



VATSIM gets it together

In the early days of flight simulation software (Microsoft FS V4 and V5) we all experienced the joy of simulated flight on our home PC's.

For me, television became an unwanted intruder as I planned flights all over the various countries and spent countless hours watching the scenery unfold beneath my trusty C182.

With later releases of Microsoft Flight Simulator the wonderful medium of multiplayer was introduced (FS95 and FS98) and in 1997, two programs, SquawkBox and ProController were introduced.

These two programs enabled a pilot using the special add on program called SquawkBox to fly under simulated air traffic control with the controller using software called ProController.

Regardless of their physical location, both the pilot and the ATC could interact using "text" messages that appeared at the top of the SquawkBox screen for the pilot.

The pilot may be flying his simulator from Sydney but actually doing the approach to Chicago's O'Hare Airport and the controller may well have been in London but using ProController with the Ohare Sector File open he can actually "see" the aircraft making its approach and thereby issuing vectors for the pilot to follow.

More recently the system has been improved greatly to include actual voice communication using software called

An Introduction to Online Flight Simulation and Simulated Air Traffic Control by Terry Scanlan SATPAC – Director of Division OCEANIA – regional Director for VATSIM

RogerWilco. Now pilots and ATC communicate via voice as in the real world.

All this is made possible by a network of servers administered by VATSIM [Virtual Air Traffic Simulation]. VATSIM is staffed and run by a group of dedicated volunteers who are keen to see the flight simulation with air traffic control develop to an "As Real As It Gets" situation

VATSIM itself does not administer the local regions as this is left up to the various Divisions within VATSIM. In our case we have SATPAC [Simulated Air Traffic Control Pacific Region]

As with VATSIM, SATPAC is staffed and run by volunteers who provide training and guidance for pilots wishing to fly online within the SATPAC area. Training is also provided for those wishing to learn ATC.

At SATPAC we align ourselves very closely with Air Services and follow all procedures to the letter. We update all our SIDS and STARS each six months to reflect the changes made regularly to these departure and arrival procedures. ERSA documents are also made available to us and can be accessed from our website.

It is interesting to note that there is no age barrier in the VATSIM/SATPAC environment. We have members at SATPAC

ranging from 14yrs to 60yrs and all interact as if they were of equal age.

Many of our members are real world pilots and air traffic controllers - some even are ATP rated. They find the system valuable to practice ILS procedures with simulated air traffic control.

Most of us to-day are connected to the Internet from home and so to enjoy online flying one needs to only outlay about \$150.00 for the latest copy of FS2002. All the other add on software is freely available from the Internet and cost nothing to join. To join VATSIM is quick and your password and User Name are sent back to you via email within about five minutes of applying for membership.

My recent experience with World Flight was one of the most rewarding experiences of online flying that I have had in all the years of being involved with SATPAC/VATSIM as we experienced ATC from the local body in each country that we passed through.

If you perhaps already have MS FS98 and above but have never tried using it online, you will find all the information and software links at www.satpac.org on the "Essential Files" area. You will also need to register with VATSIM so that you can fly online using their network of servers. Go to www.vatsim.net to register and you will have an automated response within two or three minutes. Should you have any difficulties in setting up your PC for online flying you can contact the writer at tscanlan@bigpond.net.au