

Civil Air Mail Africa ↔ US in WWII, 1939-45

PURPOSE. The purpose of this aerophilately exhibit is to show the **routes/carriers** by which African-US Civil Airmail entered/exited Africa.. My studies show that these are all the existed and they are shown, plus Epilogue routes showing a return to pre-war conditions.

SCOPE. September 1939 (Invasion of Poland) to End of European War.

Only regularly scheduled, non-axis routes normally carrying civilian airmail are considered.

This is not an internal Africa airmail exhibit nor a rate/markings exhibit.

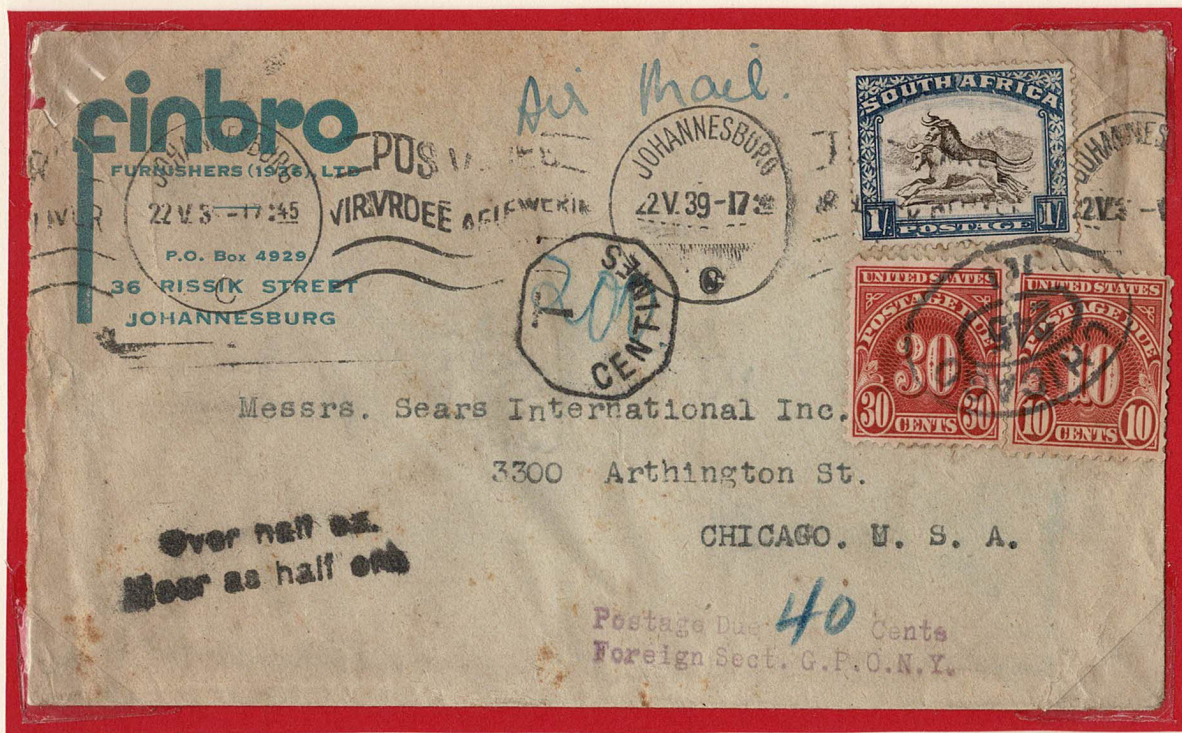
CHALLENGE. It is often very difficult to find a cover that can be shown to have exited/entered by a certain route/place and carrier. Clues to be considered include rate, date, markings, censors, origin country, etc. Mail was delayed weeks/months waiting for trans-oceanic transport so US mail mostly can not be identified as to the route into Africa

ORGANIZATION. It is organized chronologically by major WWII events.

- I. **War.** Sep 1939. PAA had a Lisbon-US route and PAA and Imperial had UK-US routes, that carried African mail.
 - II. **Mediterranean Closed.** June 1940. Forcing all Africa-US mail to either go via Durban and on by Sea, or take the long expensive Pacific route. A small amount of mail went by Spanish air line from Morocco to Lisbon.
 - III. **Pacific Closed.** December 1941. PAA linked up with BOAC Horseshoe route via Lagos/Takoradi and Leopoldville.
 - IV. **Mediterranean reopened.** November 1942/43. North African air routes open.
- Epilogue.** War over, old BOAC and Air France routes re-opened.

The left Heading shows the Chapter starting event , the center shows the route, and the right the carriers. Background information is shown on a powder blue background.

† indicates new information, and red highlights important information. Notable items matted on red.



First Africa-US Airplane mail.

BOAC SA to London, KLM London -Amsterdam-Lisbon and PAA FAM 18, Lisbon-NYC, opened May, 1939. Route only lasted 30 days.

At this time, Only KLM served UK-Lisbon via Amsterdam, and after Holland fell, direct London-Lisbon.

1/10d per 1oz example here is from this period at an unreported rate.†

I. WAR Starts, Sep 1939

June 24, PAA opened up direct UK-US mail flights..
Route shut on October 3, after just **three months** of service.
Resumed May 1942.

A newly found all-air rate of 1/3⁺ the same as the earlier
air/sea rate.

**Durban-US,
17 July 1939, Registered**

Durban to UK by BOAC(Imperial).
PAA flight 6, Yankee Clipper to NYC
Hythe (Southampton), 26 July

Received St. Paul MN 2 August
16 days proves all air.
Thus must be PAA as Imperial had not started service.



BOAC-PAA



Imperial opened Service to NYC on 10 August and quit on 28 Sep-
tember. Just **7 weeks** of operation. Resumed late 1942 to Canada.

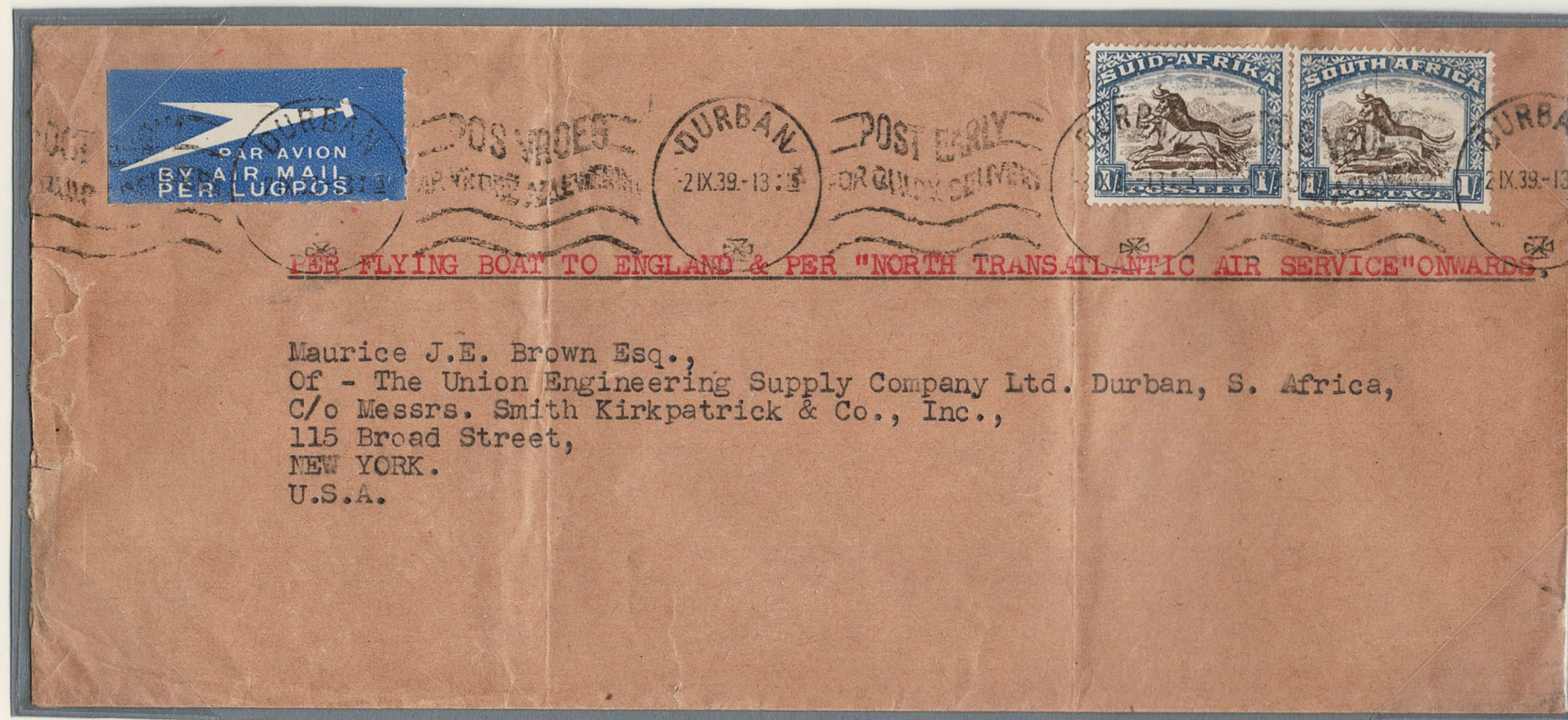
This allowed all-Imperial, all-Air from (British) Africa-US.

On 1 September SA announced a 2/- rate for SA-US all by air. First
flight at this rate. #

**Durban-US,
2 September 1939**
Marked 'PER FLYING BOAT TO ENGLAND &
PER NORTH ATLANTIC AIR
SERVICE"ONWARDS'

Durban Imperial DN228
Lv 3 Sept, arr Poole UK 9th.
To NY either by Imperial #6 on the 9th or Imperial
#7 on the 16th.

ALL Imperial since so inscribed and to get maximum
income. Franked new 2/-⁺



SA-Cairo-UK-US
All BOAC



I. Pre-war/War starts

SA-Cairo-France-
Lisbon-US

Lisbon-US

October 3, '39, PAA closes FAM18-12 to UK,
16 December, Air France opened Marseilles-
Lisbon connection to replace PAA dropping
Marseilles.



Johannesburg to Vermont, 14 February, 1940.
Contrary to inscription, Imperial did not service Lisbon.

Imperial Durban DN52, Lv 17th, Arr Marseilles on the 22nd,
Air France to Lisbon, then
PAA 97 3 Mar-NYC.

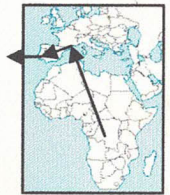
Lisbon was only route open, and as of 16 Dec, BOAC used the new French Service from
Marseilles to Lisbon. (Proud p61) Still at the 2/- rate from SA-US.

I. Pre-war/War starts

**Congo-France-
Lisbon-US**

Sabena-Air France-PAA

Sabena flew a Trans-Sahara route Congo-Oran-Spain-France-Belgium from prewar to fall of Belgium in May 1940



Congo-New York, 29 Feb 1940
Sabena Leopoldville---Oran-Barcelona-Marseilles-
Air France -Marseilles-Lisbon-
PAA-US

Spanish Air to Lisbon not started till Feb 41, so went via Marseilles,
which opened Dec '39
Rate 6 francs, very cheap pre-war rate.

II. Mediterranean closed, June '40

Congo-Lisbon
-US

Sabena-PAA

When Italy entered the war and France surrendered, the Mediterranean was closed to Allied commercial air traffic. This caused many changes.

Belgium fell, 10 May, so Sabena 8 June 40, diverted to Lisbon (then UK). Last Congo Europe Sabena flight. ‡



Leopoldville to USA, 6 June 1940
SABENA Leopoldville-Lagos-Lisbon
PAA Lisbon-USA.

Congo Censor, no London marks
Arr 21 June, only 15 days

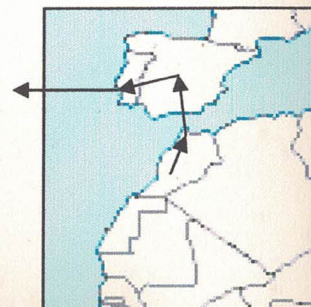
This flight left the Congo after Belgium fell on May 10th, before France fell.
But before it arrived, France was falling, so it had to be diverted to Lisbon and the UK
Last SABENA flight to Europe, and **only one to Lisbon.** ‡
A cheap 9.50 franc rate.

II. Mediterranean Closed

Med closed, but neutral Spanish Airline
still flying.
Connected Spanish Morocco to Lisbon.

Morocco-Spanish Morocco-Spain- Lisbon-US

Rail to Spanish Morocco-
Spanish Air-Seville-Lisbon-PAA



Fort Lautey Vichy Morocco to US. 21 April 1941

Fort Lautey Vichy Morocco to Tetuan, Spanish Morocco by rail
Tetuan-Seville-Lisbon by Spanish
PAA to US

PC90 censor 1461 at Bermuda proves PAA.

Spanish Air was the only route open at this time for Morocco to Lisbon.

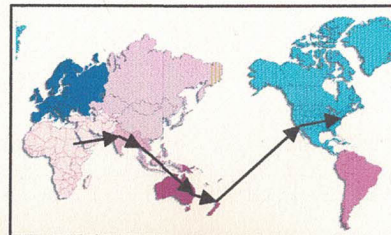
20 grams. Base FF2.50
Air to Lisbon 2x1.50=FF3.00
Air to US 2x12=FF24.00
Total = 29.50=correct franking.

II. Mediterranean Closed

**Sudan-Sydney-
Aukland-US**

BOAC-Quantas-Tasman
Air-PAA

With Mediterranean closed, the main air route avoiding Vichy Morocco was via the Pacific.
Two routes, one exiting the Sudan, the 'Horseshoe Route'



Sudan to New York State, 22 Sep 1941

BOAC-QUANTAS Horseshoe Khartoum-Sidney
TASMAN (BOAC associate) Sidney-Auckland N.Z.
PAA FAM 19. Auckland-Fiji-Hawaii
(From my Uncle to me.)

Sudan Censor

Endorsed in red "New Zealand-San Francisco"

This is the route usually used from British territory to the US at this time, as endorsed.

The alternate route was via Chunking, but since Australia, New Zealand and Egypt were part of the 'Empire Air Scheme', the longer BOAC route was preferred by the Brits to paying more to PAA..

Franked 12 pi=correct.

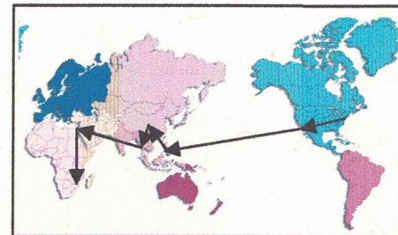
II. Mediterranean Closed

PAA China Route US-Manila-Chunking -Rangoon-Cairo-SA

US-Manila-Chunking-
Rangoon-Cairo-Durban

This route co-existed with the Horseshoe route via New Zealand. This route maximized the PAA revenues, while the New Zealand route maximized the BOAC revenues. Both could be used both ways, but US-Africa mail mainly was via China, and African mail via N.Z. The rate was 95c from 6 August 1940-17 July 1941, then increased to \$1.10.

This unique cover illustrates both rates!



NYC to South Africa, 30 Sep 1941

Originally franked 95c, returned by Church St. Annex and returned for additional 15c
Making the correct \$1.10 for this 4.5month rate.

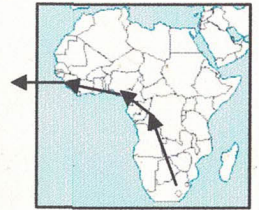
Route: NYC-SanFrancisco-PAA to Manila-China National Air (a PAA sub) to Chunking-Rangoon-BOAC to
Cairo-BOAC flying boat to Durban-Rail to Cape Town.
Transit 33 days.

PAA Africa to US

III. Pacific Closed Dec 1941

Dec of 1941, PAA instructed by FDR to connect to BOAC via Liberia, Lagos Nigeria and Leopoldville, Belgian Congo.

Africa--US
Routes A,B



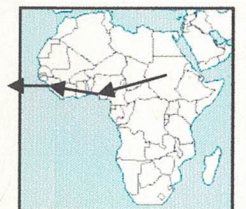
A. 15 June '42 South Africa-US via Leopoldville & Lagos

SABENA to Leopoldville
PAA-US

S. Africa to Congo by
SABENA 28 Jan 42 - EOW.
At this date, PAA boats
served Leopoldville, and
Sabena was the route to
Jo'burg.

SA censor.

8/- double weight=correct



B. 1 Sep '42 Sudan-US PAA-AF to Lagos PAA-AF (ATC) to Liberia PAA to US

At this date, PAA-AF was
operating the Khartoum-
Lagos route under contract
to BOAC
As endorsed and shown by
Lagos arrival in 2 days.

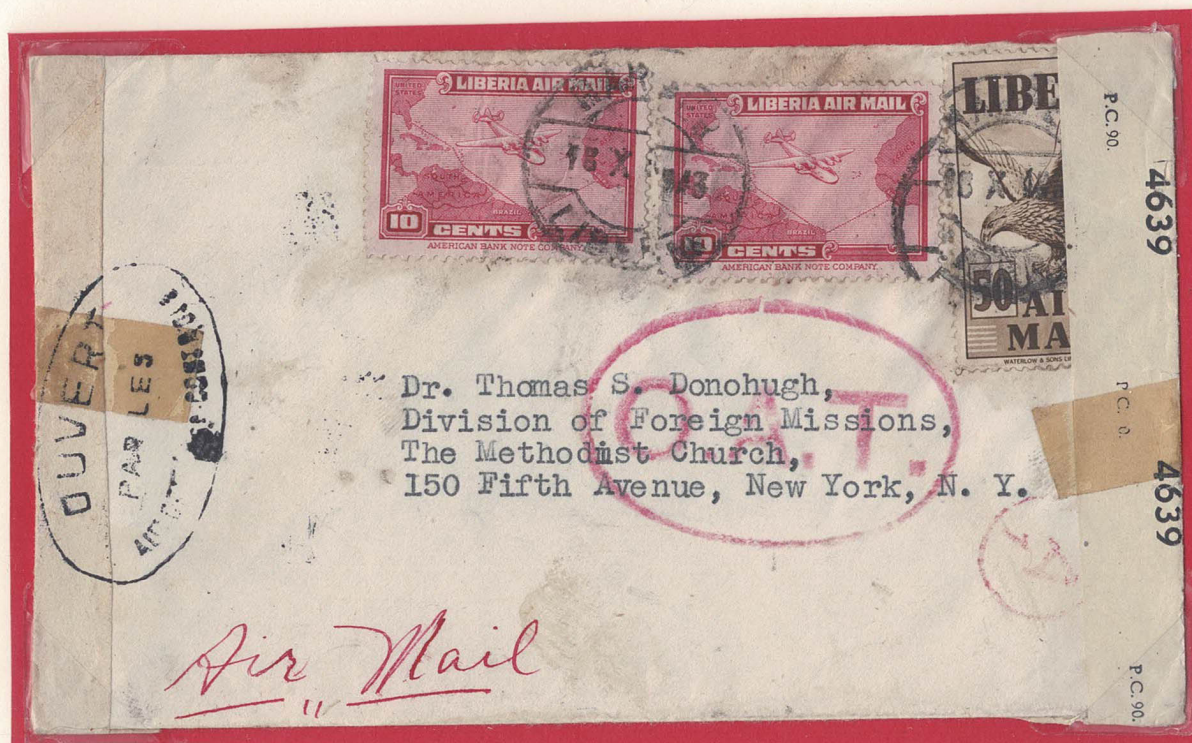
Sudan and Nigeria Censors
Franked 10 pi, correct

III. Pacific Closed

**Liberia-Dakar-
Casablanca-Lisbon-US**

Aeromaritime-BOAC-
PAA

Liberia was the focal point of PAA in Africa, but this Liberian letter was routed by way of **French Aeromaritime** to Dakar and on to London by BOAC. ‡
No obvious reason for this longer, slower route. Perhaps a quarrel with PAA over payment? PAA was only paid by the US for US mail, return fees had to be collected from the foreign governments



Liberia-NYC, 18 October 1943

In spite of Liberia being the African focal point for PAA, **this cover went via French Aeromaritime (LAM) to Dakar.**
BOAC to UK via Casablanca & Lisbon.
PAA to US

French censor proves carried by LAM (Free French) and UK Censors. London red 'OAT' proves London Transit.
PAA had now resumed US-Eire flights.

Same 70c rate as direct via PAA..

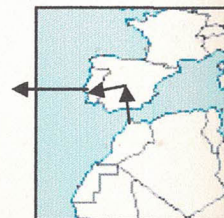
**IV. N. Africa/Med Opened
8 Nov 1942/43**

**Tangiers-Seville-
Lisbon-US**

Spanish Air-PAA

North Africa invaded 8 November 42 and all of the Med opened in 1943.

Spain had taken control of 'International' Tangiers in 1940 and so the Spanish Air Line now ran from Tangiers to Seville and on to Lisbon. Connecting with PAA.



British PO Tangiers to Lancaster PA. Registered, 30 Nov 1942

Trafico Areo Espanol Airways. Tangiers to Seville
Trans-Iberian Airways. Seville-Lisbon
PAA Lisbon to US.

Lisbon Transit 7 December
NY Arrival 8 January. (delayed in Bermuda by censor)

Censor PC90 6172 Bermuda

Only route then open from Tangiers, no London mark, so sensibly went via Lisbon.

Franked 1/10d. Possibly 4d registration and 1/6 postage.

**Congo-Lagos-
Casablanca-Lisbon-
US**

Sabena-PAA

By the end of 1943, the French in North Africa had surrendered and all of Africa freed

SABENA was able to restart a route to Europe, even though Belgium was still occupied



Congo to Peoria. 14 November, 1944

**In Sept 1944, SABENA began Leopoldville-Lagos-----Casablanca-Lisbon
PAA Lisbon-US**

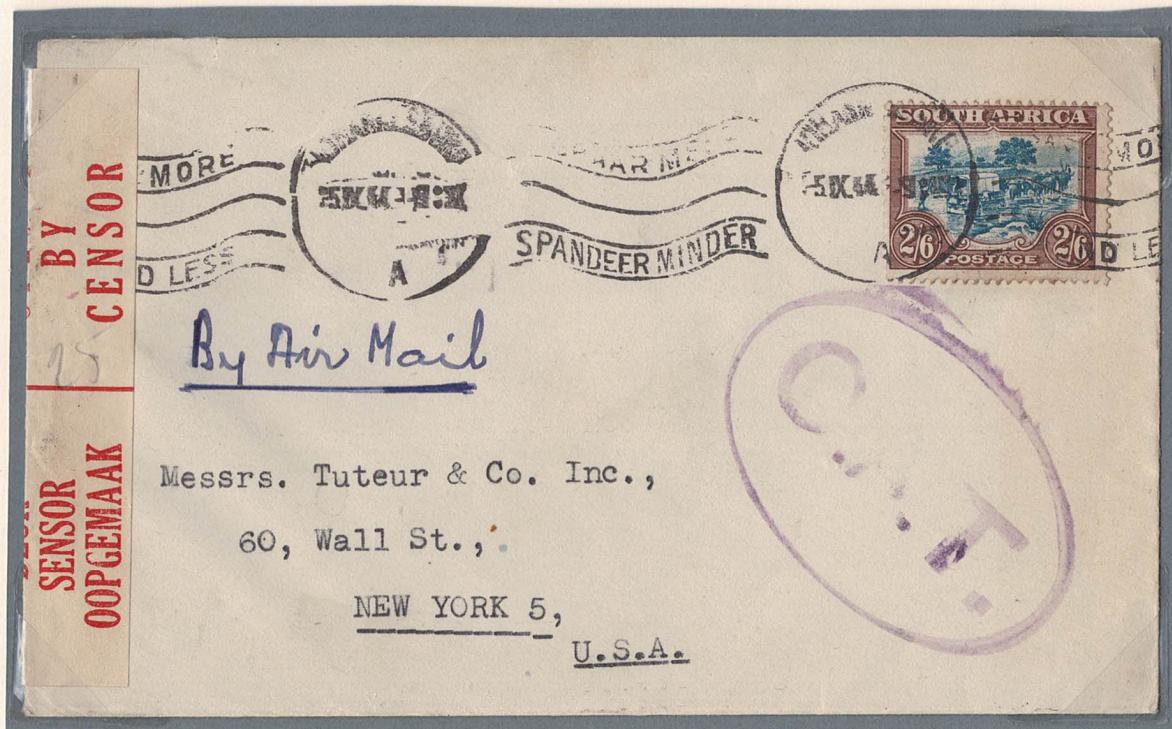
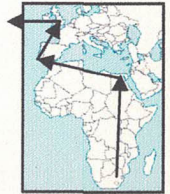
At this date, the Sabena route to Lisbon would have been the preferred route for the Belgians as it only involved 1 transfer. It is so inscribed.

Inscribed "Avion-Sabena"
Congo Censor and unusual Chicago censor 30621

Franked a high 63.50 francs. Probably triple rate, but actual rate unknown.

The Allies regain control of N. Africa and Cairo-London were again connected by air.

In Sept 1944, a *new unreported route and 2/6d rate* for SA-US via Gibraltar ‡. Horseshoe to Cairo, North African Landplane route to London via Gibraltar. Then PAA 18-12 Foynes to NY. Slower, but cheaper than via FAM 22 via the Congo.



SA-US, Via Gibraltar & UK. 25 Sep 44

BOAC Flying Boat to Cairo,
BOAC land plane to Gibraltar, London and then on to Foynes, Ireland,
Reopened PAA 18-12 to US.

London O.A.T. mark, proving via UK, in Purple, not the usual red.
Note that it did not pass through Lisbon (no Lisbon mark) thus avoiding Portuguese fees,
both landing fees and mail fees.

Franked 2/6d, correct new rate. ‡

With Africa freed, Free French LAM opened a route from Casablanca to Lisbon, taking over from the Portuguese. Connecting to LAM, Aeromaritime flights from all French African colonies.



29 September 1944.

Madagascar-Casablanca-Lisbon-PAA to NYC

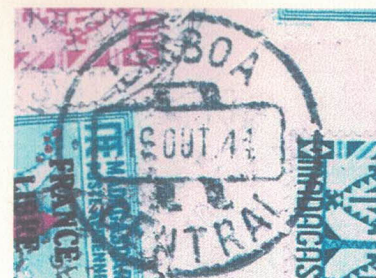
Note Lisbon proving CDS on back.

Total franking 94f50, addition error. 26f00 on face, 68f50 on back
Basic foreign 4f00, Registration 4f00. 30 grams air=6x3f/5g to Dakar
+3x15f50/5g Dakar to US = 92f50

This rate 1 day earlier than published data. #

British censor in Tamatave, Madagascar, ZB/I

Purple French currency control mark.

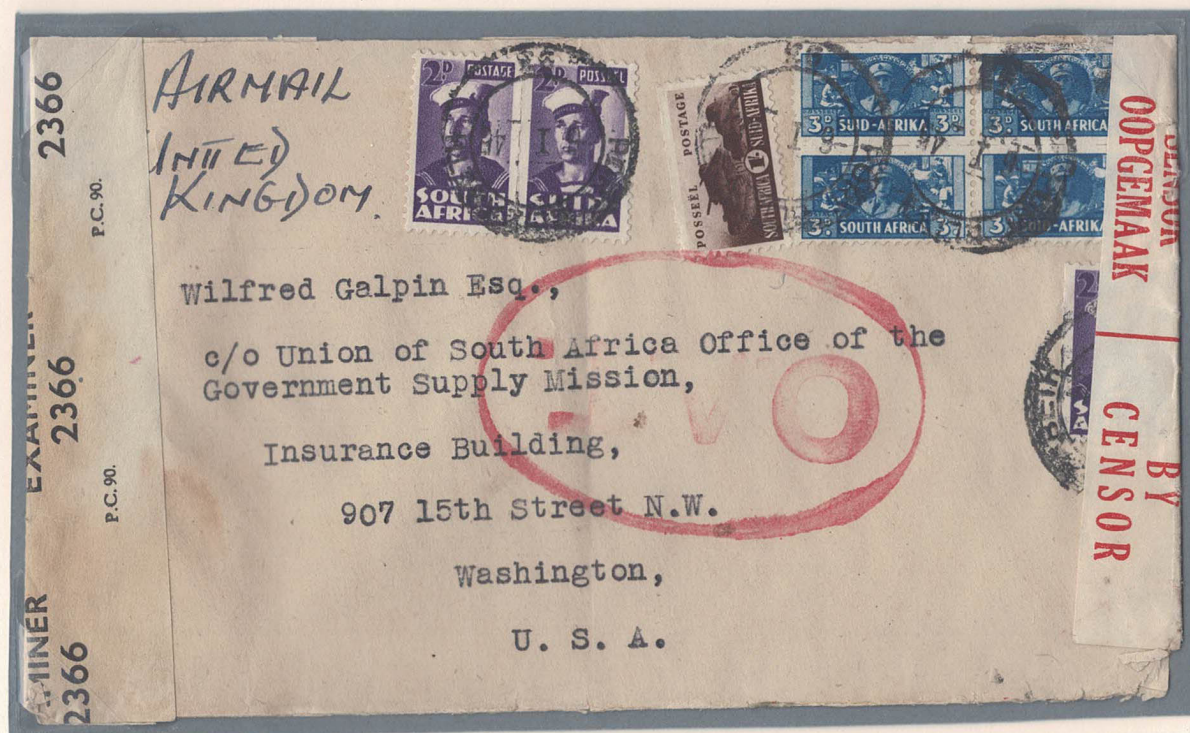


Epilogue

SA-Cairo-Marseilles-UK-
US

S. Africa-Cairo-UK-US

With France freed, BOAC could resume its prewar route from SA.



S. Africa-US via UK
6 Jan 45.

BOAC. Jo'burg-Cairo-Tripoli-Marseilles-UK.
PAA to US,

as BOAC only carried Canada mail.
(2/6d frank or OAT proves via UK)

SA and UK censors.
UK red OAT

Franking 2/6d. Correct