Virtual Airlines Partner Policy

Effective January 1st, 2023

1.0 INTRODUCTION.

From its inception in 2001, VATSIM has recognized the popularity of virtual airlines (VA) and the desire of pilots to operate aircraft on the network utilizing airline call signs, aircraft, and procedures. As a result, the Virtual Airlines and Special Operations Department was created and placed under the management and authority of a Vice-President dedicated to that department. It was determined that it would be beneficial to VATSIM to establish a cadre of partner airlines that could be recommended to members seeking to join a virtual airline. In return, being established as a Partner provided an opportunity for said VAs to make their presence known and potentially recruit new members to their rosters.

It was decided that there should be certain criteria to qualify a VA for Partner status and to retain that status, that there should be a formal policy to regulate said qualifications, and a means to verify continued eligibility. That is the purpose of this policy document.

2.0 PREFACE.

This document shall serve as the written document of requirements and daily operational procedures for all Virtual/Simulated civilian airlines and organizations that wish to use the VATSIM network for online flight simulation.

2.1 Overview.

VATSIM provides the framework for regulation and control of events and activities so that these can be properly conducted to ensure minimal negative impact to other users of the VATSIM network.

2.2 Authority.

In accordance with the VATSIM Code of Regulations, the VATSIM Vice President of Virtual Airlines and Special Operations (VPVASO), shall be the determining authority for all individuals and organizations wishing to utilize the VATSIM network for events and activities described in this document.

- **2.2.1** The VPVASO reserves the authority to remove any individual or organization from Virtual Airlines & Special Operations (VASO) partnership, thereby suspending their privilege to conduct any event, benefit, right or activity described in this document.

- **2.2.2** An email notice of removal will be sent to the member and/or organization, and to the VATSIM Vice President of Conflict Resolution (VPCR). The VPCR may review a removal and provide the targeted party or parties with an appeals process.

2.3 Applicability.

These procedures shall apply to all VATSIM Pilots and Air Traffic Control Divisions on the VATSIM network conducting any type of event, activity, or operation described in this document.

2.4 Requirement.

Any pilot or ATC Division wishing to conduct an event or activity described in this document shall first be members in good standing. Any individual or organization in breach of this requirement shall be subject to disciplinary procedures in accordance with VATSIM Code of Regulations Article VI.

2.5 Responsibility overall.

VPVASO is responsible for building and maintaining VATSIM's partnerships with virtual airlines and with Special Operations organizations.

2.6 Restrictions.

While VATSIM does not restrict pilots as to which liveries they may or may not use while flying on the network, VATSIM prohibits any organization or entity that is not officially a VATSIM Partner, to provide or guarantee an aircraft livery for any simulator and/or aircraft containing the official VATSIM branding on it.

VATSIM does allow anyone to fly military aircraft on the network, as designated on a filed flight plan with separate departure and destination locations. However, none of the privileges mentioned below will be allowed by non-VSO certified pilots or any pilot not operating on a Special Operations flight.

- Conducting joint training exercises with approved VSO organizations;
- War games;
- Air to air refueling;
- Carrier operations;
- Flying low level military routes;
- Flying escort missions;
- Executing air combat maneuvers;
- Interception/scramble of other aircraft;
- Having access to special use airspace;
- Search & Rescue Operations.

Any pilots wishing to take part in these activities are required to join a VATSIM Special Operations organization and complete the required training. Any pilot found online and not complying with the rules may be subject to disciplinary actions in accordance with VATSIM Code of Regulations and Code of Conduct.

3.0 STRUCTURE AND REQUIREMENTS.

3.1 Command Structure.

Like any other segment of VATSIM, the VASO has a specified chain of command. Positions below the VPVASO may be filled as needed by appointment of the VPVASO. All positions report to the Vice President of Virtual Airlines & Special Operations, and the Departmental Director, who both act as Team Leads, with the exception of VPVASO having higher authority. The departmental positions created are:

- **3.1.1** Director of Virtual Airlines (VATVAD1)
- **3.1.2** VA Public Relations Officer (VATVAD2)
- **3.1.3** VA Department Senior Developer (VATVAD3)
- **3.1.4** Senior Audit Manager for Virtual Airlines (VATVAD4-5)
- **3.1.5** VA Department Developer (VATVAD6-9)
- **3.1.6** Audit Manager for Virtual Airlines (VATVAD10-22)

3.2 Requirements.

In order to become a VATSIM Virtual Airline Partner, a petitioning virtual airline should go to myVATSIM and apply. All Virtual Airlines must meet these basic requirements:

- **3.2.1 Management supports VATSIM and encourages pilots to fly online**. As an online flight simulation network, our mission is to provide an aviation experience for pilots and air traffic controllers. Encouraging and sustaining use of the network is the primary means of achieving this goal. Therefore, we seek to partner with virtual airlines that make an effort to encourage their pilots to fly their flights with the airline online using the VATSIM network.

- **3.2.2 VA in existence minimum of six months**. Virtual Airlines are created all the time but many fail to either achieve a critical mass of members or maintain the management commitment for a significant period of time and are quickly abandoned. A VA that has been in existence for six months or more is likely to have overcome the initial problems that doom many startups.

- **3.2.3 50+ flights on the VATSIM network using any VA callsign ICAO** (reference **3.2.4**) **airline in the past 90 days, by minimum 15 different pilots**. The presence of at least 50 flights online on a VA's roster indicates that it has achieved some level of acceptance in the pilot community, by a corps of dedicated members. Having pilots utilize the VATSIM network while conducting flights is why the network exists. Partner VAs are subject to periodic audits every 90 days by VATSIM's Audit Managers to ensure that they are maintaining the requirements for said status. To facilitate these audits, flight records or PIREPs must be made available to the audit managers on request or via a roster that is publicly accessible on the VA website. Flights records/PIREPs should consist of the following information:

  3.2.3.1 Callsign *
  3.2.3.2 Origin Airport ICAO *
  3.2.3.3 Destination Airport ICAO *
  3.2.3.4 Flight Date *
  3.2.3.5 Departure Time (Zulu) *(optional)*
  3.2.3.6 Arrival Time (Zulu) *(optional)*
  3.2.3.7 Aircraft *(optional)*
  3.2.3.8 Remarks *(optional)*

A VA claiming to be unable to comply with this requirement must delineate a valid reason. This requirement may be waived upon request by the VA and approval by the Director of Virtual Airlines or VPVASO.

*Note for **3.2.3** – The flight records/PIREPs must be accessible online, or upon request via a readable textual list, or a .pdf/.json/.doc*/.cvs file. This requirement may be determined from a single file, hence no need for multiple submissions. Please do not include more than 50 flight records total in your document; as we wish to minimize the amount of pilot data with which we interact.*

- **3.2.4 VA's Callsign ICAOs**. While there are no limitations as to how many callsigns the VA may utilize, we require them to provide us with the list of Callsign ICAOs their pilots use when flying on the network. This should either be submitted upon applying for partner status, or upon request by an audit manager.

- **3.2.5 Display the latest VATSIM logo on the website with a link pointing to www.vatsim.net**. We display your banner as a partner airline and require that you display ours. The VATSIM logo must be featured either on the VA website homepage or in a clearly marked Partners section and must conform to the guidelines found at https://vats.im/brand.

- **3.2.6 Virtual Airlines may not have the exact same names**. Each partner airline will have a distinct name for its listing and no other VA may utilize the exact same name.

- **3.2.7 Active email address.** VATSIM's Audit Managers must be able to contact an official from each VA Partner. Upon submitting an application, and it being approved, the VA is linked to the applicant's VATSIM account, and their primary address is used as the contact address for any VA related inquiries. The VA may contact the department officials in order to request a different address be set as the contact address.

- **3.2.8 Software installed on the client's user system.** Any software that VA members need to install to fulfill work for the VA must follow any data restrictions VATSIM imposes to secure the online system. Therefore, while online, any data collection software or programs utilized by a VA must not interfere with, or possibly be harmful to, the VATSIM network. In addition, the VA will not permit any pirated and/or copyright- protected documents, charts, or other files or programs to be posted on or linked from its site without having received prior authorization from the legal owner of said material permitting such use.

- **3.2.9 Website requirements.** In most cases, websites are used as gateways for pilots to interact with their VA accounts, which includes private data. We require all VAs to meet the following website requirements:

3.2.9.1 Websites are required to pass all traffic through the HTTPS protocol, instead of HTTP. This requires the website to have an SSL Certificate. Using an SSL Certificate on a website adds an extra layer of security and helps protect against attacks such as man-in-the-middle attacks, where an attacker intercepts and potentially modifies the data being transmitted between the client and server. It ensures that the data transmitted between the client and server is encrypted and cannot be intercepted by third parties. As a free alternative, we recommend using https://letsencrypt.org/.

- **3.2.10 GDPR Compliance as a VA Partner**. Each VA will be required to have their website GDPR compliant by making sure that website has the following information posted on the front page in a very conspicuous location. Each individual VA will have their choice of either placing a pop-up box / modal or a general text box which must include the following:

  3.2.10.1 Consent from each member to have their data collected and used pursuant to the GDPR Privacy Policy.
  3.2.10.2 A link to the GDPR Privacy Policy for members to review.
  3.2.10.3 Actual GDPR Privacy Policy located on the main website for easy access.

  VAs, when applying for partnership, must include all the requested information from above for the application to be processed promptly.

  Upon submitting an application, the applicant states that they are authorized to submit the application as a representative of the Virtual Airline in question.
  Violating this term may result in disciplinary action against the applicant.

  VAs may be eligible to have the activity requirement waived, if their Virtual Airline has >80% of their total flights on VATSIM.

An organization may be removed from the database at any time for any valid reason as deemed by VATSIM officials to include, but not limited to: Dead links, bad email addresses, continuous misbehavior by pilots on the network, failure to respond to official inquiries in a timely manner (not to exceed 96 hours), or failure to adhere to the above stated partnership requirements.

> *NOTE: Virtual Airlines which do not meet all the stated requirements to be a Partner may apply to be a Virtual Airline Associate (VAA). The requirements for that program are stated in the separate VAA Policy that is posted on https://vatsim.net/docs/policy/virtual-airline-associate*

4. DATA PROTECTION.

VATSIM's Virtual Airlines department falls under VATSIM's Privacy Policy and Data Protection and Handling Policy.

4.1 Permissions.

Upon submitting an application, the applicant, on behalf of the Virtual Airline they are representing, gives VATSIM permission to responsibly store the following data:

- **4.1.1** The applicant's primary VATSIM email address;
- **4.1.2** The applicant's VATSIM CID;
- **4.1.3** Virtual Airline Name;
- **4.1.4** Founding date of the Virtual Airline;
- **4.1.5** Website URL of the Virtual Airline;
- **4.1.6** Logo of the Virtual Airline;
- **4.1.7** Country the Virtual Airline is based in;

- **4.1.8** Flight data submitted. Reference to requirement 3.2.3 that will be destroyed upon being reviewed and the application being approved/rejected;
- **4.1.9** Description and any of the selectable tags that match the Virtual Airlines.

Upon the VA being audited, in order to satisfy any requirement the Audit Manager is unable to verify without additional input from the VA, the Audit Manager may send a request, using their officially issued vatsim.net email, to the official contact address of the VA for the required information to complete the audit.

Any data submitted to the Audit Managers, is only to be viewed by the Audit Manager doing the audit, Director of Virtual Airlines and/or Vice President of Virtual Airlines and Special Operations. Upon the Audit being complete, all and any data received from the VA's contact e-mail address will be permanently deleted.

4.2 Accessibility.

Upon an explicit request from a VA, we are obliged to submit to them any and all data we hold about their VA.

4.3 Termination.

The VA reserves the right to request immediate removal from our systems, and all data concerning them, at any given point in time. This process may take up to 96 hours after being received.

5.0 BENEFITS AND RIGHTS.

5.1 Benefits.

Virtual Airlines partnered with VATSIM, from the beginning of their status as a Partner until their termination or end, will be entitled to receive the following:

- **5.1.1** VAPs participating in the program will have their site name and a link to their website published on my.vatsim.net which is visited by many pilots seeking to join a VA;
- **5.1.2** VAPs become eligible to participate in the VATSIM Pilot Training Department as an Authorized Training Organization (ATO);
- **5.1.3** VAPs are eligible to co-sponsor events with VATSIM ARTCCs/FIRs;
- **5.1.4** Access to VATSIM VA Discord via which other VA Staff Members can be contacted and coordinated. This includes, but does not guarantee, easier communication and planning with ARTCC/FIR event coordinators;
- **5.1.5** Exclusive rights allowing the VAPs to create in-house Aircraft Liveries that contain the VATSIM logo under the condition that it follows the guidelines found on https://vats.im/brand;
- **5.1.6** Access to any technical tools developed by the VA Department for VAs that allow for easier data exports necessary for audits (When such are available);
- **5.1.7** Right to submit VA hosted events on our discord server, to have them publicized via VATSIM media, which includes advertising them on our events twitter, https://vatsim.net/events, and 700+ discord servers, including the official community server.

- **5.1.8** Right to submit up to 15 aircraft liveries to be included in the FS Live Traffic Liveries project. More information about FSLTL can be found here: https://www.fslivetrafficliveries.com
- **5.1.9** Access to any Resources developed by this department for VAs (When such are available).

5.2 Rights

Virtual Airlines partnered with VATSIM, from the beginning of their status as a Partner until their termination or end, receive the following rights:

- **5.2.1** All benefits provided to VAPs. Reference to **5.1.**
- **5.2.2** Data accessibility concerning the VA in question. Reference to **4.2.**
- **5.2.3** Representing themselves as an official partner of VATSIM.
- **5.2.4** Viewing audit data and results from past periods for their VA. Reference to **4.2.**
- **5.2.5** Immediate termination and deletion, which includes, but is not limited to, requesting a removal from the program, and/or all data stored about the VA.

6. DEFINITIONS.
6.1 Partnership

Virtual/Simulated organization that is a partner of VATSIM.

6.2 Standard Operation

Standard operations comprise flying any aircraft within: General Aviation, Private, Corporate, or Commercial operations. There are no special requirements imposed by this document when conducting standard operations, and these are therefore NOT subject to the Special Operations Guidelines. At no time shall a virtual government agency, or any aircraft actively engaged in military, paramilitary or Search and Rescue activities, be considered as a standard operation entity, nor shall said entity or activity be exempt from policy set forth in this document.

6.3 Special Operations

Special operations comprise flying any aircraft that is; part of a military/government agency; or any aircraft engaged in military and/or paramilitary operations and are regulated under their own separate policy. Any other event or activity deemed as potentially disruptive will be reviewed by one or more of the following:

- a. VATSIM Board of Governors
- b. VP - Virtual Airlines and Special Operations (VPVASO/VATGOV12)
- c. Regional Directors

VPVASO can refer the matter to the VP-CONFLICT RESOLUTION for independent review.

6.4 VATSIM Virtual Airline (VVA)

Includes realistic and fictional airlines that fly from point to point and does not include special operations.

6.5 VATSIM Virtual Airline Partner (VAP)

Virtual/Simulated organization that is a part of VATSIM's Virtual Airlines Partner Program.

6.6 VATSIM Virtual Airline Associate (VAA)

Virtual/Simulated organization that is not an official partner of VATSIM, but is a part of VATSIM's Virtual Airlines Associate Program, which assists VAs in reaching the goal of becoming a VAP.

6.7 VATSIM Special Operations (VSO)

Special Operations Organizations that are approved to fly on the VATSIM network.

6.8 Vice President of Virtual Airlines and Special Operations (VPVASO, VATGOV12)

Oversees all activities within this document. VATGOV12 is the departmental chief, and has overall responsibility for Virtual Airline, Military, Paramilitary, and Civilian Governmental Agency partnerships. VATGOV12 is our representative to the Board of Governors reporting directly to them and is also our interface with the CERT server.

6.9 Director of Virtual Airlines (VATVAD1)

The vast majority of VATSIM Partnership requests come from virtual airline staff members, and this individual is tasked with specifically looking after these organization Partnerships, and ensuring that they continually meet our requirements. This position reports to VATGOV12. The Director of Virtual Airline Relations responsibilities include:

1. VATSIM's representative to Virtual Airlines;
2. Managing Virtual Airline applications to become VATSIM Partners;
3. Supervising and assisting with the auditing of VAPs;
4. Managing a team of Virtual Airline Audit Managers.

6.10 Virtual Airlines Public Relations Officer (VATVAD2)

The person responsible for maintaining VA Department's public image, collaborating and making contact with Virtual Airlines and Associates. Answers questions and manages our public resources. The Virtual Airlines Public Relations Officer's responsibilities include:

1. Report directly to the Director of Virtual Airlines and/or VPVAS;
2. Maintaining our forum section and handling complaints;
3. Send out public announcements via discord, forum & email;
4. Obtaining feedback and commencing regular surveys among the VAs willing to participate;
5. Promoting VATSIM partnership ofers and working on additional benefts for VAs;
6. Aiding VATGOV12 and the Director of Virtual Airlines with any special projects.

6.11 Virtual Airlines Senior Developer (VATVAD3)

The person responsible for maintaining and leading the departmental tech team, and to ensure my.vatsim.net and our tools are operational. The Virtual Airlines Developer's responsibilities include:

1. Leading and managing the departmental tech team;
2. Maintaining departmental repositories and reviewing requests;
3. Maintaining and developing the Virtual Airlines dashboard located on my.vatsim.net;
4. Developing and maintaining tools for both internal use of the department and VAs;
5. Aiding VATGOV12 and the Director of Virtual Airlines with any special projects.

6.12 Virtual Airlines Senior Audit Manager (VATVAD4-5)

As VATSIM is in partnership with many virtual airlines, it is the role of the senior audit manager to manage the Audit Management team, in close cooperation with VATVAD1. This position reports to the Director of Virtual Airline Relations. The Virtual Airline Audit Manager's responsibilities include:

1. Managing VAA Mentors & Partnership Advisors;
2. Reviewing submitted audits through the Audit Management System;
3. Approving & publishing VA events on VATSIM;
4. Approving & managing VA role requests on the VA Department Discord;
5. Responding to tickets from members of the community on https://support.vatsim.net;
6. Being the go-to person if other AMs need assistance;
7. Monitoring and tracking Audit Manager Team performance.

6.13 Virtual Airlines Developer (VATVAD6-9)

The person responsible for maintaining and developing our backend and frontend systems in collaboration with VATSIM's Tech Department, to ensure my.vatsim.net and our tools are operational. The Virtual Airlines Developer's responsibilities include:

1. Maintaining and developing the Virtual Airlines dashboard located on my.vatsim.net
2. Developing and maintaining tools for both internal use of the department and VAs.
3. Aiding VATGOV12 and the Director of Virtual Airlines with any special projects

6.14 Virtual Airlines Audit Manager (VATVAD10-22)

As VATSIM is in partnership with many virtual airlines, it is the role of the audit manager to undertake periodic audits of each VAP once every 90 days to verify their status and whether they continue adherence to our requirements. This position reports to the Director of Virtual Airline Relations. The

Virtual Airline Audit Manager's responsibilities include:

1. Ensuring that all VAPs receive an audit once every 90 days (unless otherwise exempted);
2. Reviewing changes made to VAP accounts;
3. Answering any questions about VAP status;
4. Aiding VATGOV12 and the Director of Virtual Airlines with any special projects.

7. STAFF LIST AND CONTACT.

Our staff list changes from time to time as our volunteers come and go, therefore, we use our forum group to keep our staff list up to date. Any contact from a vatsim.net address is deemed an official contact. Our staff will never contact you from any other addresses.

You can find our staff list here:

https://forum.vatsim.net/g/virtualairline

If you have any questions or are looking for assistance, you may contact us on forums, via email, or join our Discord Server.

End of Document.

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(DO NOT MODIFY)

VATSIM Virtual Airlines Department