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French Proposal to Update FAI Definitions: U.S. Response

(Refer to Annex 40, "Indoor Events Presentation")

At first glance, this proposal appears to be a reasonable proposition: redefine parachuting's FAI definitions to distinguish between those disciplines requiring an open parachute from those performed in freefall, so that the IPC might recognize wind tunnel competitions and so grow the sport. There also seems to be precedence; for example, indoor aeromodeling is sanctioned by CIAM and falls under the umbrella of the FAI. Given indoor aeromodeling falls under the FAI, then why not indoor freefall?



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However, upon closer examination of the proposal, the U.S. would like to shed light on some difficulties. To explain our concerns, please review this excerpt from the table in the Sporting Code General Section (page 1-2), "FAI International Air Sports Commissions":

Activity	Commission	Sporting Code	Class Letter	Description
Aeromodeling	CIAM	Section 4	Class F Class S	Model Aircraft Space Models
Parachuting	IPC	Section 5	Class G	Parachutes

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Note the format, from left-to-right: Air sport activity (a verb); next, the Air Sport Commission; the Sporting Code Section; the Class letter; and finally, the related aeronautical device (a noun). Now, refer to page six of the French proposal, "Proposed (revised) Definitions."


The French proposal contradicts the logic of the table, adding an *activity*, "freefall (skydiving)" (a verb) to the right column, where only aeronautical devices (nouns) belong. If anything were to be added to the right column, it would be "wind tunnel" (a noun). Perhaps the proposed definition belongs with "Parachuting," in the left column? Unfortunately, it does not fit there, either. Bodyflight in a wind tunnel is not parachuting. Consider this definition of parachuting:

"Parachuting is the activity of jumping from an aircraft with a packed parachute and then deploying it in the air; the purpose of the jump being the flight and/or the landing of the parachute."

As for "skydiving," it's fair to say it's always been treated as a sub-set of parachuting:

"Skydiving is the activity of jumping from an aircraft with a packed parachute and then performing maneuvers in freefall before deploying a parachute; the purpose of the jump being the maneuvers in freefall."

Practically speaking, it's fair to say that all parachuting begins with skydiving, and all skydiving ends with parachuting. Bodyflight in a wind tunnel is not freefall: there is no falling involved. It's *simulated* freefall. So does it fit within the definition of parachuting? Logically, it does not. Therefore, this activity does not belong within the definitions or scope of the IPC.

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Some related thoughts:

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Flight simulators are used extensively for pilot training. In fact, only when simulator training is complete are the pilots introduced to a real airliner for operational training. The logic of using a simulator to practice emergencies and low-visibility approaches (both rare in the real world) is unassailable; however, few in the airline industry consider simulator training remotely sufficient to qualify a pilot to fly in the real world. The real world—flight in the sky with earth below—cannot be simulated. You have to get out and fly where the risks are real; where danger is present and the stakes are life and death. No matter how good the flight simulator is—it's not real flying.

By the same logic, simulated freefall within the safe confines of a wind tunnel is not in any sense real skydiving or parachuting.



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Finally, consider the logic of this grid:

Air sport	Commission	Description (of aero devices)
Aeromodelling	CIAM	Model Aircraft
Aerobatics	CIVA	Aeroplanes, Gliders
Astronautics	ICARE	Spacecraft, Aero-spacecraft
Ballooning	CIA	Free Balloons, Dirigibles, Airships
Gliding	IGC	Gliders, Motor Gliders
Hang Gliding	CIVL	Hang Gliders, Paragliders
Parachuting	IPC	Parachutes
Indoor bodyflight	???	Wind tunnels

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Bodyflight (simulated freefall) in a wind tunnel may well deserve incorporation by the FAI, but it should have its own definitions, rules and a separate commission. Otherwise, the IPC should be dismantled and reincorporated with a broader set of definitions and an all-encompassing identity, one that would potentially encompass all base jumping activities, including wingsuit proximity flying. This entity might be called the "International Bodyflight Commission."

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However, where would parachuting fit in this scheme? The definitions would have to be expanded and the governing body re-named the "International Bodyflight & Parachuting Commission" (IBPC). Until this idea gains political capital, we suggest the wind tunnel community directly petition the FAI for recognition as a new air sport.

Respectfully submitted, U.S. Delegation
63rd IPC/FAI Plenary Meeting, Buenos Aires