



The Guild of Air Traffic Control Officers

22 September 2020

Cutting trainee air traffic controllers is a significant blow to the UK's air traffic management system

GATCO is shocked and concerned by the decision NATS has taken to terminate the training of a significant number (122) of Trainee Air Traffic Controllers (TATCs) after a review of its initial training organisation structure. Those trainees are now under threat of redundancy or redeployment. A number of those TATCs were within two weeks of completing their ab-initio training and receiving their student Air Traffic Control (ATC) licences.

In the past six months, air traffic controllers in the UK and around the world have continued to work under very challenging social, professional and personal circumstances, keeping our skies safe and allowing repatriation, medical, cargo and military flights to operate without disruption. Air Traffic Management (ATM) is a part of the UK's critical infrastructure and safeguarding its resilience and flexibility is crucial. Terminating the training of those TATCs is the wrong decision, which will compromise the ability of the UK to respond effectively to the eventual increase in air traffic.

NATS' decision is the continuation of the boom-bust cycle of ATC recruitment and training we have experienced over the years not just in the UK but across Europe. Decisions in the past to stop ATC recruitment and training have, in recent years, resulted in controller shortages followed by increasing delays for air traffic. Cutting TATCs now makes that same outcome very likely in the future.

GATCO will continue to engage with stakeholders to work towards a more sustainable, flexible and resilient ATM system and, in the immediate future, will do all it can to assist those TATCs in continuing to pursue their dream professional career.

GATCO Executive Board

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