During World War II American pilots and crews flew history’s most massive and sustained cargo and air mail run prior to the Berlin airlift. Outward bound U.S. civilian letters and incoming foreign letters carried on flights to and from Africa and Asia passed through Miami along with official and military mail. Here I shall try to provide collectors and exhibitors who cherish those feats with techniques for recognizing and interpreting clues on covers that traveled aboard those aircraft, although they can be tricky and controversial even when part of their routing can be proven.

The history of this important air transport service is murky, because operational details were shrouded in secrecy for security’s sake. It’s a dramatic, heroic tale of silver-screen proportions when properly told.

**The Origin of Foreign Air Mail Route No. 22**

On December 6, 1941, Foreign Air Mail route No. 22 (the serial number assigned by the Post Office Department to its contract with Pan American Airways and the designation used in post office news releases and leaflets distributed to the public) began service from Miami, Florida to San Juan, Puerto Rico; Port of Spain, Trinidad; Belem, Brazil; Natal, Brazil; Bathurst, Gambia; Lagos, Nigeria; and Leopoldville, Belgian Congo. That was what the official announcement stated; the inaugural Clipper flight actually originated at New York, stopped at Bermuda, and then picked up the Miami mail at San Juan for the rest of the trip to Leopoldville.

From time to time Pan Am revised FAM 22 schedules, flight paths, transit points, and terminus locations, just as American carriers on all foreign air mail routes did. The inaugural flight had been scheduled to depart Miami on November 29, but was postponed to December 6. The original FAM 22 stop at Bathurst was a temporary measure until adequate facilities were ready to accommodate Pan Am’s flying boats at Fisherman’s Lake, Liberia. Intermediate stops at Antilla, Cuba; Port au Prince, Haiti; and San Pedro, Dominican Republic were added between Miami and San Juan from August of 1942 until February of 1943.

FAM 22 began as a sham, providing a seemingly benign civilian air mail pretext for flights that ferried equipment, spare parts, and personnel to beleaguered British military forces in North Africa and the Middle East at a time when the United States was officially neutral in the war. The War Department selected Miami as the western terminus of the route, perhaps to avoid a jurisdictional dispute with the Navy, which took command of New York-based international air mail routes when war came.

Some scholars believe the unusual choice of Leopoldville as the eastern termination point for FAM 22 served to disguise American acquisitions of uranium ore from the Belgian Congo for the Manhattan Project’s secret atomic bomb program. The Air Force’s official history reported tantalite as the strategic mineral brought back on return flights from the Congo.

Other unusual cargo transported home aboard a FAM 22 Clipper included the barrel and breech of a German Army 88-millimeter anti-tank cannon captured in the Egyptian campaign, which was delivered to the Aberdeen Proving Grounds in Maryland for study and evaluation by U.S. Army ordnance experts.
Pan Am had provided cover for secret U.S. military projects long before FAM 22 was proposed as a trans-Atlantic route. Beginning in 1935, Pan Am’s facilities on Midway Island and Wake Island had been constructed to double as naval air bases at a time when terms of the 1922 Washington Naval Treaty forbade the United States to construct new fortifications or military bases in the Pacific Ocean.

**A Lifeline to Africa and Asia**

One day after the FAM 22 inaugural flight departed New York, Japan’s surprise attack on Pearl Harbor plunged the United States into World War II as a belligerent nation, which abruptly transformed the trans-Atlantic route between Miami and West Africa from a sham into a vital communication lifeline. Previously, the European conflict had blocked air mail traffic between North America and the Middle East via North Atlantic and Mediterranean flights, causing it to be rerouted via trans-Pacific Clippers. Suddenly on December 7 the Pacific war brought an immediate halt to civilian trans-Pacific air mail flights west of the Hawaiian Islands, leaving the new trans-Atlantic route as the sole pathway to those destinations.

Although the FAM 22 announcement had promised twice-monthly service, putting America on a war footing imposed irregularities on schedules of Clipper flights to West Africa and back. Nevertheless, on December 17 the Second Assistant Postmaster General issued this order, which remained in force for the duration of the war, designating Miami as the gateway:

**Foreign Air Mail Service**

Air mails for Netherlands Indies, North Borneo, Straits Settlements, Malaya, Burma, unoccupied China and countries west thereof (including Turkey), which have heretofore been sent by the trans-Pacific route, shall be routed promptly via Miami, Fla. The total postage on articles for all these countries is 70 cents per half ounce.

Air mails for the countries listed in the POSTAL BULLETIN of December 2, 1941, under the heading “Foreign Air Mail Service To Africa,” will of course also be sent via Miami, except any that are prepared to be carried by steamship to Africa thence by air.

The December 2 publication included the only official rate and route schedule for U.S. air mail to Africa until after the war ended, designated “F.A.M. route 22 from Miami.”

According to a January 18, 1942, Oakland (California) Tribune article titled “Service to Africa Saved in New Route”:

The most important point on the new route is Leopoldville, an important commerce center in what was formerly “darkest” Africa. Planes of several major international lines, including the British Imperial Airways and the Belgian Sabena Company, have terminals there to spread networks of air routes to all parts of South and East Africa, to Khartoum and Cairo, whence other links can service mail to the Middle and Far East and to Australia. Routes to Europe leave Bathurst, Lagos and Leopoldville, and mail for that continent may be transferred to any of these depots, depending on the schedules that will provide the most expeditious service.

For the sake of security, the airlines and the Post Office Department did not publish international flight schedules and routes again until late 1945. Nevertheless, covers often display features that link them to the Miami-based route which began as FAM 22.

When the U.S. Army’s Air Transport Command took charge, it retained Pan Am (sometimes abbreviated PAA or Panair in official documents) as the War Department’s civilian contractor to service and operate flights that transported mail, cargo, and passengers from Miami to West Africa and beyond, eventually renamed the Africa-Orient route. Both before and after Pan Am aircraft and facilities were militarized, many of the schedules and flight plans had been altered as charters and special missions. At times the routes and destinations were kept secret until the flights were airborne.

**Dated Postmarks Identify Letter Flown via FAM 22**

Exact dates of several early FAM 22 flights are known, enabling air mail collectors to identify covers carried aboard them by studying dated cancellations, transit postmarks, and arrival datestamps. On incoming mail, registered letters that traveled this route were struck with round magenta double-circle Miami postmarks on the back, which link them to FAM 22 even when official records for those flight dates have not yet been discovered.

The cover endorsed “By air mail to Miami [sic], Leopoldville, Douala,” was mailed at Marshfield, Wisconsin, on February 16, 1942. A violet 10-cent Twin-Engine Transport stamp and a carmine 50-cent China Clipper stamp (U.S. Scott C27 and C22) paid the 60-cent single letter air mail postage by a domestic flight to Miami, FAM 22 flight No. 6005 to Leopoldville, surface transport across the Congo River to Brazzaville, French Congo, and onward by air to...
How War Re-Routed Intercontinental Air Mail

Four covers from Chicago to Baghdad show how the geography of warfare caused United States foreign air mail routes to reverse the direction of travel twice: from eastbound out of New York to westbound out of San Francisco, and from westbound out of San Francisco to eastbound out of Miami.

The first, posted November 28, 1939, flew over the Atlantic Ocean from New York to Lisbon aboard the FAM 18 Pan Am American Clipper and onward by European airlines, arriving in Iraq on December 10. Postage combined the 30 cents per half ounce air mail rate to Europe with a 10 cents surcharge for air transport from Europe to Iraq. One bright violet 19-cent Rutherford B. Hayes stamp and one dull blue 21-cent Chester A. Arthur stamp (Scott 824 and 826) satisfied the required amount.

Although the war had begun in Europe when Germany invaded Poland on September 1, the Bermuda censorship of trans-Atlantic Clipper mail did not begin until January of 1940, so Imperial Censorship examined this letter at Palestine. Trans-Mediterranean flights from Britain to Egypt and beyond continued until Italy joined the German attack on France in June of 1940.

After those flights had been suspended, the Second Assistant Postmaster General announced on July 9 that the only available air mail service from the United States to Middle East countries would travel over the trans-Pacific route at a rate of 70 cents per half ounce.

The second cover, posted October 7, 1940, at Chicago illustrates the trans-Pacific service. One dull blue 21-cent Chester A. Arthur, two vermilion 22-cent Grover Cleveland, one deep red-lilac 25-cent William McKinley, and one light red-violet 50-cent William Howard Taft stamps (Scott 826, 827, 829, and 831) paid $1.40 double air mail letter postage.

This envelope crossed the Pacific Ocean aboard the FAM 14 China Clipper, which departed San Francisco on October 8 and arrived at Hong Kong on October 16, where it was examined by Imperial Censorship. From there it went by BOAC to the Middle East and arrived at Iraq on November 3.

The third cover, posted December 2, 1941, at Chicago and backstamped at San Francisco on December 4, departed California on December 6 and was in transit aboard the FAM 14 Anzac Clipper to Hawaii when Japanese forces bombed Pearl Harbor. The flight was diverted to Hilo to avoid the attack area.

The letter was backstamped at Honolulu on December 14, opened and examined there, and released by the Information Control Board. With civilian flights west of Hawaii suspended, it was returned to the U.S. mainland. Meanwhile, the Post Office Department had issued instructions to send mail bound for Asia via Miami, where this cover was next backstamped on January 13. It de-
Douala, Cameroun, where a Free French military censor opened, examined, passed, and resealed the letter, recorded by a tape seal and handstamped markings on the envelope. From Douala on March 11 it traveled by surface mail to Ebolowa and finally to Elat for delivery.

The *Capetown Clipper* had departed Miami on February 22 and arrived at Leopoldville on February 27. By Pan Am’s internal classification system, trans-Atlantic flights from Miami to West Africa and beyond were designated Route 6 and consecutively numbered with four digits, beginning with 6001–6002 for the December 1941 inaugural FAM 22 flight from New York and Miami to Leopoldville and back. Odd numbers were assigned to eastbound flights and even numbers to westbound, so No. 6005 was the third eastbound FAM 22 flight.

After unloading mail, passengers, and cargo at Leopoldville, the Clipper flew eastward on a survey mission all the way to Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean, with intermediate stops at Port Bell, Uganda; Khartoum, Sudan; Mombasa, Kenya; and Mahé and Coetivy, Seychelles. The westbound return, Pan Am trip No. 6006, departed Diego Garcia on March 19 and arrived back at Leopoldville on March 22 for the FAM 22 flight back to Miami. After boarding passengers and mail, it flew to Lagos, arriving there after midnight.

Miami-bound mail taken aboard at Lagos on March 23 included a registered air mail cover, This February 16, 1942, air mail cover from Marshfield, Wisconsin, to Elat, Cameroun, flew the entire distance of Foreign Air Mail route No. 22 from Miami to Leopoldville aboard the *Capetown Clipper*. From there it transferred to a foreign carrier for a flight to Douala, and made the rest of its journey by surface transport. The tape seal and markings were applied when it was intercepted en route by a Free French military censor, examined, and passed.

This March 4, 1942, registered air mail cover from Haifa, Palestine, was censored at its point of origin before crossing Africa to meet the return FAM 22 flight at Lagos, Nigeria, on March 23, which landed at Miami on March 26. From Miami this letter flew onward aboard a domestic flight to New Haven, where it arrived the next day and was forwarded to its destination.
which had been posted on March 4, 1942, at Haifa, Palestine, and had crossed Africa from Cairo either on a British or an American flight. Before departure it had been opened, examined, resealed, and passed by a British censor at Jerusalem. After arrival at Miami on March 26, a domestic flight took it to New Haven, Connecticut. On March 27 it was forwarded to a local address for delivery.

Postage consisted of a bright blue 100-milliemes Tiberias and Sea of Galilee stamp and an olive-green 20-milliemes Citadel of Jerusalem stamp (Palestine Scott 80 and 77), which exactly paid the 105 milliemes air mail rate to North America for a letter that weighed five grams or less plus the 15 milliemes registry fee.

The U.S. Office of Censorship opened its Miami operation on December 12, 1941, and began censoring mail on January 18 on the eastbound FAM 22 Capetown Clipper Trip 6003 flight.

This envelope acquired a second censor marking at Cairo and a third at Baghdad, having finally arrived there on February 26. The three stamps — bright blue 5-cent James Monroe, deep ultramarine 30-cent Theodore Roosevelt, and light red-violet 50-cent William Howard Taft (Scott 810, 830, and 831) — paid the 70 cents single air mail letter postage and 15 cents registry fee.

The fourth cover, posted April 1, 1942, at Chicago, passed through the foreign mail and registry sections of the New York City post office on April 2 and arrived at Miami on April 3, where it was opened, examined, passed and resealed at the Office of Censorship, then postmarked again on April 5 before departing on Trip 6007 which left Miami on April 12.

The letter received a transit datetimestamp and censor mark at Lagos on April 15 and another censor’s handstamp at Cairo. It was again opened, examined, and resealed upon arrival at Baghdad on May 7. A blue-green 25-cent Niagara Falls stamp, a dull blue 30-cent Winged Globe air mail stamp, and a bicolor red-violet and black $1 Woodrow Wilson stamp (Scott 699, C24, and 832) paid the $1.40 double air mail letter postage plus 15¢ registry fee.
December 15. Miami was third behind New York City and Chicago in the volume of mail examined but second to New York in personnel strength, probably because of language, security, and intelligence-related analytical requirements that exceeded Chicago’s burden. Mail censored at Miami can be identified by the examiner numbers on the sealing tapes and markings: 1741 to 1949 (assigned December 1941), 3801 to 5000 (assigned February 1942), and 30010 to 31372.

The tape seal inscribed EXAMINED BY 4837 identifies one cover as having been opened, read, resealed, and passed by the Office of Censorship at Miami. It was posted June 8, 1942, at Montclair, New Jersey, transited Leopoldville on July 3, and arrived at Elizabethville on July 5. A pair of blue 30-cent Twin-Engine Transport air mail stamps (U.S. Scott C30) paid the 60-cent single air mail letter postage to and within the Belgian Congo.

The letter was carried on Pan Am flight No. 6013, whose departure and arrival dates have not yet been found by researchers. The previous FAM 22 flight No. 6011 departed Miami on May 28, before this letter was posted. The next FAM 22 flight for which the date is known, No. 6015, departed Miami on July 6, after this letter had reached its destination.

**Armed Forces Air Mail Concessionary Rate**

On December 24, 1941, the White House announced President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s gift to uniformed military personnel and their families, which exponentially increased the volume of international air mail. A concessionary air mail letter rate of 6 cents per half ounce to and from active-duty members of the U.S. armed forces stationed overseas became effective on Christmas Day. Dramatically reduced postage for international air mail was the original World War II postal reward granted to American fighting forces, three months before Congress gave them the free surface mail privilege.

Anticipating the increased volume of mail, a January 7, 1942, order of the Second Assistant Postmaster General gave instructions for pouching and labeling sacks of air mail to military addresses, and closed with this requirement:

Air mail for the Army Post Offices, etc., mentioned above, shall be given the same dispatch from point of mailing as international air mail for the same islands and countries in which the bases, etc., are located.

Within a few months, the amount of air mail in the system exceeded the available aircraft capacity to carry it all. A Postmaster General’s order of April 20, 1942, imposed restrictions on weight and the frequency of mailing parcels, in these excerpts:

**Limits in Weight and Dimensions of Mail for Delivery Outside the United States**

To assure to our armed forces that all available ocean and air transportation space is devoted to war essentials and to prevent congestion at ports of embarkation and debarkation, the War and Navy Departments are directing and supervising shipping facilities used in ocean and air transportation to and from our territories and bases, and to foreign countries.

The War and Navy Departments have informed the Post Office Department, and the Post Office Department realizes, that large quantities of second-, third-, and fourth-class (parcel post) mail matter addressed for delivery outside the continental United States, and of similar matter in the international mails, are seriously interfering with and delaying the expeditious movement
of vital war supplies, and that merchandise and printed matter not absolutely essential to the war effort which were formerly transported by other means, are now being placed in the mails. Therefore, as a military necessity, the following restrictions shall become effective immediately:

(1) No parcel or package of any class of mail, including air mail, addressed for delivery outside the continental United States shall be accepted for mailing if it exceeds 11 pounds in weight, or 18 inches in length, or 42 inches in length and girth combined; provided that these restrictions shall not apply to matter addressed to Canada or Mexico, nor to official matter of the United States Government on which postage is paid or which is entitled under section 618, Postal Laws and Regulations, to be mailed free of postage under the penalty privilege ....

(2) Not more than one such parcel or package shall be accepted for mailing in any one week when sent by or on behalf of the same person or concern to or for the same addressee.

Postmaster General Frank C. Walker summarized the importance of wartime mail service in his December 30, 1942, report to Congress:

**Mail For Armed Forces**

The most important work that confronted the Department during the year was that of organizing and extending the mail facilities for our armed forces. This work was made more difficult at first because, despite the experience of the past, it was not generally understood outside the Postal Establishment that a good mail service is comparable in importance with food and medicine and is one of the first requirements of our defense.

The War and Navy Departments are responsible for the transportation of mail between the United States Postal Service and the military and naval units, and for delivery of the mail to the individual soldiers and sailors. The War and Navy Departments also control and direct the shipping facilities, ocean and air, used in transporting mail to and from our territories and bases and to foreign countries.

The Post Office, War, and Navy Departments realize fully that frequent and rapid communications with parents, associates, and other loved ones strengthens fortitude, enlivens patriotism, makes loneliness endurable, and inspires to even greater devotion the men and women who are carrying on our fight far from home and friends. We know that the good effect of expeditious mail service on those of us at home is immeasurable. The immense amount of official mail entrusted to us for the Army and Navy, much of it secret and confidential, requires the utmost care in handling. We have striven to surmount the many obstacles and supply the very best mail service possible.

FAM 22 valiantly met those challenges, but was almost entirely hidden from view by security concerns, which has vexed air mail collectors ever since.

**Modifications of the FAM 22 Route**

After the inaugural FAM 22 trip, few Clipper air mail flights actually reached or originated from the Belgian Congo, but the colony’s military value was significant for other aircraft that transported passengers, cargo, and mail. From the very beginning Pan Am built facilities for land-based aircraft as well as flying boats. According to the airline’s own history, “An integral part of the Fisherman’s Lake project was construction of a landing strip, a mile and a half distant from the seaplane base, later to be known as Benson Field. It was to be used as a transfer point for onward carriage of the Clipper cargoes by land plane.”

U.S. Army Air Force intelligence officer Captain J. W. S. Foster reviewed air facilities in Africa from April to June of 1942 and reported his findings in July, notably the need for both northern and southern air routes across Africa in the event one became congested or imperiled. The Southern Route for land-based aircraft went via Kenya and the Congo:

> You can make the flight from Nairobi to Elizabethville very comfortably in a DC-3. They are working on the aerodrome there now and it will be finished by the Fourth of July and will be an excellent field [with] very extensive underground gasoline facilities ....

At Leopoldville they were also putting in a concrete landing strip that is as good as you will find anywhere on the African Continent. They are working day and night there. That was the only project in Africa on which they were working 24 hours a day. The airport at Leopoldville will be finished on July 4th, too, and turned over to the United States Government to tie up at the same time as Elizabethville.

**Pan Am’s Africa-Orient Route**

Pan Am had built other airfields across Africa in 1941. Historian of aeronautics Paul St. John Turner, who enjoyed access to Pan Am’s corporate archives during the firm’s heyday, picked up the narrative in his 1973 book *Pictorial History of Pan American World Airways*:

> From February 4, 1942, the Takoradi/Accra-Cairo [Gold Coast to Egypt] services (which had at first operated only as far as Khartoum [Sudan]) were scheduled at a daily frequency, with a crew change at Khartoum. Two months later the service was doubled to two trips daily, and sometimes as many as four were operated on one day. By this time PAA-Africa dominated trans-Africa transport operations ....

British Overseas Airways Corporation also provided trans-Africa service, but as Turner pointed out, “on the main transcontinental routes [BOAC] had not exceeded six round trips weekly,” whereas PAA-Africa, in its peak month of August 1942, logged 170 scheduled and 510 non-scheduled trips.

The next step was to establish frequent service beyond Africa to Asia. At a March 3, 1942, meeting of the Combined
Chiefs of Staff in Washington, the military aviation pioneer Lieutenant General Henry H. “Hap” Arnold reported:

> At present 38 transport aircraft were operating between Takoradi and Calcutta. It was intended that this number should shortly be increased to 104 and these aircraft would be used mainly for building up the U.S. forces operating in India and Burma.

That was the earliest contemporaneous reference I found to the service that evolved into a grand partnership between the Army and Pan Am, its civilian contractor, and Pan Am’s subsidiary China National Airways Corporation (CNAC). Pan Am’s flights beyond Cairo to India for the Royal Air Force began in October 1941 on a charter basis; a regular thrice-weekly service as far east as Tehran, Iran, began in April 1942.

On November 10, 1942, the Air Transport Command added an additional route from Miami to Africa and beyond by flying land-based aircraft between airfields built or improved by Pan Am, which was then contracted to Pan Am as the Africa-Orient route. Pan Am pilots who flew the trans-Atlantic leg of the route were responsible not only for the safe transport of passengers, cargo, and mail, but also for spotting and reporting the locations of German submarines.

At first the route went only from Morrison Field, Miami, via several Caribbean and South American stops to Natal, Brazil, from there to Ascension Island in the South Atlantic and on to Takoradi, Gold Coast, or to Lagos, Nigeria. Later it linked up with the India-Burma supply route, crossing Africa to Khartoum, Sudan; Cairo, Egypt; and crossing Asia to Basra, Iraq; Tehran, Iran; Karachi, India, and finally as far as Calcutta, where it connected to CNAC flights to Kunming and Chungking, China.

**Speed of Transport and Strategic Importance**

Because the cover from Army Post Office No. 606 in care of the Miami postmaster was forwarded, it has treated us to a rare glimpse of the surprising speed by which some mail traveled across this South Atlantic route. After being passed by an Army censor it departed Accra, Gold Coast, on August 21, 1943, and arrived at Minneapolis four days later. There it was backstamped August 25 and redirected to a rural route destination at Hayward, Wisconsin. A carmine 6-cent Twin-Engine Transport stamp (Scott C25) paid the military concession single air mail letter rate of postage.

Civilian air mail seldom traveled so speedily. British and American censorship stations routinely imposed delays on letters in transit so that even when examiners failed to detect hidden or coded secret messages, spies could not send actionable reports on troop movements or ship convoys by mail.

_The Army Air Forces in World War II_, published by the Office of Air Force History, emphasized the significance of one station along the Africa-Orient route:

> Probably no other air base used by the Air Transport Command had such strategic importance as that on Ascension Island. This anchored airfield of volcanic rock, covering an area of only thirty four square miles, was located in the South Atlantic approximately midway between the Brazilian bulge and the African coast.

Army Post Office Miami 877 was the address for American forces at First Air Base on Ascension Island. The cover
from APO 877 to Quincy, Massachusetts, went via Miami at the concessionary rate in an orange 6-cent Monoplane air mail embossed stamped envelope (U.S. Scott UC6), canceled November 5, 1943.

In the Pan Am archives at the University of Miami Rich ter Library, David Crotty discovered a June 1, 1944, schedule for daily round-trip service that flew nine C-54 and C-54A aircraft from Miami to Karachi over this route.

**Further Restrictions on Air Mail to Foreign Destinations**

In June 1942, the POD and the military introduced microfilmed V-Mail service for armed forces letters. V-Mail stations were located at New York City, San Francisco, Chicago, and various locations overseas. More than one billion V-Mail letters traveled to and from members of the armed forces abroad.

Whenever space was available, bags of civilian international air mail examined and passed by the Office of Censorship traveled on the same flights as urgent official mail and armed forces mail examined and passed by military censors, as highlighted in a Postmaster General’s order issued September 4, 1942:

**AIR-MAIL RESTRICTIONS**

**Matter Destined Outside Continental United States**

The War and Navy Departments exercise control over the transportation of air mail to overseas destinations. Reports received during the past few weeks show conclusively that the volume of air mail now being received for transmission to certain points outside the continental United States is greatly exceeding and will continue to greatly exceed the facilities that are or can be made available for that purpose. Therefore, it becomes necessary to materially reduce the weight of individual pieces of air mail so that the transportation by air of the greatest possible number of letters to those areas may be assured.

The existing military demands upon air-transportation facilities for strategic cargo and for personnel essential to the war effort have made necessary the immediate establishment of the following order of preference in the loading of mail on aircraft destined for restricted areas:

1. **Official Air Mail**
2. **V-Mail**
3. **To the extent space is available**, other letter mail weighing not in excess of 2 ounces per letter.

The public should be informed that the quantities of air mail coming within the third category that can be given air dispatch to the restricted areas cannot be accurately predicted, and such matter may have to be transported by surface means. Military necessity may later require that only official air mail and V-Mail be transported by air to those areas.

Until further notice, therefore, only letters in their usual and ordinary form weighing not in excess of two ounces and coming within the third category may be accepted as air mail for transmission to foreign countries and to overseas Navy post offices and A.P.O’s.

Packages of merchandise, prints, etc. (except official packages) will not be carried by air from the United States.

The foregoing restrictions apply to air mail for all points outside the limits of the continental United States except that for the time being they will not apply to Mexico, Central America and South America, the West Indies, and other islands within the Caribbean area, Alaska, Canada, and Newfoundland.

Postmasters will please instruct their patrons as far as practicable without expense to the Department of these changes in the manner of handling air mail and further urge upon their patrons the importance of using V-Mail for messages to persons in the military service outside the United States and of using the lightest possible stationery for other overseas correspondence.

The foregoing instructions are effective immediately.
After a misdirected trip to San Francisco where it was censored, this October 12, 1942, cover from Oxford, Mississippi, departed Miami on October 17 aboard the Capetown Clipper on the last FAM 22 flight to Leopoldville until 1944. Instead of flying to the end of the line and connecting to a flight from Brazzaville back to Cameroun, it went by air only to Lagos and from there by surface mail to its destination.

Flights Discontinued to the Belgian Congo

For most of that period, the urgent need for increased service to the Far East had been so pressing that those flights had bypassed the original stop at Leopoldville. The cover shown traveled on trip No. 6023, the last FAM 22 flight that terminated in the Belgian Congo until the restoration of commercial service in September 1944.

If it had been rated and routed for air transport all the way, it would have flown the entire route to Leopoldville, transferred across the Congo River to Brazzaville, French Congo, and flown north from there on a foreign carrier to Cameroun. But the sender evidently decided that the

Not all the mail from Asia and Africa that transited Miami flew the entire way on American flights. British and other foreign routes connected with them at various points. Mail for the United States offloaded at Lagos often took a short shuttle flight to Liberia for onward transport to Miami, the probable route of this March 3, 1943, registered air mail cover from Johannesburg, South Africa, to Philadelphia.
shorter, less expensive surface route from Lagos, Nigeria, via Douala, Cameroun, to Ebolowa was preferable to flying beyond Cameroun and back.

The letter was mailed at Oxford, Mississippi, on October 12, 1942, and initially sent in the wrong direction by mistake, proven by the tape seal of examiner U.S.A. 1490, a number assigned to the San Francisco Office of Censorship. Nevertheless it made the transcontinental trip back to Miami in time to catch the October 17 *Capetown Clipper* departure of Trip 6023.

All-air U.S. postage to French West Africa, including Cameroun, was 60 cents per half ounce, via Leopoldville with a connection onward via Brazzaville. This sender chose air transport only to Nigeria for 50 cents, paid by a single brown-red 10-cent John Tyler sheet stamp and a pair of bright blue-green 20-cent James A. Garfield stamps (U.S. Scott 815 and 825), with a “Miami ... Lagos ... Duala” endorsement for onward (surface) transport to the port of Douala in neighboring Free French Cameroun (probably by boat from Lagos past the British mandated portion of Camerouns, which was governed as part of Nigeria).

The letter was examined by a British imperial censor at Lagos, indicated by the magenta tombstone-shaped CENSOR marking, and received an October 29 transit backstamp there. Upon arrival in Cameroun, it was opened and examined for the third time by a Free French military censor. The Ebolowa receiver backstamp shows that it finally reached its destination on the day before Christmas.

From South Africa via Miami in 1943

After FAM 22 flights to the Belgian Congo had been suspended, air mail letters to the United States that originated farther south in Africa were typically flown to Lagos by European carriers (British, French, and Belgian), and transferred there to a Miami flight or shuttled to Liberia for a connection to Miami.

The registered air mail cover to Philadelphia is an example. It was posted March 3, 1943, at Johannesburg, South Africa. After being examined by a British imperial censor there, it was sent onward, transiting Miami on April 6 and arriving at Philadelphia the following day.

A block of four dark brown 1-shilling Tank Corps stamps and a single dull green 4-pence Artillery stamp (South Africa Scott 97 and 95) exactly paid 4 shillings postage for a half-ounce civilian air mail letter to the United States plus the 4 pence registry fee.

All the covers illustrated thus far in my main article, and two of the four in the sidebar, passed through Miami en route to their destinations as the December 17, 1941, Second Assistant Postmaster General’s order had instructed postmasters and contractors. They do not tell the whole story, however. Although Miami flights were seldom as congested as New York flights, it occasionally became necessary to send letters to and from Africa and Asia by surface mail for lack of sufficient aircraft capacity, as the Postmaster General’s September 4, 1942, order acknowledged. Those letters, though prepaid and endorsed as air mail, sometimes bear evidence of transit via New York City.

As a final consideration, incoming mail that flew across Africa aboard non-U.S. carriers sometimes transferred flights at Atlantic coastal points north of Gold Coast, Liberia, Gambia, and Nigeria, especially after Free French forces had secured their rule in various colonial possessions. Those letters were typically routed to Europe and entered the United States at New York.

[To be continued. Part II will follow the mail from the Miami gateway all the way to India and China.]

The Author

Ken Lawrence (apsken@aol.com), a former APS vice president and APRL trustee, is the Spotlight columnist for *Linn’s Stamp News*. In November 2013 the United States Stamp Society awarded him the Walter W. Hopkinson Award for a series of articles in *The United States Specialist* on “Unpublished Air Mail Rates for United States Pacific Island Possessions 1935–1946.” Ken advises readers, “If this article piqued your interest, please plan to join me in attending Aerophilately 2014 at the American Philatelic Center in Bellefonte, September 12–14. It promises to showcase this decade’s grandest exhibition of air mail, and will be held in conjunction with the 2014 Postal History Symposium.”

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