs, new pilot rating notification to the pilots etc. In total we have more than 10 e-mail templates generating all kind of useful e-mails to our members. You can see an example from my paste above which shows the e-mail generated when a new Instructor/CFI is accepted by the system. A different one is generated and sent when the Instructor applies for access. The one you see is the one he receive on

acceptance.

- If you want to get an idea of what a pilot receives when he gets a new rating:

This is an automated email message, please do not reply!

Dear Pan,

Congratulations, you have been issued a new pilot rating certification!

Certification details:

Rating: P5

Issued to: Pan Lalas (936402)

Issued by: Svilen Vassilev

ATO: VATSIM PTD

- We will have in one place everything related to pilot training. When the application goes live we won't be using the old Typo3 PTD pages that even me, after two years, I find it hard to browse through and find what I want. Instead we'll set a redirect to the new app.
- Concluding my quick presentation of the new PTD Web Application I would like to extend my thanks - besides Svillen, who did an amazing job as you can see- to Cristoph Neukrich for helping us out deploying the application on the Web Server and spending more than 5 hrs troubleshooting various issues and of course to Luca. Luca needs special mentioning because he's been dealing with the mess the CERT is for too long. I really don't know of anyone else that would have this kind of patience.
- I'd like to ring a bell here. The CERT is broken. The BoG/Founders need to find a way to resolve this before it's too late. There are too many problems. Just to give you a clue. During the deployment we realized that the CID column (the 6-7 letter digits one) is VARCHAR instead of INTEGER type. That has led to many entries like "123456_", "_123456" -where the dash represents a space. Or even worse like: "123456." or "Cincina" or whatever. Those false data have been generated by a few badly written scripts and they end up breaking the consistency and the integrity of the database logic over the years. Luca has been struggling to resolve all those manually. I helped him out by pointing him to false entries we found out through our new application. But this is not a solution since we were only getting data related to the pilot training department. We do need a webguy (or even better a DBase guy) to fix those issues before we see a CERT 2.0 or something similar in the future.
- My department has finished the P9 rating (CFI). I attached a pdf here with the presentation. This has been discussed extensively with the ATOs and they were very happy with it. The new application has already implemented the logic of the

new P9 scheme.

- That being said, I'd like to bring up the issue of CFI and pilot ratings recognition on the network. I asked Luca if he could forward to the VATSIM FSD Developers a request to include into the data feed that the various tools such as VATSpy, Vroute etc use, the pilotrating bitmask. That will allow us to ask the developers of the software to include the Pilot Ratings a member has in their software. For example you could click on Pan Lalas on VATSPY and along with the Name, CID you could also see that this gent is P1,P2,P4 certified. That would be a HUGE step for us. We keep getting many e-mails / week from people asking us about this kind of recognition and how people would know that they have their rating
- As for the CFIs, what we can do is to ask for the developers of the VATSIM listing tools (VATSpy etc) to include _CFI with OBS rating as a Staff callsign (VATSIM Flight Instructors or something similar). That way we give them the recognition they deserve plus they can easily make their presence visible helping new pilots. The application is already generating a list of people who can hold this callsign on VATSIM (people who complete the P9 program and are CFIs of the VATSIM Pilot Academy or another ATO) so that the supervisors can identify if someone is abusing a _CFI callsign. I'm pretty sure that Miguel can easily implement this into his SUP web application as we did for the S1 tower ratings.
 - I'd like the BoG members to discuss this issue and if we all agree we could move forward with those 2 changes.
- During May, we're creating the ATO Audit/ ATO quality assurance team. It will be run by my colleague Mr. Kevin Kan - 811725 who is the VATSIM Pilot Training Director. The purpose of this team (size 4-5 members) is to perform the audits for the new ATOs/audits for new Ratings and they will also be responsible for the Quality Assurance review. By the end of the week the Quality Assurance handbook will be ready (Mr.John Weisenfeld has been working on that) and we have scheduled the new ATO audit team to review the current ATOs between July 1st and September 30th. This will be a repeated in a yearly basis. I'll post in the list the ATO audit and quality assurance handbook when it's finalized.
- In the period between June 1st and September 30th we're planning to open up the discussion in the forum for the remaining 3 ratings (P6,P7,P8). We already have a team of people for P7 and P8. The plan is to have all the ratings released by the end of October.
- My personal plan is by the end of this year to have the whole VATSIM Pilot Training project completed, based on the common vision of Kyle and myself about the department and its role.
- What I'm planning to deliver is a full set of Ratings (3 remaining), a new web

infrastructure (the PTD application that is ready), the VATSIM ATO and the VATSIM Flight Instructors rating/role(those are also ready), a quality assurance and auditing protocol with its respective team (this will be completed by the end of May).

- What I'd like to see resolved:
 - The _CFI recognition.
 - The pilot ratings to be displayed on VATSPY, VRoute etc
 - Some kind of note to the VATSIM welcome e-mail about pilot training and its importance.
 - ATOs offering higher ratings
- In general the department has been doing well. 3400 ratings (that's >2000 new ratings for year 2013, exceeding by far our wildest dreams). 45+ ATOs. ~150 Instructors/CFIs engaged into the Pilot Training task.
- I'm very happy to have John, Kevin and Max in my team. These guys work non stop for VATSIM and the quality of their work + the time they spend on the project amazes me.

Region Update – PN -

- PN stated that all in all the EC was busy and proactive arranging numerous cross Divisional events attracting significant traffic which was a boost to local ATC, especially in less developed or busy areas of VATSIM. All members of the EC are to be thanked for what they do, and as expected since they all have real life work and commitments, we see active and less active times and it is a pleasure to work with them all and to see how they juggle their time, having said this it is seldom that an email or action is not followed up within 12 hours which is a great and quick reaction time.
- VATEUR1 has been semi absent the last 3 months due to personal reasons and PN is pleased to see Apostolos back and active again. Europe (EUD) was undergoing quite a significant change of Division Staff, and since this week the VATEUD 1 position was once again open following the resignation of Ivan Kovacevic who was appointed in January as an interim Director following the resignation of George Condes in December. As far VATRUS and VATUK are concerned things are progressing as normal. Florian Haerms is the new Marketing and Communication Director for VATEUD.
- VATSouth America is seeing quite some changes following Federico Navarro taking over as RD 3 months ago, most notably in Brazil which is becoming increasingly busy both ATC and ATO wise. Fred has more or less amalgamated

the South American and the Central American Divisions allowing these two to share as many resources and personnel as possibly, they are still two separate divisions but may end up as one consolidated Division in the Future. For the time being members of Central America has changed from their local Training system to ATSIM test. Is this trial is successful then South America Division will gradually switch to ATSIM as well. This is a major change as ATSIM test is entirely in English and this would bring a new level of standardization for this part of VATSIM.

- VATNorth America is seeing significant improvement from Mexico with a fresh and enthusiastic team who again are focusing training in English in order to become more flexible in catering from non-national traffic. VATUSA and VAT Canada are progressing as normal but there are some concerns re VAT Canada being very slow in getting members up the ratings and VATNA1 is looking into this matter.
- VAT Africa and Middle East is seeing changes in Division Staff recently, VATAME1 has great ideas about joining the various divisions, most of them already use ATSIM test so the consolidation would make sense, however due to staff changes these plans are progressing very slowly. Within this Region vACC Iran is showing most growth.
- VATOCEANIA is proceeding as normal, with some changes to staff on local level.
- VATASIA has a new Region Director being Anasasios Stefopoulos, Anas takes over from Alfred who resigned late last year. Anas will have a substantial challenge in VATASIA as most Divisions there have been on auto pilot for a long time with little or no direction as we have seen in VATSEA with 90% of the Division Staff having resigned since the restructuring and who subsequently decided to leave to another network all together. VATJapan and VATKOR are showing growth, yet VAT China seem to be stagnating. One of the long term plans for VATASIA is a consolidation of Divisions to share resources and above all personnel.
- VATSIM HIT Squad. Florian Haerms now leads the HS and discussion is ongoing as to where they should be deployed next, possible areas are Parts of Africa, Parts of South East Asia, Taiwan, Certain parts of Central and South America.
- ATSIM Test is now being used by VATEUD, VATSEA, VATNAF, VATCAF, VATCAM, and both VATSAF and VATSAM are looking at it.
- GRP The EC have been asked to investigate in depth ATC progression times versus quality versus quantity versus ATC staffing hours and member retention between 2008 and 2013 in order to commence a consultation between EC and

BoG as to the need or not to review GRP or parts of GRP. In this respect PN will be sharing historical statistics with the EC in the coming months.

In Executive Session at 2028z

Out of Executive Session 2042z

VA/VSOA Report – RC –

- Web interface development for the VA/SOA management replacement for Linksmanger continues to move forward.
- SC asks about Partner focused events. RC responds the team did one event and is looking at planning another. The events are focused on the partners and invitations are sent to them although any VATSIM event is open to all pilots.
- Discussions within the team about changing the application requirements, i.e., must be in existence for 6 months instead of the current 3.
 - Managing VA memberships that have a high failure rate is human resource intensive and the effort is not to so much limit membership but better sort those with increasing chances of survival so we can focus our limited resources on them.

Membership Update – JJ

- **Not available**

Pilot and ATC Forum Badges – LB

- Banners are out, re-sizing to make them the same size
- Server is not showing any problems as we scaled up
- Thanks again for Colin Schoen for his creative and logistical help

Development Update – KR/LB

- Most relevant updates covered in exec session earlier
- Chart system VATSIM wide, based on an old VATEUD system
 - Questions around resources to support this effort, will require engagement with EC since it will involve their resources
 - PN and KR to discuss engagement with the EC

- Looking for a code reviewer for the pilot client. Mike Evans is likely choice and has indicated his willingness.
 - LB setting up a test server for them
 - They are approaching testing phases
 - NB suggests it is traditional for BoG and Founders be invited to early testing.
- The SSO (Single Sign On) system is practically running and is ready for release and will help with the further integration between VATSIM web sites that use CERT to authenticate members.

Vienna Convention Update - SC

- SC unable to attend but making opening and closing remarks videos
- LB, NB, and Founder Roland will be there

New Business

Marketing & Strategic Development Update – JF

- A lot of interest in us after the Malaysian airline disaster. NY Times did a positive article JF was involved with, he did a couple of radio interviews, and another down in Houston on a local TV station involved a VATSIM member showing the hobby creates no harm.
- Jessica Bannister Pierce from PC Pilot magazine will be at W14.
- Working on other stories with AOPA, Flying, PC Pilot magazines.
- Member Question: do we have a policy to instruct people on how to deal with press inquiries?
 - VATSIM does not wish to police its members participation in the free press wherever they live, so we don't have any rules covering this.
 - Suggestion to increase the awareness of JF as our key resource for talking to media by any member. JF to consider NOTAM or other guidance; will send to email ring for discussion.

In Executive Session at 2114z

Out of Executive Session at 2117z

Increasing EC visibility in the forums – SC – change EC member's color by creating a

new group to increase their visibility and profile there.

GRP2 Evaluation for Effectiveness – SC

In Executive Session 2147z

Out of Executive Session 2157z

Member Questions – KR -

- Regarding VATSIM's policy on members speaking to the media, JF to prepare information and contacts to help members who reach out to us, although VATSIM does not police the free expression of the members within their homes.
- Regarding allowing S2's to open and run Sweatbox sessions as the trainer as it is currently limited to S3 and above. S2's more and more are mentoring OBS and S1 members. BoG took this question off line where it will be voted on after more discussion to understand the technical effects.

Meeting was adjourned at 2100z per SC, seconded by KR.