

THE ICAO CORNER

by Albert Pelsser

GUATEMALA - 40th ANNIVERSARY OF ICAO



Figure 1

This month's story of the series titled "The ICAO Corner" focuses on the private first day cover issued in Guatemala on 2 April 1987 to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). Shown at Figure 1, this cover is particularly interesting for collectors as it carries many errors and inconsistencies, which are illustrated hereafter.

Several dates could be used as references to celebrate ICAO's anniversaries, as follows:

1. 7 December 1944: The Chicago Conference ended in Chicago with the signature of the Convention on International Civil Aviation (also named Chicago Convention), designed to provide a complete modernization of the basic public international law of the air;

2. 6 June 1945: The Interim Agreement on International Civil Aviation, designed to deal with the period intervening until the above permanent Convention would be ratified, came into effect on 6 June 1945, thereby constituting the Provisional International Civil Aviation Organization (PICAQ); and

3. 4 April 1947: After ratification by 26 States, the Convention on International Civil Aviation came into effect on that date with the constitution of the new permanent ICAO.

ICAO used all the above dates for its anniversaries which evidently created much confusion, up to 1984 for the 40th anniversary; since that time, ICAO had decided to use the ending date of the Chicago Conference, that is 7 December 1944, as reference for the anniversaries, hence establishing a consistent pattern. A previous story on ICAO's anniversaries appeared in the December 1997 issue of *The Canadian Connection* (see reference here-below).

The then ICAO Secretary General, Mr. Yves Lambert, had suggested to the Civil Aviation Authorities of the Member States to consider the issuance of postage stamps in 1984 to commemorate the 40th anniversary; however, Guatemala calculated ICAO's 40th anniversary on the basis of the constitution of the new permanent International Civil Aviation Organization, that is 4 April 1947.

The two stamps issued by Guatemala for the 40th anniversary show Aviateca Boeing 727-100C aircraft. Aviateca, known until 1974 as Aviateca Empresa Guatemalteca de Aviación, was established as the state airline on 14 March 1945 to succeed to Aerovías de Guatemala founded in 1929. In September 1981, Aviateca acquired from Eastern Air Lines two Boeing 727-100C (registered TG-ALA and TG-AYA in Guatemala). United Airlines had shown a great deal of enthusiasm for this aircraft and



Figure 2

considerably influenced its final configuration; Eastern Air Lines was also a potential customer. Airline services with the original Model 727-100 were initiated by Eastern Air Lines on 1 February 1964, with United Airlines following only a few days later.

The text of the cachet depicts several errors and/or contradictions:

1. The English acronym ICAO should not be broken by a line return. It is one word.
2. The acronym in Cyrillic is misspelled. The first letter should not be an N from the Latin alphabet, and the two letters O and A are reversed. The exact writing is ИКАО.
3. Two dots follow the closing brackets on the second line, when only one is required.
4. ICAO is not actually a UNIT of the United Nations (UN), but it became a Specialized Agency of the UN on 3 October 1947.
5. Although the stamps were released in 1987, the cachet still indicates 1984 as the date of the 40th anniversary.

Between the second and ninth century AD, one of the most brilliant and mysterious civilizations that the world has ever known developed: the Mayan civilization; spec-

tacular cities emerged with their temples and pyramids. The Maya civilization extended throughout the present-day southern Mexican states, the northern Central American region, including the states of Guatemala, Belize, western Honduras and extreme northern El Salvador.

The earliest Maya civilizations began to emerge in the highlands of Guatemala by as early as 2000 BC; of the cultures that arose in what is now Guatemala, it was the Maya who lasted the longest and left the most traces. Guatemala is, unquestionably, the heart of the Mayan world; within its territory, the Mayas' greatest cities flourished centres of commerce and culture for the Meso-American region.

No wonder that the cover at Figure 1 refers to the Route of the Mayas. In addition to the USA, the main destinations of Aviateca's flights are located in Central America, covering the areas where the Mayas had stretched their civilization.

The official first day cover at Figure 2 used postal stationery with the emblem of the Dirección General de Correos y Telégrafos of Guatemala. In the upper-right corner, one can notice the post horn symbolizing postal services with a quetzal in the inside. The quetzal, a

strikingly coloured bird that is the national emblem of Guatemala, first appeared on the stamps in 1878 and has been depicted at frequent intervals since that time; it is also

the name of the currency of this country. The quetzal symbolizes freedom and the blue bands just below the quetzal stand for the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean.

CHECKLIST

Guatemala

C809-C810

1987 Apr 02

ICAO's 40th anniversary

REFERENCES

http://www.icao.int/secretariat/PostalHistory/guatemala_1987_40th_anniversary_of_icao.htm

http://www.icao.int/secretariat/PostalHistory/tcc_75th_anniversary_of_icao.pdf

http://www.icao.int/secretariat/PostalHistory/the_anniversaries.htm

