



CLEARED TO LAND

Newsletter For The Pilots of MidContinent Airlines

January 2019

View From the Top

A Message from Michael Collier / CEO

First things first, Happy New Year! It's hard to believe another year is in the log books already! For those keeping score at home, it's been **14 years** since the first issue of "Cleared To Land" was published and I thought it was high time we got back to it!

On the surface, it may seem quiet at times around the MidCon home offices, but I can assure you that my mind never stops thinking about things that need done and ways to improve what we do here.

Action Items for 2019

Several things are on the radar for the coming year:

- ◆ PMDG Global Flight Operations - As briefed by PMDG, this will add several elements previously missing from an operations-oriented environment, mainly the air-to-ground communications via ACARS, CPDLC, and SATCOM. I can't tell you how long I've been waiting for this to arrive on the simulation scene.



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- Navigraph Survey
- Pilot Profile



View From the Top

Action Items for 2019

- ◆ Continued website work– Major improvements needed in the way we hire and process new pilots. Ideally I'd like to get away from the phpVMS bits.
- ◆ AQP Training program ported over into the new Learning Management System (LMS)
- ◆ Begin work in the SimDirector application in an effort to build our AQP Maneuvers Validation (MV) simulator profiles as selectable/scored "missions"
- ◆ Develop and implement delayed CQT (recurrent) training programs
- ◆ Attend FlightSimExpo in Orlando in June (see sidebar this page)
- ◆ Retire the 757 and 767 fleets. As much as I hate to see them go, many real world carriers are starting to retire them as well, and the availability of suitable models with advanced functionality is slim.
- ◆ Begin deferred deliveries of the B787-8, and –9 series aircraft to replace retiring 767-300's.
- ◆ Roll out the delayed Phase II of the crew bids. Work was completed in the fall of 2018 to organize all of our flying into sequenced trip pairings in preparation for building and bidding multi-day trips.
- ◆ Continue rebuilding our presence on VATSIM
- ◆ **Look for progress updates on these action items in the February Issue!**

FlightSimExpo 2019

Mark your calendars!

File your flight plans to Orlando the first weekend in June and join us for a fun and informative weekend of virtual aviation.



As with previous conventions, we are planning to showcase the operation and recruit a mid-year new-hire class.

<https://www.flightsimexpo.com>

FlightSimExpo 2019

June 7-9, 2019

Orlando Florida





Flight Line News

We'd like to take a moment in this issue to introduce our Management Pilots.

Michael Collier / CEO / 777/787 Fleet Captain

Real World Flight Dispatcher / MidCon since 1998

John Binner / JFK Chief Pilot / 737

Real World Military Air Traffic Controller - Retired / MidCon since 2005

Eric Hill / Director of Training / 737 Fleet Captain / MIA

Real World Airline/Corporate Pilot/Instructor / MidCon since 2006

Bill Meyers / MCI Chief Pilot / 737

Real World Air Traffic Controller - Retired / MidCon since 2006

Matt Bartels / PHX Chief Pilot / 737

Real World Flight Dispatcher / MidCon since 2016

Fuel-Smart

Highest

FPO - \$4.28/gallon

Lowest

BRU - \$2.02/gallon

Hubs

JFK - \$2.44/gallon

LAX - \$2.64/gallon

MCI - \$2.51/gallon

MIA - \$2.56/gallon

PHX - \$2.47/gallon

December Arrival Fuel

Average gate arrival fuel by fleet

737 - 6,325 lbs.

777 - 19,422 lbs.

3rd Quarter Arrival Fuel

Average gate arrival fuel by fleet

737 - 6,097 lbs.

777 - 19,376 lbs.



On The Radar



January VATSIM ATC Events of interest

Friday January 4th:

- ◆ [ZFW featuring DFW](#)

Saturday January 5th:

- ◆ [ZDV featuring DEN](#)

Friday January 18th:

- ◆ [ZJX/ZHU featuring IAH/MCO](#)

Saturday January 19th:

- ◆ [ZLA featuring LAS](#)

Wednesday January 23rd:

- ◆ [ZDV featuring DEN](#)

Saturday January 26th:

- ◆ [ZMP featuring MSP](#)

Check the VATUSA events calendar and mark your 2019 MidCon calendar for more dates and events!



Center NOTAMs

Captain Matt Bartels, PHX Chief Pilot/737, VATSIM VP of Marketing and Communications

It has been a very busy year for VATSIM. The Board of Governors has multiple technology products that are due to be released within the coming year. The first of which is the long awaited improvements to VATSIM's voice solution (codec). The new voice solution incorporates many new pieces of technology that will result in a cleaner VHF radio and reduced latency. These two being the chief complaints of VATSIM's current voice codec.

Additional capabilities for the voice solution are blocking tones, range based VHF simulation, and the ability to transmit and receive on any frequency within the VHF communication spectrum. This means that voice Unicom will finally become a reality! In addition, this means that MidCon Pilots will be able to communicate with each other and ramp control via company frequencies!

Other technology in development is upgrades to the FSD infrastructure to bring position updating in line with ADS-B update rates as well as changing the default flight plan format for the network from the US FAA style to the ICAO standard.

Procedurally, there has been one change that will affect our MIA base. The VATSIM – Executive Committee has authorized a 45 day trial of a new special center in the Caribbean. "Caribbean Radio" CR-RDO_CTR will cover the Caribbean FIR's FL240 and above. It has been assigned frequency 134.300





Training Talk

Captain Eric Hill, Director of Training / 737 Fleet Captain

The leaves have fallen, and temperatures are rapidly dropping over the vast majority of our coverage area and that can only mean one thing, Cold Weather Ops.

FAR 121.629 states: "No person may take off an aircraft when frost, ice or snow is adhering to the wings, control surfaces, propellers, engine inlets, or other critical surfaces." This should be stating the obvious but, (especially we Miami crews) how familiar are you with the other limitations and procedures involving cold weather operations? Before you dig out your Hold Over Time cheat sheet, I'd like to remind you of some other considerations.

During exterior pre-flight, carefully inspect areas where surface snow, ice or frost could change or affect normal system operations. Also, you **MUST** Advise Dispatch if contaminated runway adjustments are necessary for snow, slush, ice or standing water. **Never assume!** Remember it is very difficult to distinguish between deicing / anti-icing fluids and hydraulic fluid. In small quantities and thin coatings, both fluids will have similar coloring and feel slippery to the touch. During the exterior inspection, if residual fluids on aircraft surfaces cannot be identified, contact local Maintenance or call MOC for guidance.

When starting: if the engine has been cold soaked for one or more hours at ambient temperatures below -40°C (-40°F), do **not** start or motor the engine. Maintenance personnel should do appropriate procedures for adverse weather heating of the Hydro-Mechanical Unit. If ambient temperature is below -35°C (-31°F), idle the engine for **two** minutes before changing thrust lever position. Several minutes may be needed for oil pressure to reach the normal operating pressure. During this period, oil pressure may go above the normal range and the OIL FILTER BYPASS light may illuminate. Operate the engine at idle thrust until oil pressure returns to the normal range. If the oil pressure remains above the normal range after the oil temperature has stabilized within limits, shut down the engine. In temperatures such as this it's also perfectly normal for display units to need extra time to warm up and display correctly. They might also appear more dim than usual.

Don't forget the anti-ice! Engine anti-ice must be selected ON immediately after each engine is started and remain on during all ground operations when icing conditions exist or are anticipated. Use wing anti-ice during all ground operations between engine start and takeoff when icing conditions exist or are anticipated, unless the aircraft is, or will be protected by the application of Type II or Type IV fluid in compliance with an approved ground deicing program. **If the Captain prefers that engine start be delayed until after pushback, that decision is final.**

(Continued next page)



Training Talk

If the ramp surface is slippery (ice or other material accumulations), engine start should normally be delayed until after pushback. Forces created by the engine may cause resistance to the rearward movement of the aircraft. This may cause the pushback tractor / tow-bar and aircraft to jackknife. If there is snow or ice accumulation on the wing, consider delaying the flight control check until after de-icing/anti-icing is accomplished.

An increase in control forces can be expected at low temperatures. When taxiing Taxi at a reduced speed. Use smaller nose wheel steering wheel and rudder inputs and apply minimum thrust smoothly. Differential thrust may be used to help maintain airplane momentum during turns. At all other times, apply thrust evenly. Taxiing on slippery taxiways or runways at excessive speed or with high crosswinds may start a skid. Most importantly for Takeoff verify that the LE FLAPS EXT green light is illuminated.

When engine anti-ice is required, and the OAT is 3°C (37°F) or below, the takeoff must be preceded by a static engine run-up. Use the following procedure: Run-up to a minimum of 70% N1 and confirm stable engine operation before the start of the takeoff roll. A 30-second run-up is highly recommended whenever possible.

It bears repeating that during Takeoff if the airplane starts to slide, release brakes and begin takeoff roll. Any tendency to deviate from the centerline during thrust application should be countered with immediate smooth and positive rudder input.

On wet and slippery runways, the Pilot-Monitoring (PM) should ensure the engines have symmetrical thrust. Crosscheck engine instruments for reasonableness during takeoff. Forward pressure on the control column during the initial portion of the takeoff roll (below approximately 80 knots) increases nose wheel steering effectiveness.

All this information and more is in your FCOM Vol. 1.

I remind and encourage all you to check your in-boxes for any SAFETY Bulletins and the 2018-19 H.O.T. information.

Any questions, the door is always open.

“Clear left, I’ll have the chicken...”

Captain Eric Hill, Director of Training / 737 Fleet Captain

ehill@midconair.net

Fleet News

As mentioned in the Action Items for 2019, MidCon is planning to retire the 757 and 767 from the fleet.

The reason for this is two-fold. First and foremost is an ever-decreasing pilot base to draw from to fly these older aircraft. Secondly, development and support for the type of models that we need as an airline is also waning. The Level-D 767 lineage dates back nearly 20 years to FS2000 and the 767 Pilot in Command series. While the systems complexity and quality managed to stand the test of time, the flight deck visuals (virtual cockpit) and instrumentation options did not. If Level-D had updated their flight deck to be competitive with other developers, and offered a flat-panel avionics upgrade option, it may have delayed the retirement plans by a few years.

Regarding the 757, the QualityWings offering has served us well for several years, and does provide a flat-panel avionics upgrade option, however, there are some FMC limitations that prevent us from being able to use it in the North Atlantic (PBCS tracks). Our current route network is such that it simply doesn't make sense to operate two types of narrow-body aircraft in our domestic markets.

As sad as we will be to see these iconic workhorses leave the fleet, it paves the way for the next generation of long-range, fuel efficient aircraft to step in and take the place of the 767 while providing the global reach required to expand our international network. That aircraft is, of course, the Boeing 787 Dreamliner.

We had hoped to take delivery of our first 787-8 last Spring but, due to unforeseen circumstances (unreliable aircraft painters) the initial deliveries for the 787-8 and -9 aircraft have been deferred. The current plan is to begin taking deliveries during the first quarter of 2019.

MidCon has also placed an order with Boeing (PMDG) for 50 new 737 MAX 8 aircraft, with an option for an additional 50 pending development and release.



Navigraph Survey

The results are in from the Navigraph Flight Sim Community survey, and the results may surprise you if you haven't seen them yet!



Previous surveys :

2006 - VATSIM - 6,691 respondents

2013 - AVSIM - 2,800 respondents

2016 - Navigraph - 2,200 respondents

2017 - Navigraph - 3,187 respondents



Click to download survey

2018 - Entire Sim Community - 15,006 respondents!

"The typical flight simulator enthusiast is a 43 year old male from the United States. He flies simulators 2-3 times per week for about 5-10 hours in total and was introduced to flight simulation 20 years ago. There is a 27% likelihood he already has some sort of pilot license. If so, he was introduced to flight simulation before he pursued his pilot license. Moreover, he has a bachelor's degree, is full time employed, makes 50,000 USD per year before tax, and spends about 250 USD on software and 200 USD on hardware annually. He prefers X-Plane 11, but Prepar3D v.4 is also popular."

Other interesting stats include:

Do you work within aviation?	
No	77.59%
Yes	22.41%

What pilot licenses do you currently have?	
None	72.65%
PPL	11.33%
ATP	3.10%

How many years have you been using sims?	
0-4 Years	00.22%
5-10 Years	35.66%
10+ Years	64.08%

Are you a member of a virtual airline?	
No	66.56%
Yes	33.44%

	Primary Simulator Platform		
	2016	2017	2018
FSX	60%	23%	12%
P3D	30%	31%	40%
XP-11	10%	20%	35%

As shown above, from 2016 to 2017 FSX use dropped by more than half, while X-Plane doubled. P3D stayed consistent at around 30%. While X-Plane has definitely gained ground over the last two years, P3D is still the primary simulator platform of choice.

Pilot Profile

Michael Collier

P002

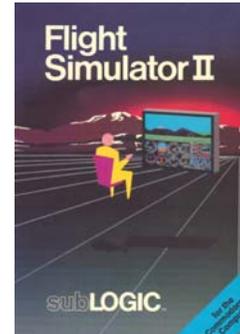


Greetings everyone!

I suppose since this is our “grand reopening” for the newsletter I’ll start this off.

My history with flight simulation takes me back to around 1986 and SubLogic’s Flight Simulator II for the Commodore 64 computer. I spent many hours with this learning how to operate the airplane and navigate. This prompted several trips to the library to check out as many different books as I could find on navigation and instrument flight.

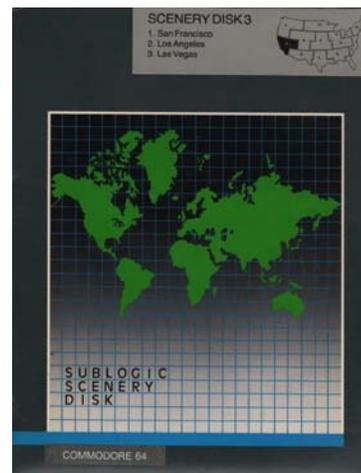
How many of us remember THIS view?



SubLogic FS II at Meigs Field Chicago

I continued flying FS2 for the next few years, expanding the coverage area as I could with the release of the SubLogic Scenery Disks. As the coverage area expanded, it allowed me to gain more experience with navigation and cross-country flight.

Naturally, as my experience with the sim grew, so did my desire to learn more about larger aircraft and airliner operation.



Pilot Profile

Michael Collier

P002



For me, SubLogic hit a home run with the release of Flight Assignment: A.T.P. in 1990.

For the first time in personal computer based simulation history, A.T.P. allowed users to fly structured assignments between approximately 30 major airports in the U.S. using Boeing 737, 767, 747, Airbus A320, and Shorts 360 aircraft.

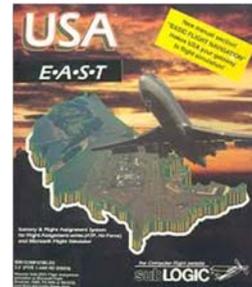
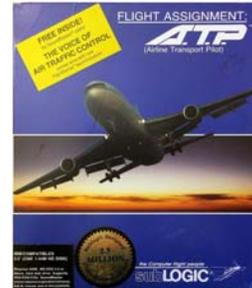
At the end of the trip, we would receive an evaluation based on airmanship, safety, navigation, and flight planning.

The "Blue Box" update introduced spoken Air Traffic Control for the first time, so of course I had to have that one when it was released!

By around 1992 SubLogic consolidated their scenery disks into a comprehensive collection called USA-EAST and USA-WEST. These collections provided every paved runway in the USA, every Navaid and Instrument Approach, and an increased level of detail (roads, buildings, etc.) than previously seen in the stand-alone disks.

Then, in 1995, the big game-changer for ATP was the release of the 3D Advanced Graphic System, or 3DAGS.

Yes boys and girls, this was state of the art in 1995, and the forerunner of what we enjoy today with the PMDG 737 series.



Pilot Profile

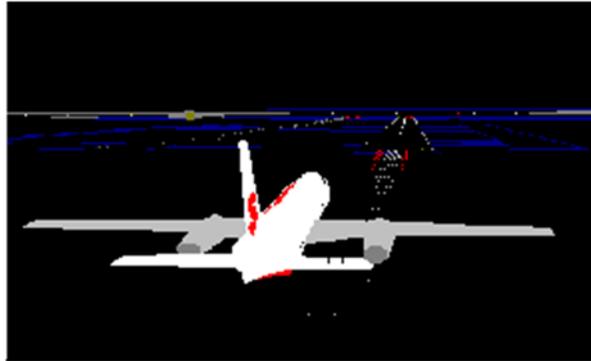
Michael Collier

P002



It was also around 1995 that I joined my first virtual airline, in fact **THE** first virtual airline, SunAir Express founded in 1992 by the late Jim Swanson. I was hired to fly the 737 from the Atlanta hub.

Once on board and flying trips for SunAir, I had a sense that all the study and flying up to that point had led to this moment. I finally felt as if I had a purpose for my flying. In 1995-1996 I became aware of a cargo airline created as a companion to SunAir called "MidContinent Airlines". If I recall correctly the founders of this outfit were Jerry Madero, Mark Lam, Tonny Koops, Ken Dundon, and I think Marc Brodbeck was also involved on some level as well.



By now, Microsoft had purchased and taken over the "Flight Simulator" franchise from SubLogic. I owned FS4 and FS5 but only flew them sporadically when I had an urge for general aviation flying. My first love was flying the airliners in A.T.P.

As the MSFS franchise continued to develop, I eventually left my beloved Flight Assignment: A.T.P. and moved over to Flight Simulator 98 (FS6.1). This was the first version of the Microsoft simulator that I felt had potential to "replace" A.T.P.

Third party developers were starting to emerge and more advanced simulation products such as the Dreamfleet 737 arrived on the scene.

Around 1998-1999 I joined up with an America West virtual airline and started providing them with suggestions to make the operation better. The then 16 year old kid that was running it left and yours truly took over as the CEO. We ran a very successful operation as America West from around 1998-2003. While still in medical school, Dr. Darren Hess spent a lot of time programming a custom website, one of the first fully functional custom ACARS units, an automated pilot bid system, and an online Dispatch system. During this time several of the founders of the original MidCon came onboard to fly for AWVA (Jerry Madero, Mark Lam, and Tonny Koops).



But, things were about to take a dramatic turn..

Pilot Profile

Michael Collier

P002



In the Spring of 2003, we were asked nicely by the folks at America West to not use their branded logos etc. for our VA. So, left with little choice we sadly closed the doors on AWVA. After a brief discussion it was decided that we should simply re-brand our operation and bring back the MidContinent Airlines name. MidCon rose from the ashes and has been running ever since in one fashion or another.

So that this doesn't turn into a "history of flight simulation according to Mike", I'll move along and wrap this up.

I credit my fascination with Flight Assignment A.T.P. for ultimately leading me into my career.

In 1996 I obtained my FAA Aircraft Dispatcher certificate and went to work for Mesa Airlines in Farmington New Mexico in early 1997.



In 1998 I relocated to Phoenix AZ to join America West Airlines.



After a merger with US Airways, I was relocated to Pittsburgh in 2008.



Another merger in 2013 with American Airlines brought what should be my last airline related relocation to Dallas Fort Worth. I'm currently a Flight Dispatch Training Instructor specializing in the Pacific Theater of Operations, and Boeing 777/787 equipment. In September I celebrated 20 years with the company.



I'm currently 52 years old, married, with a step son in college at the University of North Texas (Go Mean Green!), and a step daughter in her Junior year of high school back in Pittsburgh. I commute between DFW and PIT every week while waiting for her to graduate. In June of 2020 we'll make the permanent move to our place in Fort Worth.

Over the years I've had people ask me why I'm involved with flight simulation as a hobby when I do it for a living. My answer has always been that it's the hobby that led me into my career, and if anything, my involvement with real world aviation and airline operations has only strengthened my passion for the simulated world. I want to take my 22 years of experience and apply it to MidCon as much as possible so that others can experience that "sense of purpose" and a feeling of realistic operations like I did over 20 years ago when I first started flying for SunAir.

Look for another Pilot Profile in the next issue! Until then.. "Dispatch Out"