

# U. S. Department of Transportation news:



Office of Public Affairs  
Washington, D.C. 20590

Contact: Linda Gosden  
Dick Schoenfeld  
Phone : (202) 426-4570

Statement by U.S. Secretary of Transportation Drew Lewis  
And Federal Aviation Administrator J. Lynn Helms  
**At A Press Conference On The FLRA Ruling**  
October 22, 1981

The controllers, technicians, flight service station personnel, supervisors and all who have worked so hard to maintain the safety of the nation's airways have our deepest appreciation and the gratitude of a nation.

The ruling today by the Federal Labor Relations Authority against PATCO is a sound and responsible decision. It reaffirms a basic principle of our democracy, that no person or organization is above the law and that the citizens of this country cannot be allowed to pick and choose the laws they will obey.

The FLRA ruling debars the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization as a labor organization entitled to represent Federal employees. The union lost the right to represent the nation's air traffic controllers when it called the illegal strike on August 3, and urged its members to violate the oath they took not to strike against the government.

This decision allows us to focus full attention on rebuilding the system and accommodating the needs of those controllers who stayed on the job as well as those being trained, and other key airway systems personnel.

The people in the control towers and centers today together with technicians and specialists are helping us build a strong, more efficient air traffic control system. As the air traffic safety record proves, they have served their country in an exemplary fashion.

As we have said all along, controllers make a vital contribution to the air traffic control system, and they work under circumstances that at times can be very difficult. The package we are recommending to Congress will provide the controllers an 11.4 percent increase in pay and benefits, more than double the pay increase given other federal employees. We continue to believe that they deserve this increase for performing their responsible job.

Because we want to address their concerns in a fair and reasonable manner, we are recommending to the Congress a legislative package calling for an average 6.6 percent increase in benefits for air traffic controllers. This increase will be in addition to the 4.8 percent all Federal employees, including controllers, received Oct. 1.

Our overall goal is to provide an across-the-board improvement in pay and benefits for the national airways systems personnel, and to fairly distribute the money so that each person is equitably compensated for his or her job responsibilities.

Our proposal, as prepared by the Federal Aviation Administration, allocates increases in five ways.

First. All controllers except initial trainees will receive an operational responsibility differential of 5 percent of their base pay rate. This 5 percent differential also will be paid to other employees, including flight service station personnel, airways facilities technicians, supervisors, managers, and in-flight system testers, who are critical to the safe and effective operation of our national air traffic system.

Second. A 10 percent pay differential will be awarded controllers for time spent as on-the-job instructors. The controllers provide this training as a part of their regular duties. Nevertheless, it is an extremely important and responsible task and, we feel that they should be compensated for the additional responsibilities they shoulder when they provide on-the-job training.

Third. In addition to the controllers who man the scopes, there are many controllers who perform vital services such as computer systems upkeep and classroom training. It is not a condition of their jobs that they maintain their certifications current so that they might at any time be able to engage in air traffic separation duties, but it is desirable that they do so. For this reason, we are recommending a 1.6 percent operational currency differential for the staff controllers who make the special effort to maintain that currency.

Fourth. Unlike other Federal employees, who work an 8½ hour day (with a half hour for the lunch period), the normal shift for controllers is eight hours. Up to now, that has not included a guaranteed meal period.

The package we are sending to Congress guarantees controllers either a 30 minute meal period -- free of duty obligations, or premium pay for that period if the controller's supervisor determines that the controller cannot take a regular meal break. This has the effect of reducing the controller's work week to 37 1/2 hours, while getting paid for 40.

Fifth. Because some controllers are near the maximum allowed pay cap of \$50,112 for all Federal employees, special provisions must be made to ensure that they are not excluded from the benefits of this proposal, especially in light of the vast amounts of overtime over the last three months. We are asking the Congress to lift the pay limitation which applies to overtime and premium pay to accommodate these increases.

The package we offered PATCO in August would have cost \$40 million in the first year. We propose the same 6.6 percent increase to controllers in this package, except that the cost for 1982 will be approximately \$20 million. This difference in cost results from the fact that we are operating with a smaller controller work force. We estimate that on the average in 1982 we will have on board one-half of the number of controllers employed prior to August 3, 1981.

In addition, because we pledged that those who remained on their jobs would not be penalized for the failure of the union to reach an accommodation for them, we are proposing to the Congress that portions of the package -- the operational responsibility increases and the relief from the pay limit -- be retroactive to Aug. 3, 1981.

We feel that this package affirms our commitment to address the needs and special concerns of air traffic controllers and others in the towers and centers. It is only one step in a continuing process which will create a better climate for future relationships between the FAA and its employees.

We are proceeding with our commitment to invest \$10 billion during the 80s to upgrade equipment and facilities of the air traffic control system.

We also are committed to improving the management-employee relations at the FAA.

We recognize that there have been problems that have festered over the years and that we do not have all the answers. We are committed to finding the answers and resolving the problems. We are investigating the causes of controller discontent that have built up over a period of years, and we are determined to identify the problems and solve them. In August we appointed a task force of professionals from the private sector to conduct an independent review of the controller employment environment and make its recommendations within five months. We will give full and careful consideration to those recommendations which may provide the basis for other improvements.

We are hopeful this package represents the beginning of a new chapter in management-employee relations at the FAA and one in which all parties can communicate, resolve differences and work in harmony for the number one objective, which remains a safe and effective air traffic control system.

- ##### -