

**January 25, 2006**

**Bobby Sturgell, Deputy Administrator of the FAA**  
**Bruce Johnson, Vice President for Terminal Operations for the Air Traffic Organization**  
**Jeffrey Clarke, Manager of the New York TRACON**

### **New York TRACON Update**

You just heard about how we're working very hard to ensure that taxpayer dollars are spent wisely.

That push – to operate more like a business – is one of the main drivers behind the changes we've made at the New York TRACON.

The good news is that we're seeing positive results. But, before I go into those, I want to recognize the tremendous work on behalf of many of our controllers, supervisors, and managers – particularly Bruce and Jeff who are all responsible for the improvements at the facility.

It's been seven months since the FAA conducted an investigation at the TRACON after receiving anonymous reports of operational errors at the facility. To give you some context, these errors were reported within days after management began taking actions to curtail the abuses identified by the Department of Transportation's Inspector General. The abuses included findings by the IG that the local union was manipulating the work schedule and using sick leave and annual leave to inflate overtime payments.

At the same time the errors were being reported, local NATCA representatives publicly claimed that facility understaffing was jeopardizing safety. Union reps. appeared on local New York television. A writing campaign by members of the controller's union demanded that the FAA remove the acting manager at the facility (Jeff Clarke) – the same manager that was taking steps to curb overtime abuses.

With this as a backdrop, on March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2005, the FAA assembled a team of safety experts, current and former air traffic controllers, and human resource and finance personnel, who conducted a 60-day on-site investigation.

## **Findings**

The team found evidence that a culture of intimidation by local union representatives had developed over the years at the NY TRACON – all designed to protect control of the schedule and inflate overtime.

These practices resulted in the NY TRACON incurring the highest overtime costs for any large TRACON, even though the facility had more controllers onboard and handled fewer operations per controller than almost all other large TRACONS. You will see the details of this in a minute.

The team also found that operating costs were greatly increased by schedule manipulation, leave abuse, and excessive numbers of worker's compensation claims.

The bottom line is that the team we sent in concluded that the TRACON was more than adequately staffed, and neither understaffing nor workload caused operational errors.

Finally, and most importantly, public safety was not jeopardized.

## **Actions**

As a result of the team's findings, management took the following actions.

First, management of the TRACON took back full control of all aspects of the schedule. We did this by canceling ill-advised agreements entered into with the local union in the early 1990's that compromised our authority to set work schedules, determine staffing, and allocate overtime.

Second, we changed the schedule from an inefficient schedule that maximized staff on two non-peak weekdays and maximized unnecessary overtime, to a more reasonable schedule that efficiently distributes days off and staff available to match aircraft traffic. The former schedule required unnecessary overtime.

With the assistance of investigators from the IG's office – who have been permanently on-site at the facility for the past 7 months – we took immediate action to curb sick leave abuse and addressed threats and intimidation to ensure a professional environment in the control room. We also turned over all evidence of intimidation and other abuses to the IG's office.

Finally, as a result of the operational errors discovered, we imposed new training requirements and performance enhancing actions for employees and supervisors.

**Slide – Total Overtime Costs at Large TRACONs (from June 2005 Assessment)**

**Total Overtime Costs at Large TRACONs**

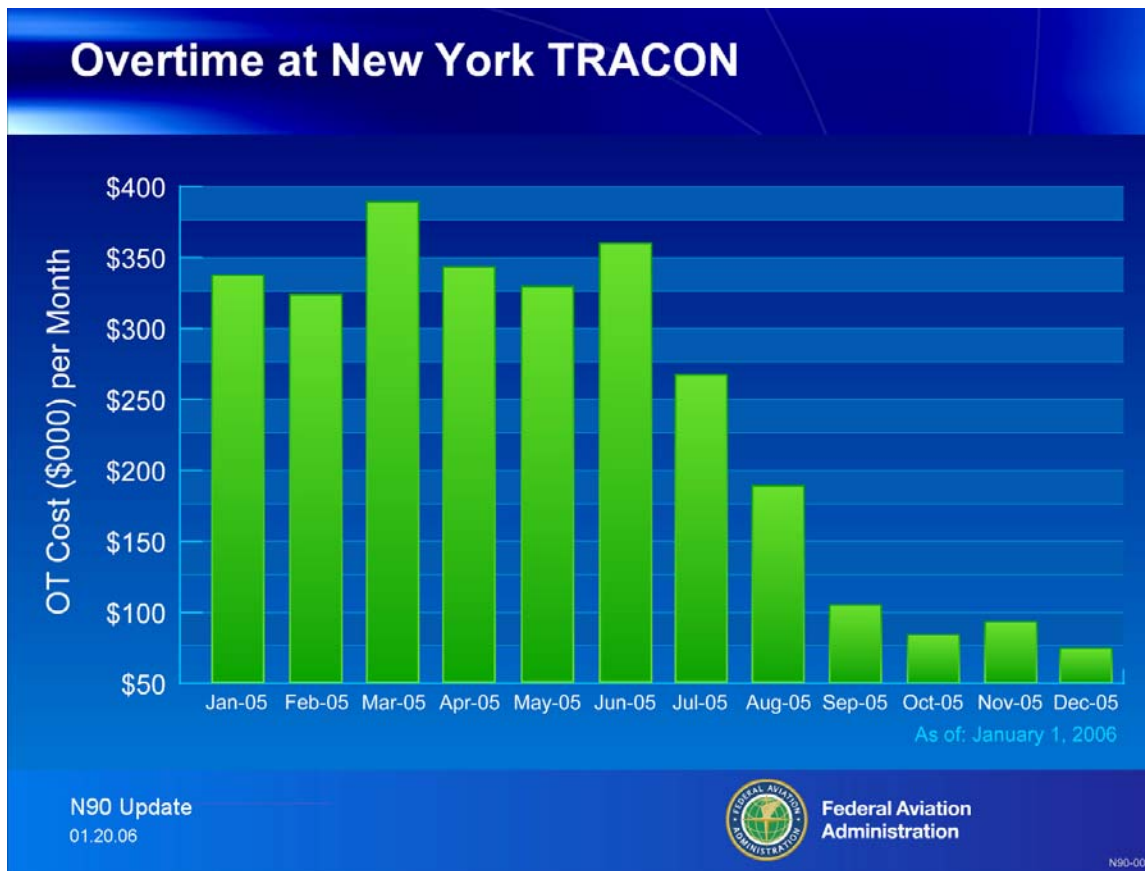
FY04	Total Operations (IFR)	Certified Professional Controllers On board	Ops per Controller	Total Overtime	Time On Position
New York	2,066,708	210	9,841	\$4,122,971	3+39
Southern California	2,124,033	235	9,038	\$1,628,122	5+06
Chicago	1,502,382	74	20,302	\$696,672	4+02
Atlanta	1,386,610	69	20,095	\$148,545	4+56
Dallas Ft. Worth	1,305,622	90	14,506	\$34,829	**

\*\* Dallas Ft. Worth time-on-position not included because it includes two separate air traffic facilities; Tower & TRACON

This slide gives you a national perspective. Prior to changing the schedule, the New York TRACON incurred \$4.12 million in overtime costs in 2004. This was the highest overtime cost of any large facility – even though they had more controllers on board and handled fewer operations than most Large TRACONs. This was the result of union controlled scheduling practices that were created specifically to require unnecessary overtime.

## Slide – Total Overtime Costs

Since we took control of the daily schedule in July 2005, and moved away from a schedule that maximized staff on two (non-peak) weekdays and maximized unnecessary overtime – overtime has decreased 76 percent. If you look at the chart, you'll see that overtime costs dropped from \$360,000 in June 2005 to \$73,000 in December. That's a 6 months savings of over \$1.4 Million.



We believe that the current overtime numbers will continue to decrease.

Slide - Result 1 – Decrease in Overtime

**Annual Overtime Costs**

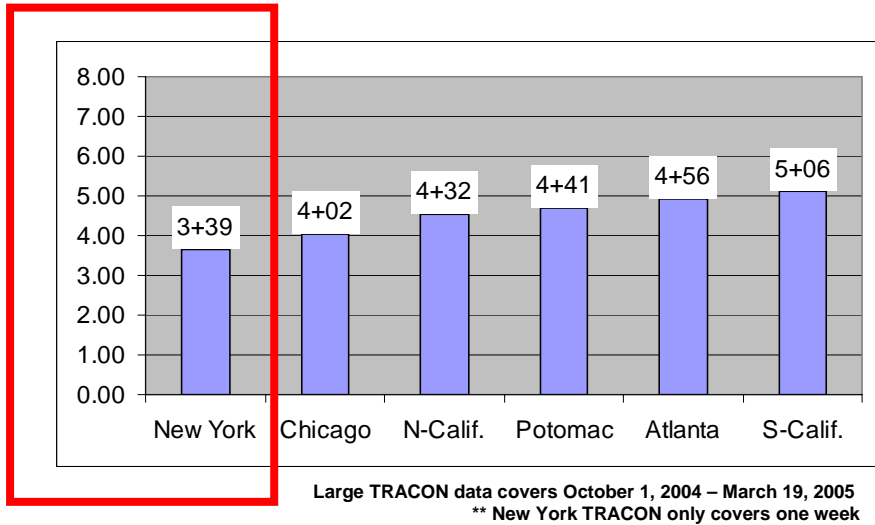
Before  
**\$4.123M**  
(FY04 total)

After  
**\$968K**  
(FY06 proj. total)

CHANGE  
**-76%**

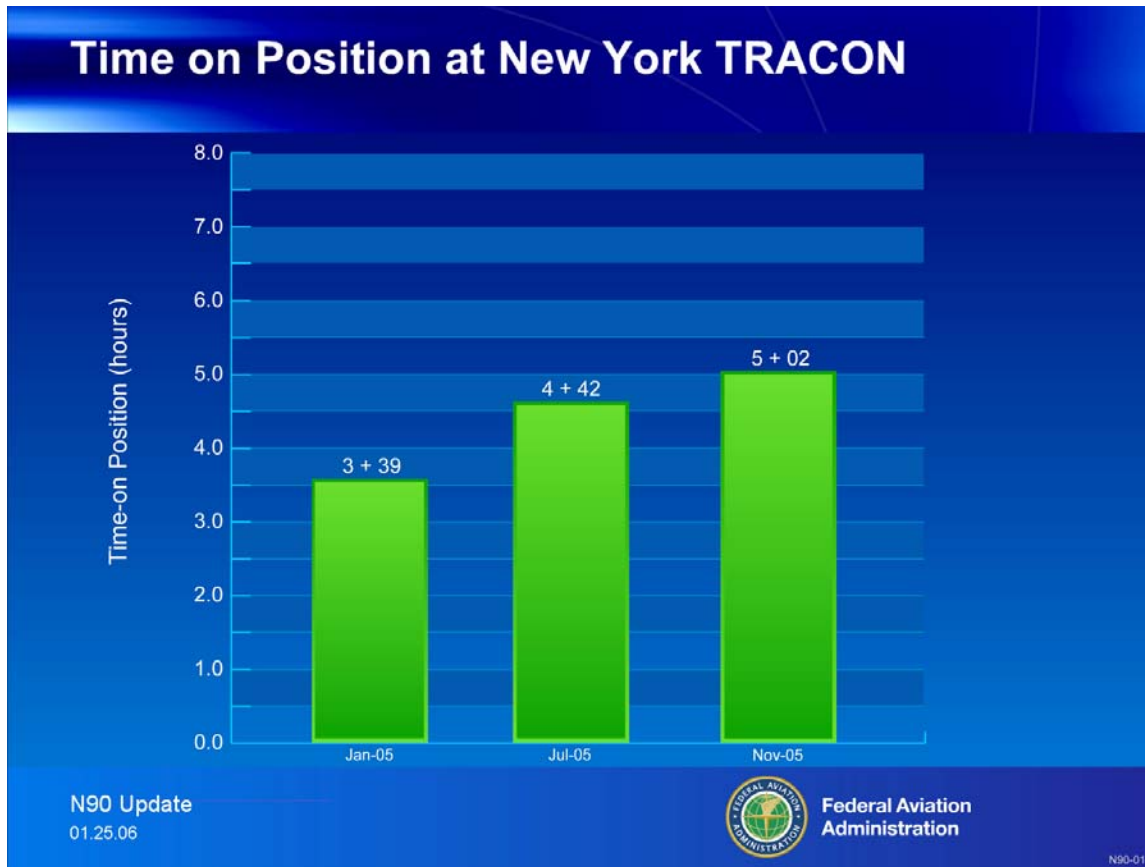
**Slide – Time-On-Position (from June 2005 Assessment)**

**Time-on-Position Per 8-Hour Shift for Large TRACONS**



As a result of the schedule changes and other actions by management, including increased supervisory presence, more over the shoulder supervision, and greater management presence on the control room floor, the time air-traffic controllers spend on the radar scopes actually guiding airplanes – known as time-on-position – has increased since our assessment concluded in June 2005.

## Slide – Time-On-Position



If you look at the chart, you will see that time-on-position has increased from an average of 3 hours and 39 minutes to 5 hours and 02 minutes – this is over the course of an 8-hour shift. The New York TRACON is now within 4 minutes of being the “best” large TRACON facility when compared to the June 2005 time-on-position. Both management and our controllers deserve to be commended for this turn-around improvement.



Slide – Result 2 – Increase in Time on Position

**Time on Position**

Before

**3 hr 39 min**

(Jan 2005)

After

**5 hr 2 min**

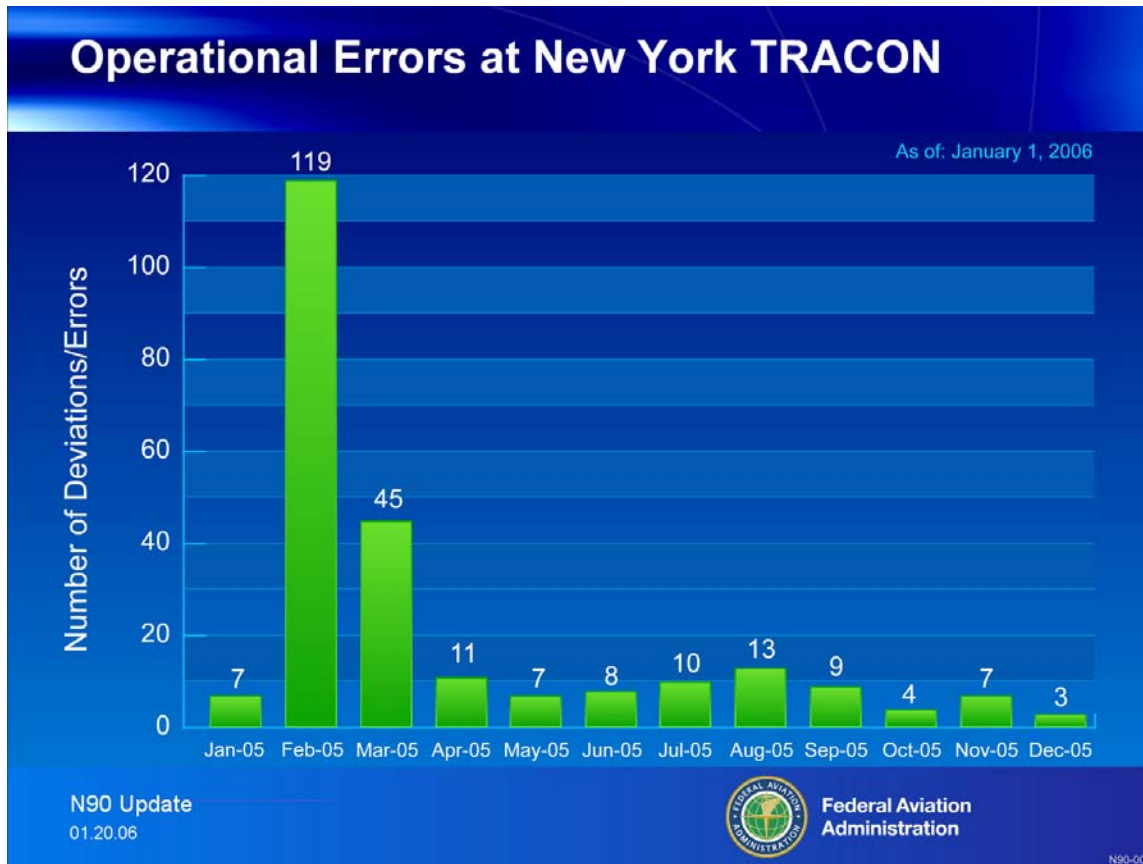
(Nov 2005)

CHANGE

**+38%**

## Slide – Operational Errors

Next, we have seen a significant decrease in the number of operational errors at the facility. If you look at the chart, you will see that errors have decreased from 119 in February 2005 to just three in December. Remember, February was the month that the errors were anonymously reported after management took action to reduce overtime abuses.



Both management and controllers have undergone extensive training, including back to basics training, and refresher mandatory training on separation standards, over the last seven months. It's also important to note that we've instituted regular, random audits of radar data to ensure that errors are not going unreported.

Slide – Result 3 – Decrease in Operational Errors

**Operational Errors**

Before

**197**

(Jan-Jun 2005)

After

**54**

(Jul-Dec 2005)

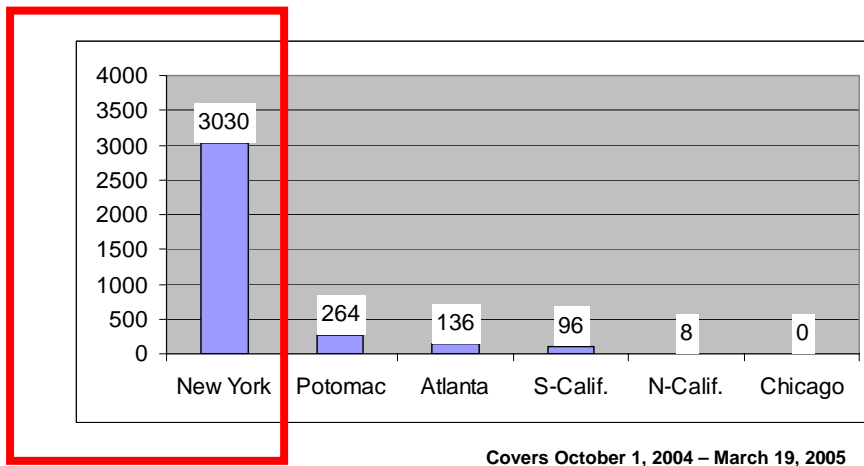
CHANGE

**-73%**

**Slide – Worker’s Comp Hours used at Large TRACONs (from June 2005 Assessment)**

In the first half of 2005, worker’s compensation claims at New York TRACON were responsible for 3030 hours of lost productivity. This was 6 times greater than Chicago, Northern California, Southern California, Potomac, and Atlanta’s TRACON’s combined.

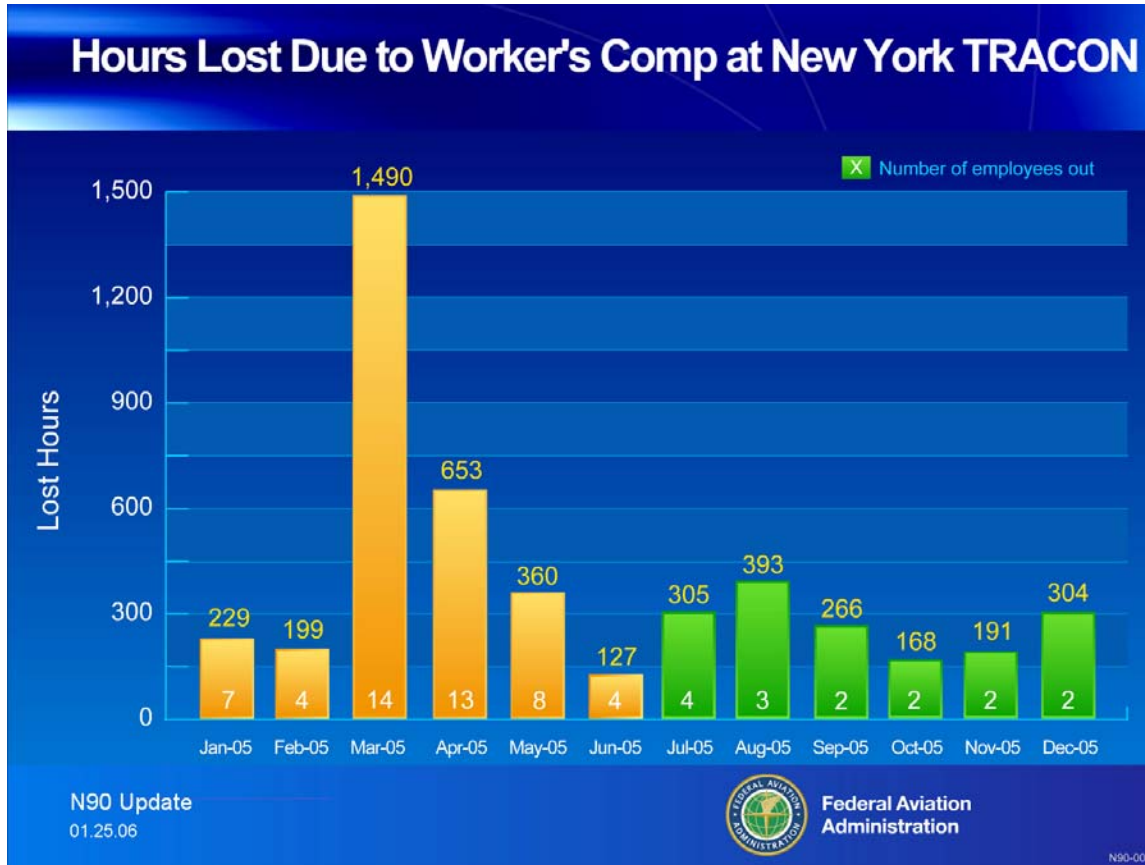
**Worker’s Comp Hours Used at Large TRACONs**



Since the spring of 2005, workers compensation claims at the facility have dropped dramatically – both in number of claims and hours.

## Slide – Worker’s Comp Hours

The number of hours claimed since the release of our findings has decreased 66 percent. As you can see on the chart, the hours have dropped from 1490 in March 2005 to 304 in December.



During this period, the IG has also been on-site at the facility and investigating some claims.

Slide – Result 4 – (cont'd) - Decrease in Worker's Comp Hours

**Worker's Comp Hours**

Before

**3024 hr**

(Oct '04 -Mar 19, '05)  
170 days

After

**1627 hr**

(Jul '05-Dec 2005)  
180 days

CHANGE

**-46%**

## **Slide - Independent Staffing Review**

Finally, we have taken steps to confirm the investigation team's conclusion that facility was not understaffed – as NATCA claimed – but rather overstaffed.

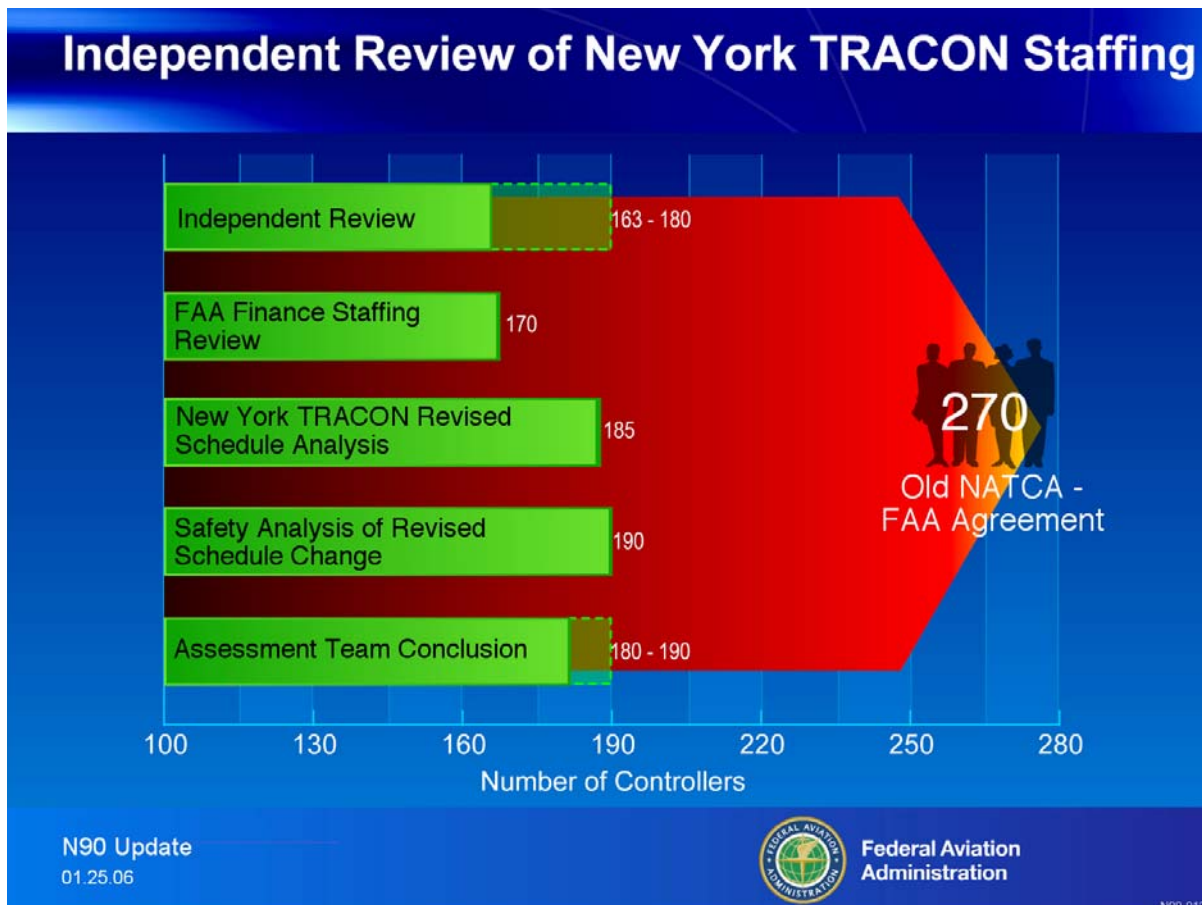
The FAA has studied staffing levels at the New York TRACON four times over the past year, and on each occasion, concluded that the facility should have no more than 190 controllers – on the high end – to efficiently and safely operate the system.

In late 2005, the FAA commissioned MITRE, the government's federally funded research group, to study staffing levels at the facility. MITRE reviewed staffing methodology, time-on-position, and traffic loads and complexity data. As a result, MITRE determined that the facility is indeed overstaffed. MITRE concluded that the staffing level should be between 163 controllers and 180 controllers.

Currently, the facility has 206 fully certified controllers. In addition, the facility also has 11 developmental controllers.

## Slide – Staffing standard numbers and Old Negotiated Standard

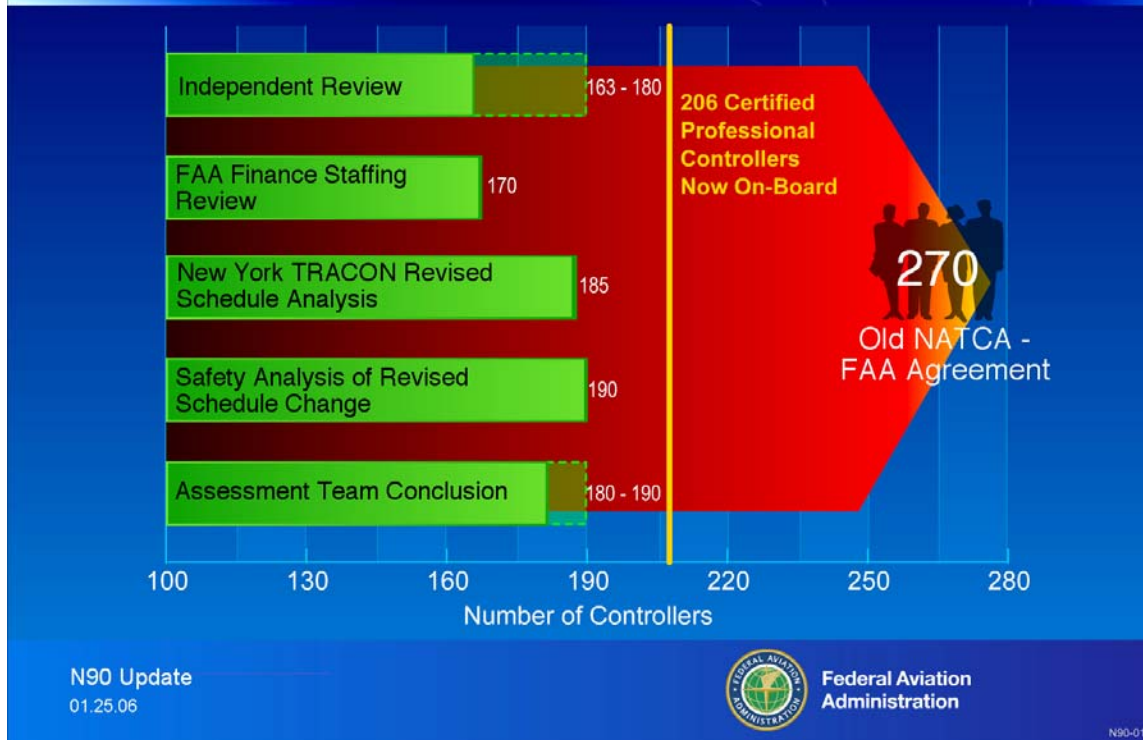
Moreover, in light of these findings, it is important to note that the old “negotiated” authorized staffing – bears no relation to what is needed to safely and efficiently operate the New York TRACON – the cancelled 1998 agreement called for 270 controllers at the New York TRACON.



That is 80 controllers more than the highest number called for by the studies conducted by the FAA and MITRE. To put this into perspective, that is enough controllers to completely staff the entire Atlanta TRACON at a cost of over \$12 million a year.



# Independent Review of New York TRACON Staffing



It is also important to note, that the old, negotiated staffing standard numbers repeatedly cited by NATCA every time they tell you that a facility is understaffed. These numbers bear no relationship to what is needed to safely and efficiently run this TRACON.

Right now we're studying our staffing numbers at our major facilities across the country. Unfortunately, the New York TRACON is not the only facility that is overstaffed. At the same time, however, there are some facilities that are understaffed.

The FAA needs the flexibility to staff to the traffic. As you know, in many locations, traffic has exceeded its pre-September 11<sup>th</sup> numbers. At the same time, air traffic is still down double digits in several significant markets like Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Miami, Seattle, Los Angeles, Boston, Cleveland, Dallas-Ft. Worth, Portland, and San Francisco.

It is particularly important that the FAA's new contract not restrict management's ability to make reasonable business decisions about staffing at individual facilities. We must be able to adjust staffing numbers at individual facilities as patterns change. Shifting staff should not require new negotiations and agreements when our customers simply shift their flights from one airport to another.

Thank you – We'd be glad to answer any questions at this time.