South Atlantic Airmail in World War II and Pan American Airways' Role

Sponsored by The Collectors Club via **200**

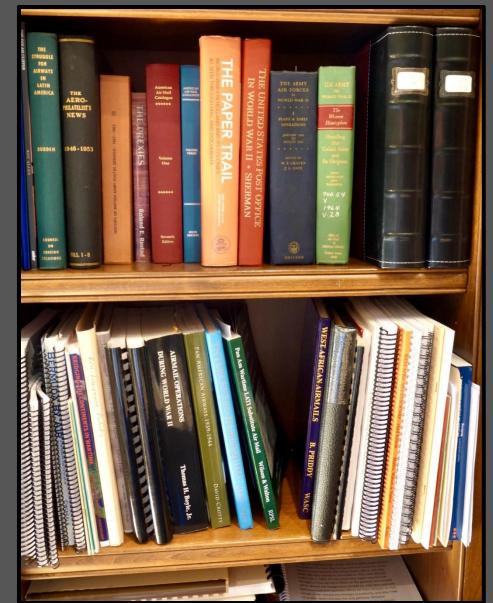
Gordon Eubanks 5 May 2021



Boeing 314 Clipper

- There has been and continues to be significant research in this area.
- Special thanks to the great philatelists and researchers who have contributed to this area: Ken Lawrence, John Wilson, David Crotty, Frank Walton and many many others.
- I will provide an overview of the major components and issues ...
- North Atlantic and Pacific come up
- and show some nice covers.

Note: A few covers will be framed in Red because they are special – at least to me ⁽³⁾



From 1937 PAA Was Flying the Pacific Two short-lived rates to Africa

- Lindberg's Atlantic flight 20 May 1927
- In late 30's PAA flying the Pacific E-W and South America N-S



14 Feb 1941 Youngstown OH to Bloemfontein South Africa. Stamps pay 95¢ 1/2 oz rate effective under 1 year: 6 August 1940 through 17 July 1941.

19 November 1941 censored air mail letter from Baltimore MD to Cape Town South Africa. Stamps pay the \$1.10 airmail rate via Hong Kong or Singapore and Cairo.

Rate effective less than 6 months: 18 July 1941 through 1 Dec. Censored in South Africa.

Mr.H. G. Mise Glo Frenkel Whise 8 6: Led. P. O. Box 2917 FIN VIA AIR MAIL Cape Joron 1841 BAI Anudh-Africa

Pan American Airlines & Trans-Atlantic Travel

- By 1939 PAA was flying North Atlantic
- 3 Sept 1939 war comes to Europe
- UK starts censoring mail in Bermuda
- June 1940 Italy enters the war closing the Mediterranean



1 May 1940 New York to Elisabethville Belgian Congo. On a PAA B-314 FAM 18 trip 119 from New York to Lisbon via Horta and then onward to Marseilles by European carrier. To Elisabethville by French carrier.

Stamps pay 7x the 50¢ per half ounce airmail rate - 30¢ to Europe and 20 cent surcharge to the Belgium Congo - plus 15¢ registry fee.



In February 1941 PAA started operating Charters for the Army

- In general these were unpublished classified trips
- Usually followed the route through Brazil to Africa
- Over time there would be almost 100 charters later called special missions (SM)
- Charters carried a significant amount of mail
- Were the 12 Miami to Leopoldville FAM 22 Clipper Flights charters/SMs?
 - It matters but it is not the core issue
 - Most of charters/SMs left from New York
- Miami remained a key departure point for South America and Africa

Goodson irney Hotel ich, India

24 Jan 1942 air mail letter from Karachi India to New York most likely carried back on Charter 10 PAA 6004. The letter was censored in Karachi but not in Miami.

KILLARNEY HOTEL, Karachi, 1-24-42

First flight of An American Clipper across the South Atlantic



August 1941: New York – Puerto Rico – Trinidad – Belem – Natal – Bathurst To Liberia via British Corvette. This letter was carried by the pilot. The *Yankee Clipper* conducted a survey and supply flight, known, as PAA Charter 3, bringing the first members of the construction crew to Fisherman's Lake.

Announcing Foreign Air Mail Route 22

(Continued from other side)

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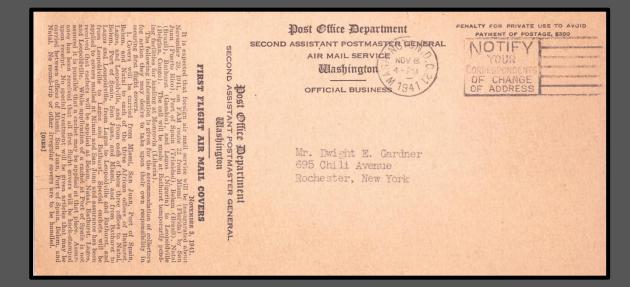
<text><text><text><text><text><text><text><text><text> SMITH W. PURDUM,

Second Assistant Postmaster General. 200128

Reverse of postcard

Originally planned for late November from Miami it actually left on 6 December from New York This was a major philatelic event but confusing

Postcard Explaining First Flight Processing



Outbound FAM 22 First Flight

Boeing B-314 Capetown Clipper flying boat with William M. Maslund piloting

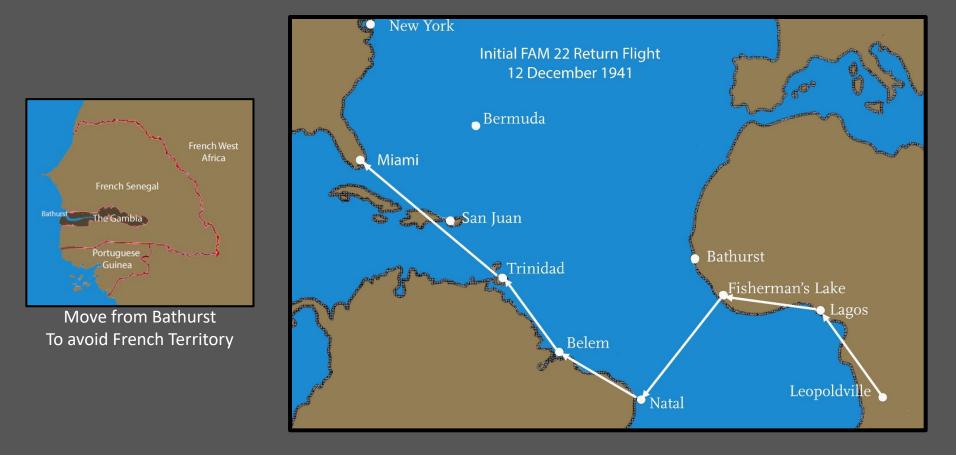


Commercial FAM 22 First Flight Cover Originating in New York Most Covers Joined the *Capetown* in San Juan



5 December 1941 letter from New York to Alexandria Egypt. This letter flew on the *Capetown Clipper* departing from New York to Bathurst Gambia. From Bathurst across Africa by BA or SABENA to Khartoum connecting with the BA Horseshoe route to Cairo. The letter arrived 14 February 1942 where it was censored. The stamps pay three times the 70 cent per 1/2 ounce cent airmail rate.

Return of First FAM 22 Flight Eliminated Bathurst from the Return



FAM 22 First Flight Return





There was a belief in the Belgium Congo that the flights would return in Nov. The 4 line cachet was prepared for the Nov date. When the date slipped to early Dec a single line handstamp was applied.

30 Oct 1941 airmail letter from Coquilhatville Belgian Congo to Akron OH. Censored at Leopoldville on 30 Oct. The letter flew on the 12 Dec return flight of the *Capetown Clipper*. It was also censored at Trinidad and arrived in Miami 20 December. Stamps paid the 17 franc 75 centimes surface postage and airmail surcharge.



Everything Was About To Change As the United States Enters the War



Case 7 Condition A – The Attack on Pearl Harbor

The December 6-7 Anzac Clipper flight from San Francisco to Hawaii, piloted by Captain Turner was less than one hour from Honolulu Hawaii, when the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor began. PAA's prearranged secret plan was to reroute to the island-based of Hawaii.



2 Dec 1941 censored air mail letter from New York to Bombay India. The letter was sent to San Francisco and then to Honolulu onboard the *Anzac Clipper*. Returned to San Francisco, forwarded to Miami and sent on a South Atlantic flight to West Africa and Bombay India arriving 24 March. Censored in Honolulu and in Bombay by British (handstamp on front). Stamps pay the 70 ¢ 1/2 ounce rate to India. Anzac Clipper Letter Returned to Sender The Pacific Was Closed as Well as the Mediterranean





4 Dec 1941 censored airmail letter from Bethel OH to Palembang, Sumatra N. E. I. R to San Francisco on 14 December, and to Miami, Belgian Congo, Calcutta and Singapore where the censor applied "PASSES DHC/37". By this time, Samatra was occupied by Japan. The letter was returned to Bethel OH via New York. Stamps pay the 70 ¢ air mail rate. Most likely delayed along the return route because of high priority war requirements.

The Long Way Home



On 7 Dec '41 the *Pacific Clipper*, piloted by Robert Ford, was 3 days out of Pearl Harbor. Traveling Westward Ford, stayed ahead of the Japanese advancement, crossed Asia to the West Coast of Africa returning to New York. The *Pacific Clipper* was the first commercial plane to circle the earth.

No mail was carried beyond New Zealand.

Why the Atlantic Is Important? What Was PAA's Role?

- Critical Need for a Lifeline to Africa and Asia
- Communications between Europe and Americas
- Building bases to support clipper and land-based aircraft
- Moving material, men, mail to battlefields far from resolved



An unimagined supply chain over 7,000 miles

PAA In the South Atlantic

- About 14 routes in the Atlantic plus PAA Africa and PAA Orient
- Navy 'managed' FAM 18 routes
- Army Air 'managed' FAM 22



Building Bases to Support Land-bases As Well As Clippers

The United States was planning for the infrastructure that would be needed to support moving troops, equipment and mail to Africa and Asia. This investment started early and ended with an air network that dwarfed what had been seen before.



While Clippers were the first planes to Africa, PAA vision was to build an infrastructure for landbased planes. At Fisherman's Lake Liberia PAA built a seaplane base and expanded the Firestone Rubber Company landing strip into the airdrome Roberts Field. This allowed war supplies, troops and mail to get to Africa and into the Mediterranean with the Pacific routes closed and Europe at war. PAA, under the guise of expanding its commercial route, was building the infrastructure and flying capability to meet the military requirements across Africa and Asia to China. In September 1940 the US agreed to lease military bases in British territories along the Eastern Atlantic for 99 years (signed 27 March 1941) in turn for 50 destroyers. In November 1940 PAA signed a secret contract to build airfields in the Caribbean, Central and South America. The bases supported commercial and military planes.

Trinidad

VIA AIR MAIL Mus Caroline M. Kasenberg PASSED BY Chappaque new Gore (700 S Chappaque new Gore W & Q. ARMY EXAMINER

23 May 1941 air mail letter from Port-of -Spain to Chappaqua NY. Censored by the Army in Trinidad. APO 803 established 31 March 1941.

Natal S.J. Clark Ranney 15 + 50237 Igd. 8, US2 dere Ont, ADF AP.O. 604. 9. B.M. Meani, Fla. FA Min Carrie Ranny Lahanna, Ohio Route F

3 December 1942 package from APO 604 Natal Brazil to Gahanna OH.

Let's Look At Some Covers

Mail to Africa



The South Atlantic route to the Belgium Congo allowed access to the many strategic minerals found in West Africa. The Shinkolobwe mine, operated by Union Miniere du Haut Katanga, produced extremely high-grade uranium for the atomic bomb. Besides uranium, metals like Columbium and Tantalum were mined in the Belgium Congo.



20 July 1943 letter from Stanleyville Belgian Congo to New York City. Stamps paid airmail rate to New York. The letter was censored at Stanleyville and Miami.

Mail From Egypt

Service to Egypt was provided by TWA and Air Corps Ferrying Command. With some political maneuvering, on 25 May 1942 Pan Am Africa started service from Cairo to Fisherman's Lake connecting West. Souvenir covers were forbidden by the Post Office but PAA Africa's Cairo staff prepared around 100 souvenir covers.



25 May 1942 censored air mail letter from Cairo Egypt to Butler PA. From Cairo to Fisherman's Lake by air then onward to Miami by land based aircraft from Lagos. The cover was censored at Cairo and Miami. Stamps pay the 22 millimes surface postage and double the 75 millimes air surcharge.

Mail To Egypt

Regensor Alan J. B. Wace J. S. K. D. Gaiso Egypt

18 April 1942 censored air mail letter from Evanston IL to Cairo Egypt. Domestic air to Miami and FM 22 route to Lagos.

Military censorship Cairo. Mute civilian censorship from Miami or Trinidad.

Addressed to Wace at Inter-Services Liaison Department, British General Headquarters Cairo Egypt. Wace was a prominent British archaeologist who was attached to MI-6 to evaluate intelligence from the field and probably to forge documents in support of counter-espionage efforts.

During WW I, Wace was a British spy in Turkey working with T. E. Lawrence.



Professor Alan J. B. Wace

To Syria

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Censored at Miami and Syria by the Free French military and Egyptian censors.

Beyrouth transit marking.

12 Nov 1942 air mail New York to Beirut Syria. Censored in Miami through Brazil to West Africa.Stamps pay the 70 cent airmail rate.



Led by General Władysław Albert Anders of Free Polish forces 2nd Corps under British Command fighting in the Middle East representing the Polish Government-in-Exile

> Boxed LOTNICZA Polish 'Air Mail'.

Censored by Polish military, at Egypt and at Miami. The Polish forces operated their own FPO, Poczta Polowa (field mail) 118, within the British FPO.



Anders seated

By PAN AMERICAN I PPER SERVICE UNA ACTIVE Э SERVICE 0 ENZUROWANO Stacho iss Stan 12 ZT4 POLO VA118 Irans. Allan Hir Mail Written in Tolish

13 May 1943 registered airmail letter from Polish forces stationed in Iraq to Chicago IL. India stamps with Polish cancels. Transited British field post 18 May, transited Miami 24 June. Probably PAA-Africa to Accra Gold Coast then South Atlantic to Miami.

FAM 22 Route Continued After Clippers

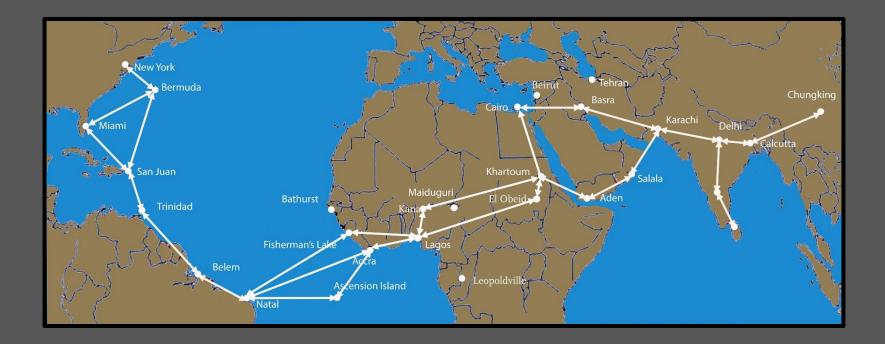
• FAM 18 continued to use Clippers, FAM 22 mail was carried on land-based planes

L. F. TURNBULL 1108 CORONADO TERRACE LOS ANGELES 26 CALIFORNIA, U. S. A. XAMINE Insufficient postage for laters Air Mail on Route Rev. & Mrs. Harola S. Roudougou, 56 Return Incorpt request vels de recepció

Nov 1943 registered letter RRR from Los Angeles to Ivory Coast. Sent to Miami for FAM
22 route to Africa but returned New York since there was no route to Upper Ivory Coast
from Miami. Sent back to New York and then to Lisbon and on to Africa. Censored in
Bermuda. 50 cent stamp under tape. 80 cents overpays the 65 cent rate.

Airlift Over the Himalaya "Hump" to China

- China Burma India Theater
- After Burma Road Blocked Only Way to Supply the Chinese Army was by Air
- Flights started Early 1942 Operating Until June 1946
- A Continuous Airlift to Keep China in the War
- PAA Orient Flights Used Over 100 Airports Many Routes
- China National Airways Corporation (CNAC) Flew Calcutta Chungking



Over the Himalaya "Hump" to China

AIR MAIL-PAR AVION m G.A.Fitch A. Fitch nited China Relief SILVER Chungking 8 No. 650 AIRMAIL TO CALCUTTA, CAIRO; PORT BELL LEOPOLDVILLE, Thence by PAA TO DESTINATION.

17 May 1942 registered airmail letter from Chungking China to New York. Over the hump to Calcutta, India. BOAC Horseshoe Route to Cairo, Egypt, Port Bell, Uganda to Leopoldville. From Leopoldville FAM 22 transiting Miami 23 June then to New York City and forwarded to Silver Bay NY arriving 26 June, The \$20 stamp overpays the surface rate, airmail surcharge and registry fee by 60 cents.

2 June 1943 letter from South Palisades CA to Fukien China. Stamps pay the 1/2 ounce 70 cent airmail rate. Censored at San Francisco. Sent to Miami for air mail to Africa by PAA. Carried over Cannonball route.

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Kunming China to Caltech Pasadena CA



2 December 1942 registered air mail letter from Kunming China to Pasadena CA. Over the hump to India and to Leopoldville. South Atlantic route through Miami to Pasadena.



\$11.70 in stamps pay \$1.50 20g surface, 8.70 5g air and registration fee \$1.50.

"Double Hump Letter" – US to China and Back to India

R. Gordon Hy Marina Uning % Thos. Cook N Son Calcutta India



Stamps paying forwarding to Calcutta

22 December 1942 censored air mail letter from Rochester NY to Chengtu China. The letter transferred by the PAA Africa-Orient Division better known as the Cannonball Express. South Atlantic route to Africa and across Africa to India. Land based aircraft from China National Airways Corp. flight over the Himalaya Mountains via Kunming to Chungking. Surface to Chengtu. From Chengtu the letter was forwarded to Thomas Cook in Calcutta back over the hump. US stamps pay the single 70 cent 1/2 ounce single air mail rate. \$6.00 paid to send the letter by air from Chengtu to Calcutta. The letter was censored in Miami on outbound flight and in Calcutta where the tape was put over the tape from Miami. Addressee was head of Department of Pathology, Histology and Bacteriology West China Union University.

Two Oceans 18,000 Miles to Honolulu No Frequent Flier Miles

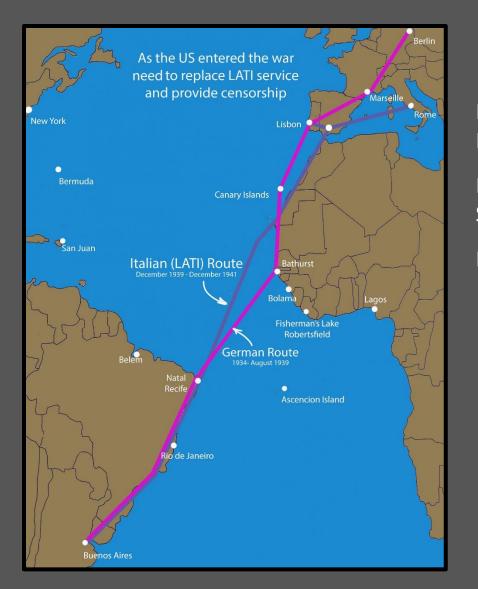
航 8 AVION U Mrs. m.n. Bien tao Chun miao. an Kanson Misilven Tain 1040 Richards St. Honolulu, T. H. OHFIT L.S. A CININA Via airmail HF/25 No. 1287

1944 registered and censored air mail letter traveled over 18,000 miles from Lanchow (Lanzhou) China to Honolulu Hawaii. Before the War the letter would have traveled across the Pacific, a distance of about 3,200 miles.

Over the Hump to India. Across Africa to Lagos and South Atlantic route to Miami. Domestic air to West Coast and air to Hawaii. \$46.00 in stamps paying 20g for surface, 2x 18g for air and 6g for registration.



Axis Mail to South America

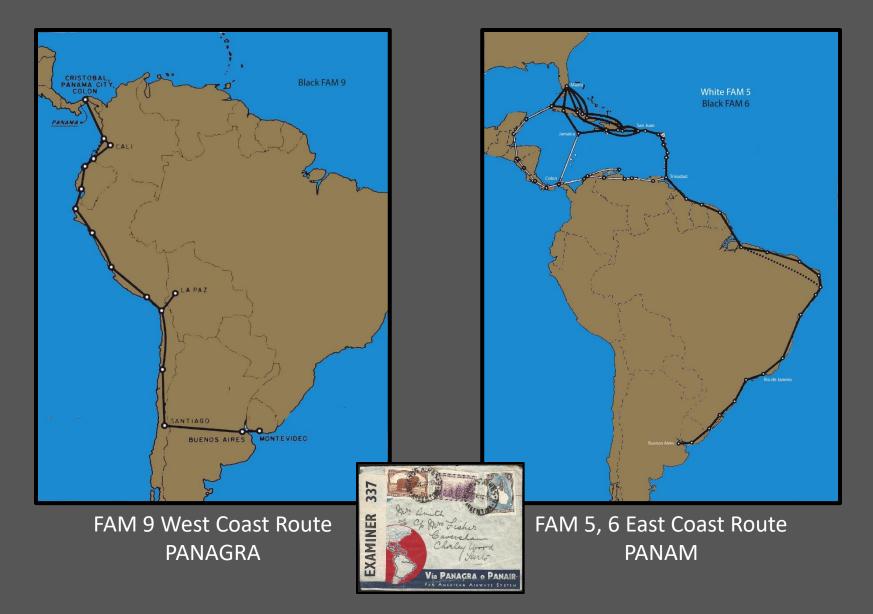


Immigration to South America Especially from Italy but also Germany

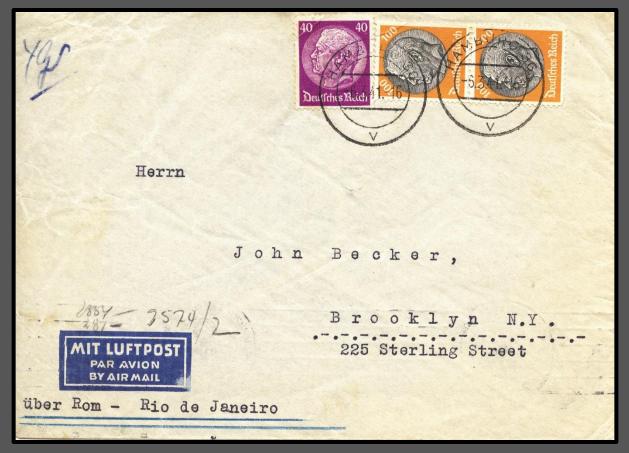
LATI route from Rome Replaces German Route Started Dec 1939 Ended Dec 1941

Mail to the US avoiding Censorship

PAA Routes Between North and South America



The Problem With LATI Flights – Not Intercepted by the Allies



Germany to Rome. Via LATI from Rome to Rio de Janeiro. PAA route 6 to United. Reich Mark stamps pay 0.25 RM surface, 2.15 RM Air.

Another Example of the Problem with LATI

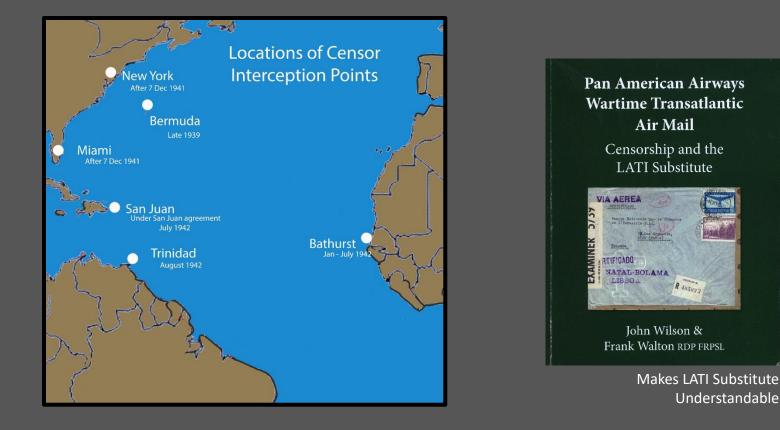


Germany to Rome. Via LATI from Rome to Rio de Janeiro. PAA route 9 to United States via Cali. Reich Mark stamps pay 0.25 RM surface, 8.60 RM Air and 0.30 RM for registration. March 1941 registered letter from Berlin to Chicago Interception in Germany but not censored by either British or US.



Replacing LATI Flights and Intercepting Axis Mail

- Preventing Axis communicating with agents in the Americas
- Interception at Bathurst, Bermuda, Trinidad, San Juan

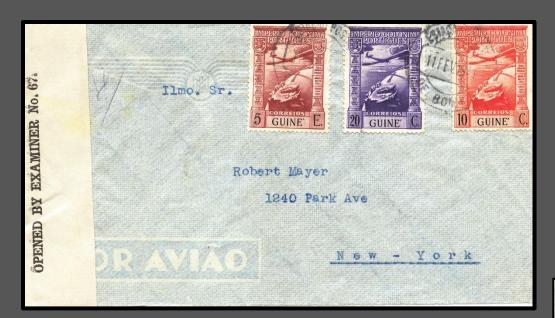


Basic View of LATI Substitute routes 7, 8

PAA Provided Alternate Routes for Mail from Europe Clockwise and Counter Clockwise Routes



Early Interception in Port-of-Spain Trinidad



11 February 1941 Bolama to NY. Clipper trip 264 Route 4. After censoring from Trinidad to New York on Trip 266. Philatelic cover documents 2nd and 3rd Route 4 flights. Delayed for sensor caught 3rd flight home.



2 cent stamp applied in New York paying local rate showing arrival in New York.

Bathurst Censorship February to July 1942

Operated by the British to Stop an Open Channel Axis Powers Were Using

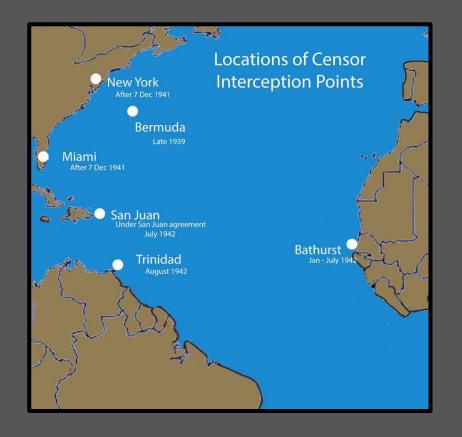


16 July 1942 Basel, Lisbon, Bathurst, Fisherman's Lake, Natal, Rio, to Buenos Aires arriving 19 October 1942. Stamps pay 30 centimes plus double 75 centimes air.

Censors numbers used on tapes: 5453, 5524, 5960, 6185, 7219

San Juan Agreement

- Bermuda and Bathurst not working
- Classified MOST SECRET
- US and UK San Juan Agreement
- PAA could not carry mail directly between South America and Europe or Africa
- UK and US worked together at San Juan
- Detailed how to implement
- See chapter 8 Wilson & Walton



LATI Substitute – Censored in San Juan San Juan Agreement Working

4 Nov 1942, Buenos Aires to Copenhagen. Natal and Belem on Condor Airline. PAA North to Trinidad and Puerto Rico. Offloaded in San Juan where it was censored and sent to New York then across the Atlantic to Lisbon. By Lufthansa to Stuttgart and Berlin. Then to Copenhagen.

son Via aerea :



Blue bag (4 digits) and batch numbers applied in San Juan as well as censor tape 2941. The Ab in circle applied in Berlin by the OKW. (Supreme Military Command) Stamps pay 145c - surface 20c and air fee 125c. This was the LATI rate not the PAA rate.

LATI Substitute – Censored in San Juan Letter Held By Censors



Red numbers used in San Juan in 1943. Letter held until end of the war. and returned to sender. Arrived Buenos Aires Sept 1945. The two line red handstamp applied in San Juan. 26f stamps pay letter 4f, air 18f and registration 4f rate. 16 Oct 1943 registered air mail letter from Paris France to Buenos Aires Argentina. Train to Lisbon. PAA to San Juan.



September 1944 China Clipper Returns to Miami - Leopoldville Route Now Called Leopoldville Clipper

September 1944 China Clipper Returns to Miami - Leopoldville Route Now Called Leopoldville Clipper Designated FAM 18



Diverted around Miami Due to Oct 18 Hurricane?

17 October 1944 letter from Boston to Leopoldville. Most likely intended for the second restored *China Clipper* trip. Plane Miami and not censored in the US. Censored at Leopoldville. Stamps pay the 60 cent rate to West Africa.



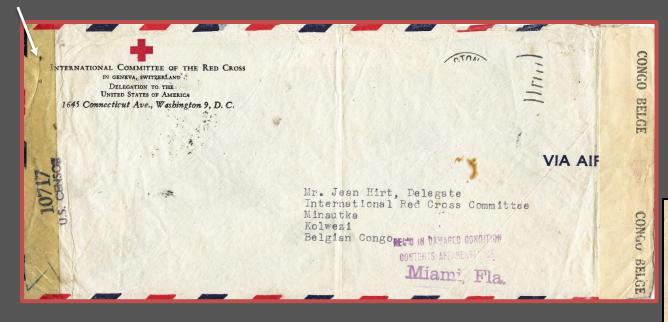
From Amman Transjordan



27 October 1944 registered and censored air mail letter from Amman Transjordan to New York NY. Transited Miami 19 November 1944. Censored at Amman and New York. 8th Trip of the *Leopoldville Clipper*

The *Leopoldville Clipper* made 7 round trips. Leaving for the 8th trip on 8 January 1945, it crashed at Port of Spain, Trinidad on 8 January 1945 at 10 pm, ending the return of Clipper flights to the South Atlantic.

Staple holes



January 1945 Letter from Washington DC to Kolwezi Belgium Congo. Stamps lost in crash when China Clipper sank.

Eaveloppe poballement endomnage dans l'accident ra Leopoldwille · Chipper à Thinibad (Port-of-Ipace) . aprei l'accident 3 sande commer dertuer an C.B on iteretrouses, I endocumento, Les hibres out orspasse.

The note stapled to the envelope

With the loss of the *China Clipper* and the War ending, PAA's participation with the Air Transport Command was ending



20 June 1945 registered air mail letter from Addis Ababa Ethiopia to New York transiting Miami 7 July 1945. Censored at Khartoum Sudan. From Khartown on PAA land based ATC Route through Kana to Lagos to Miami.

Summary

- By the end of the war PAA 314 Clippers had flown over 12 million miles during 5,000 flights.
- As the war continued Clippers were not competitive with the newer
 2 and 4 engine land-based aircraft that were being produced in
 large numbers. These planes flew many many millions of miles.
- At a critical time in history PAA served the country by providing much needed capability to move men, material and mail across the Atlantic.
- Nothing was more critical than service to Asia and China.
- Not as well understood, is the role of censorship and mail from Europe to South and North America.



We Thank You!

gordoneubanks@gmail.com