



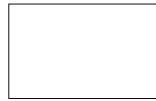
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Cuba's Expanding Civil Aviation Web



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An Intelligence Assessment

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GI 84-10073
April 1984

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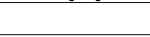


Cuba's Expanding Civil Aviation Web



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An Intelligence Assessment


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This paper was prepared by 
 of the Office of Global Issues, with a
contribution by  Office of Central
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State. 

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Comments and queries are welcome and may be
directed to the Chief, Geography Division, OGI, on


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April 1984

[Redacted]

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Cuba's Expanding Civil Aviation Web [Redacted]

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Key Judgments

Information available as of 1 April 1984 was used in this report.

Civil aviation is an important element in Cuba's contacts with the rest of the world. Its airlines serve its political goals by establishing a Cuban presence in countries Havana deems important as well as by providing a means for supporting military and economic missions overseas and by conducting some intelligence activities. The aviation sector is also a modest source of hard currency for the beleaguered Cuban economy. [Redacted]

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Havana has managed to develop, largely in the last 10 years, a thin international network of flights with connections to the Caribbean, North and South America, Europe, and Africa. These routes are serviced with a potpourri of about 60 Cuban aircraft, mostly Soviet built, and a number of aircraft leased from other countries. Cubana, the primary national carrier, conducts both scheduled and nonscheduled flights to a variety of domestic and foreign destinations. Cuba's charter airline, Aero Caribbean, is focused primarily on tapping the lucrative tourist and cargo markets in the Caribbean for hard currency. [Redacted]

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In addition to their worldwide commercial activities, Cuba's airlines have for years been involved in military activities. Flights operating under Cubana and Aero Caribbean umbrellas—some of which reportedly use military aircraft with civil markings—perform virtually all of Cuba's international military airlifts and supplement the Cuban Air Force's (DAAFAR) limited transport capability. Aircraft operating as nonscheduled charter flights have regularly transported military personnel and supplies to Angola and Nicaragua. [Redacted]

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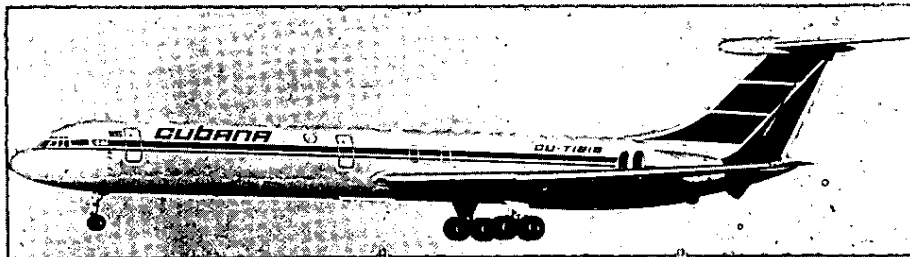
[Redacted]

Cuba will continue to expand its civil aviation links to areas of the world where it wants to extend its political influence, support its overseas military and civilian missions, and take advantage of the potential hard currency earnings from tourist and cargo traffic. Latin America and, in particular, the Caribbean Basin will remain the focus of these efforts because of Havana's twin desires to undercut US influence in the region and to tap the tourist market between the Caribbean and the rest of the Western world.

[Redacted]

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An IL-62M, flagship of the Cuban fleet



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One of Cubana's two Bristol-Britannia BB 318s which has been in service with the airline for 25 years



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**Cuba's Expanding
Civil Aviation Web**

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Cuba's Airlines Today

Civil aviation is a valuable political, military, and economic link to areas of the world the Cubans deem important, as well as a modest generator of foreign exchange for Cuba's beleaguered economy. Since coming to power in 1959, Castro has slowly managed to build a small international network of flights with connections to Europe, Africa, North and South America, and the Caribbean. Cubana, the primary national carrier, services a number of foreign and domestic points with both scheduled and nonscheduled flights and performs a variety of tasks within Cuba, such as air ambulance service. Aero Caribbean (also known as Aero Caribe), a government-owned charter airline, was established in 1982 specifically to tap the lucrative tourist and air cargo markets in the Caribbean area.

Aircraft Fleet

Since the mid-1970s the Cubans have been slowly modernizing their fleet, replacing older propeller-driven aircraft with newer jets (see table). The entire jet inventory of some 30 aircraft has been acquired from the Soviets within the past eight years. Almost half of these are medium- to long-range jets—four or five medium-range TU-154s and nine long-range IL-62Ms. Two additional IL-62Ms are leased from Aeroflot for flights between Havana and Angola. More recent additions to the jet fleet were 16 YAK-40s—small short-range trijets suitable mainly for domestic passenger flights.

The rest of Cuba's civil fleet consists of about 27 older propeller-driven aircraft. Most significant are the 18 highly versatile AN-24 and AN-26 twin turboprops, which have the range to reach any point in the Caribbean and are used for both cargo and passenger transport. Six long-range turboprops—four IL-18s and two British-built Bristol-Britannias (BB-318s)—are used to supplement the IL-62M jet transports on long-range flights and for special flights, such as cargo transport to Nicaragua. The inventory also contains two or three operational IL-14 piston-engine

aircraft. In addition to these aircraft, Cuba also has a variety of US-manufactured light aircraft and about 50 AN-2 single-engine biplanes.

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Aircraft Charters From Other Sources

Because the existing inventory is insufficient to fully support Cuba's long-range transport needs—much less its hopes to open up more lucrative markets for tourism—Cuban civil air authorities historically have supplemented their own aircraft capabilities by leasing Western and Soviet aircraft. A variety of reports indicate that:

- Several DC-8s were leased from Air Canada in the mid-to-late 1970s.
- Two Boeing 707s were leased from Yugoslavia in 1982 for tourist charters from West Germany to Cuba.
- Leased FINNAIR DC-8s were used for the initial phase of the Aero Caribbean charter inaugurated last fall between Havana and Milan, Italy.

The Cubans have for some time been attempting to augment their capabilities by obtaining US-built aircraft for use between Cuba and Western Europe. State Department reporting indicates that Havana most recently has been trying to buy or lease Boeing or McDonnell Douglas aircraft from Nicaragua, France, Venezuela, and other countries.

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Cubana's International Operations

In the nearly 55 years since its founding, Cubana has grown from a small domestic carrier to a modest-sized international airline with service to destinations in the Caribbean, North and South America, Europe, and Africa. Cubana began operations in 1929 as Compania Nacional Cubana de Aviacion Curtiss. It opened its first international route in 1946 with the inauguration of service to Miami. Prior to the Castro

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Cuban Inventory of Significant Aircraft^a (as of December 1983)

Type	Number	Engines	Capabilities ^b		
			Range (kilometers)	Passengers	Cargo (metric tons)
IL-62 M Classic	9 ^c	Jet (4)	9,200	168 to 186	23
TU 154B Careless	4 to 5	Jet (3)	4,000	154 to 180	18
YAK 40 Codling	16	Jet (3)	1,800	27 to 32	2.4
BB-318 Britannia	2	Turbo prop (4)	8,600	130 to 140	16
IL-18 Coot	4	Turbo prop (4)	6,500	110 to 122	13.5
IL-14 Crate	2 to 3 ^d	Piston (2)	3,000	32	8
AN 24/26 Coke/Curl	18	Turbo prop (2)	2,500	38 to 40	4

^a The fleet also contains more than 50 older light aircraft.
^b Range with maximum fuel and light payload. Maximum number of passengers calculated at all-tourist class. Cargo calculated at no passengers, all-cargo operation—range severely degraded.
^c In addition, two IL-62Ms are leased from Aeroflot.
^d Thirteen IL-14s are in inventory, but only two or three are operational. The others are out of service and are being cannibalized for spare parts.



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takeover, Cubana operated a fleet of 10 aircraft, mostly US built, on routes to Madrid, Lisbon, Mexico City, and New York, as well as to a number of Caribbean points.

Following the Castro takeover, air transport in Cuba was nationalized, and Cubana was consolidated with two smaller airlines as Empresa Consolidada Cubana de Aviacion. With Cuba's swing into the Communist sphere, however, international operations were drastically reduced as countries broke diplomatic relations with the Castro government. Through the 1960s and early 1970s, Cubana's international service was limited to connections to Mexico City, Madrid, Prague, and Moscow. In the mid-1970s, however, Havana began to rebuild Cubana's international network, as many Latin American countries normalized relations with Cuba, and Castro sought political and economic ties with the non-Communist world. By the late 1970s, new routes linked Havana with numerous destinations in Latin America and the Caribbean, three in Africa, two in the Middle East, and one in Canada. Cubana since then has added further to its route network.

Scheduled Flights. According to published international schedules, Cubana currently operates 22 weekly, two semimonthly, and two monthly flights to 18 countries over a route network of some 50,000 kilometers (see figure 1):

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- In **Europe** IL-62Ms operate five times a week to Madrid, with one of the flights going on to Paris and another to Tripoli. Prague and East Berlin are serviced weekly. All of the European flights return to Havana via Gander, Newfoundland, where they refuel.
- Scheduled service to **Latin America** currently includes three weekly flights to Mexico City; two a week to Panama City (one of which continues to Lima, Peru); and one to Managua, Nicaragua. In addition, Georgetown, Guyana, is serviced by a TU-154 twice a month via Havana, Bridgetown, Barbados, and Port-of-Spain, Trinidad; Kingston, Jamaica, hosts a weekly AN-24 flight. Service to St. Georges, Grenada, and Paramaribo, Suriname, was stopped in late October following the intervention in Grenada.

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- In Sub-Saharan Africa IL-62Ms are scheduled into Luanda, Angola, three times a month with a refueling stop in Cape Verde. Once a month that same flight stops in Accra, Ghana, before continuing to Luanda and then Maputo, Mozambique.
- Scheduled service to Canada comprises eight weekly flights to Montreal during the winter tourist season to ferry Canadians to and from Cuban resorts; this service usually drops to five flights a week during the off season. These flights—the only Cubana flights over US territory—skirt the coast before turning inland over New York.

Nonscheduled Flights. Cubana also frequently employs its aircraft on nonscheduled charter flights. Because charter flights usually can be organized on an ad hoc basis without a formal bilateral air agreement, Cubana's charter network serves a wider variety of destinations (for example, Venezuela and additional stops in Western Europe) than its scheduled route network (see figure 2); nonscheduled Cubana charters last year reached seven more cities than the scheduled service. These charter flights are aimed primarily at the tourist market and the attendant hard currency earnings.

Cubana charter flights to Venezuela illustrate the wide range of Havana's hard currency earning schemes.

special charter flights have been arranged to fly out Cuban political prisoners whose relatives or friends in Venezuela have raised money to buy their freedom.

a second series of Cubana flights to Barquisimeto, Venezuela, delivers racehorses and gamecocks purchased by wealthy Venezuelans from the Cuban Government.

Aero Caribbean's Charter Operations

Aero Caribbean was formally established in October 1982 to tap the tourist and cargo markets in the Caribbean region for badly needed foreign exchange.

official dissatisfaction with Cubana's failure to pursue those markets aggressively was also a key factor in its creation.¹ Aero Caribbean's first official flight in December 1982 was to Cancun, Mexico, to pick up tourists for Havana. The airline has since conducted frequent nonscheduled passenger and cargo service throughout the Caribbean Basin and last fall inaugurated service to Western Europe with flights to Milan. It also services a number of Cuban cities including Cayo Largo del Sur, Varadero, Santiago de Cuba, Holguin, and Nueva Gerona on the Isle of Youth; its aircraft perform government-chartered cloud seeding in eastern Cuba for rain enhancement.

Bilateral Civil Aviation Agreements

Cuba's international route network of both scheduled and nonscheduled flights is based primarily on bilateral civil aviation agreements with at least 46 countries (see appendix). Most of these agreements give Cuba overflight rights and landing and service privileges and provide reciprocal rights in Cuba for each country's national carrier. Only seven countries—the USSR, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Spain, Angola, Canada, and Mexico—take advantage of their reciprocal rights and fly scheduled routes to Havana. Most agreements contain a charter clause to facilitate nonscheduled tourist and cargo flights.

Although the Cubans have generally stayed within the terms specified in their bilateral treaties, they have on several occasions been caught violating those terms so blatantly that agreements or some attendant privileges have been temporarily suspended by the other country. in 1976 Venezuela suspended Cubana charter flights after Cubans were discovered attempting to infiltrate unmanifested passengers into Venezuela hidden aboard Cubana aircraft. The infiltrators were able to bypass Venezuelan immigration

¹ We believe that a forerunner organization of Aero Caribbean may have existed prior to the airline's formal incorporation in 1982.

Civil Aviation Structure and Leadership

According to official publications, all civil aviation in Cuba is controlled and administered by the government through the Cuban Civil Aeronautics Institute (IACC) under the Ministry of Transportation. [redacted]

[redacted] Cubana Airlines, the primary carrier, may now be directly subordinate to the Ministry. Moreover, Aero Caribbean, although ostensibly a government-sponsored private enterprise, is also directly controlled by the Ministry of Transportation, [redacted]

Cubana, the larger and more organizationally complex of the two civil carriers, reportedly employs some 3,800 persons in its worldwide operations. Cubana's president, Dixon Arjona Ledea, and four directors oversee operations, commerce, finance, and public relations from Cubana's headquarters at Jose Marti International Airport near Havana. [redacted]

Aero Caribbean, an entity separate from Cubana, occasionally uses some of Cubana's aircraft and pilots. The charter airline's operations are nominally directed by a president, Renaldo Delgado Garcia, and four vice presidents. [redacted]

however, the Minister of Transport, Guillermo Garcia Frias, is the de facto head of the airline. The airline has formal, although unspecified, ties to the Cuban National Institute of Tourism (INTUR) and its agencies, CUBATUR and HAVANATUR. [redacted]



Dixon Arjona Ledea, President of Cubana [redacted]



Guillermo Garcia Frias, Minister of Transportation [redacted]

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and customs but were later apprehended by Venezuelan authorities and deported. The United States also suspended Cubana overflight rights for two weeks in early 1983 following unauthorized diversions near Griffiss Air Force Base, New York, from the flight route to Montreal. [redacted]

[redacted]

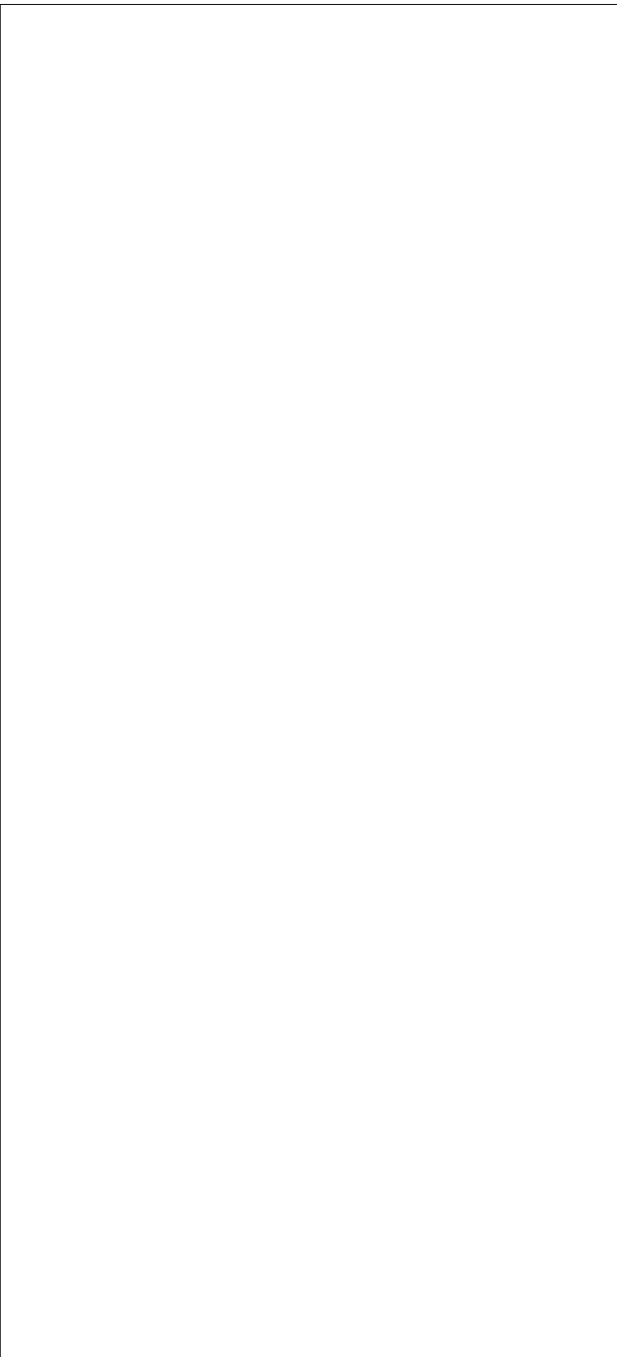
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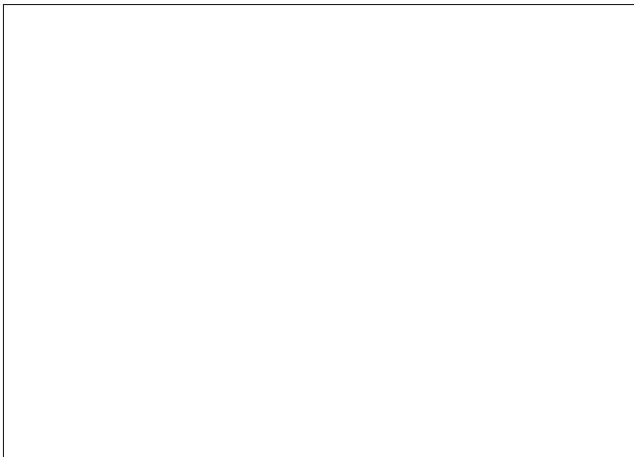


Cuban Airlift Capabilities

Cuban airlift operations are limited to some extent by the fact that none of Havana's large civil aircraft are configured for all-cargo operation. Loading doors are modest in size, and all medium- and large-sized planes are set up for passenger traffic. 25X1

the probable imminent arrival of two to four IL-76 Candids will provide a qualitative change in capabilities. Although the IL-76 cannot transport any modern tank (even the T-55 is too wide for its loading doors), it has been designed to operate out of poorly prepared fields and can lift 40 tons over medium ranges. Acquisition of this aircraft will sharply enhance Cuba's airlift capability in the Caribbean Basin for carrying such military hardware as armored personnel carriers, artillery, trucks, and support equipment. 25X1

limited domestic transport capability.² The Air Force supposedly operates no aircraft larger than an IL-14, which has a capacity of only 8 metric tons and a range of just 3,000 kilometers. The DAAFAR fleet is thus totally inadequate for supporting Castro's foreign military ventures. 25X1



Military Uses of Civil Aircraft

Flights operating under Cubana and Aero Caribbean umbrellas perform all of Cuba's international airlifts and supplement the Cuban Air Force's (DAAFAR)

[redacted]
[redacted] Cubana nonscheduled charter flights have been used to carry Cuban military personnel to and from Angola.³ These special "charters" supplement three scheduled flights each month that we believe also support the Cuban military presence in Africa. During the first five months of the Cuban airlift to Angola (September 1975 to January 1976), Cubana's IL-18 and BB-318 aircraft completed 45 flights between Havana and Luanda, in the process transporting an estimated 4,500 troops. Subsequent loss of Barbados and Trinidad as refueling stops led to Havana's decisions to lease Aeroflot IL-62M long-range jets and then to acquire identical jets for the Cuban inventory to continue to accomplish this mission. An average of 20 nonscheduled flights per month were used in this fashion in 1983.

[redacted]

Since the Sandinista revolution in 1979, Cubana aircraft also have been transporting civilian and military personnel and supplies to and from Managua, Nicaragua.

[redacted]

An average total of 30 flights per month by both airlines were flown last year; we believe, [redacted] that during the last half of 1983 they were engaged in a significant airlift of small arms and munitions to Nicaragua.

[redacted]

³ Cuban personnel transiting to Ethiopia typically fly to Luanda where they catch an Ethiopian Airlines flight to Addis Ababa.

[redacted]

Hard Currency Issues

We believe that Cuba's civil aviation operations are a modest—but potentially important—source of hard currency for the country's beleaguered economy. Many of the scheduled routes established for political purposes are operated with low load factors and incur significant losses. According to the American Embassy in Lima, load factors on Cubana flights into and out of Lima between January 1982 and mid-1983, for instance, ranged from only 26 percent to 42 percent. The run to Jamaica is also operated at a loss, with load factors of considerably less than 40 percent.⁵ The nonscheduled-tourist charters, however, probably operate profitably because they fly with higher load factors and are usually ticketed with hard currency payments. In particular, the charter flights to Cancun, Montreal, Bonn, Cologne, and Milan are likely to be significant hard currency earners.

Cuba's desperate need for hard currency to service its large foreign debt, nevertheless, has led the Cuban regime over the last three years to take a number of steps designed to make the aviation sector more of an income earner. The most important move has been an intensive effort to attract more tourist traffic by offering special charter flights and package arrangements, especially in Western Europe. Since 1981 Cubana and two Cuban tour agencies, CUBATUR and HAVANATUR, have opened offices in Luxembourg, Frankfurt, and Paris and signed contracts with European tour firms to encourage tourist travel to Cuba. In the past year, charter flights have been flying during the summer season between Havana and several West European cities, including London, Frankfurt, Cologne, Bonn, and Paris. Aero Caribbean has expanded the scope of its operations to include cargo charters, and it recently inaugurated service to Western Europe. The American Embassy in Lima reported recently that Cubana was actively selling discounted tickets for flights between Peru and Europe as well as improperly ticketing passengers for debarkation at the technical stop in Panama City.

[redacted]

⁵ At current competitive international rates, aircraft must typically operate with load factors of more than 50 percent just to break even.

[redacted]

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To conserve the relatively small hard currency earnings from its air operations, the Castro government has attempted to cut Cubana's overseas operating expenses. [redacted] government was planning in 1981 to implement reductions in overseas personnel and salaries, to curtail rest stops for flight crews, and to cut down on the number of intermediate stops. [redacted]

efforts, largely because of Castro's interest in under-cutting US influence and enhancing his own in the region. [redacted] countries where the Cubans are likely to push for new routes because of their desire to establish a presence include Argentina, Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, and Belize. [redacted] 25X1 25X1

Service and Safety

We believe that service by Cuba's civil airlines is generally poor and cannot compare to that offered on Western airlines, or even on the Soviet airline Aeroflot. Aircraft maintenance is a serious and continuing problem because spare parts for the mostly Soviet-built fleet are not readily available. Various reports indicate that Cuban aircraft routinely exceed allowable flying time between maintenance intervals by more than 50 percent—a practice that can be expected to result eventually in high accident rates. [redacted]

Cuban priorities in the rest of the world are difficult to ascertain. In Europe the most likely candidates for the establishment of scheduled service are West Germany and Luxembourg because of the potential tourist market there. Cuba already has charter arrangements with tour operators in both countries. [redacted] 25X1

To conserve hard currency, the Cubans contract for the cheapest services available at the international airports they service. We believe that maintenance at Madrid, Gander, Montreal, and Frankfurt may be problems for the Cubans because of the constraints on hard currency outflows. Moreover, in-flight services are extremely poor by international standards. [redacted]

Elsewhere, service is likely to be established to countries in which there is a current Cuban presence or with which Cuba already has air agreements. These would include, among others:

- In Africa: Ethiopia, Algeria, Guinea, Congo, Sierra Leone, and Equatorial Guinea. 25X1
- In the Middle East: Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon (if there is a resolution to the current conflict there favorable to the Arab cause). [redacted] 25X1

Pilots and other flight personnel, however, are reportedly well trained. [redacted]

Future Directions

Cuba will continue to push the expansion of its civil aviation links into areas of the world where it wants to extend its political influence, support its overseas military and civilian missions, and take advantage of the potential for hard currency earnings from tourist and cargo traffic. In such cases, we can expect nonscheduled Cuban air service to be established as a precursor of formal bilateral air agreements and the inauguration of scheduled service. Latin America and the Caribbean will remain the primary targets of such

[redacted] 25X1 25X1

Appendix

Cuban Bilateral Civil Aviation Agreements, as of February 1984 *

USSR and Eastern Europe

USSR
Bulgaria
Czechoslovakia
East Germany
Hungary
Poland

Western Europe

France
Ireland
Portugal
Spain
Switzerland
United Kingdom

Africa

Angola
Cape Verde
Congo
Equatorial Guinea
Ethiopia
Ghana
Guinea
Madagascar Republic
Mozambique
Sierra Leone
Tanzania

Middle East

Algeria
Iraq
Lebanon
Libya
Morocco
Syria

Asia

Laos
Vietnam

North America

Canada
United States*

Latin America and the Caribbean

Barbados
Chile
Grenada *
Guyana
Jamaica
Mexico
Netherlands Antilles
Nicaragua
Panama
Peru
Suriname*
Trinidad and Tobago
Venezuela

* Asterisk indicates suspended.



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Figure 1
Cubana Airlines: International Scheduled Routes, 1984

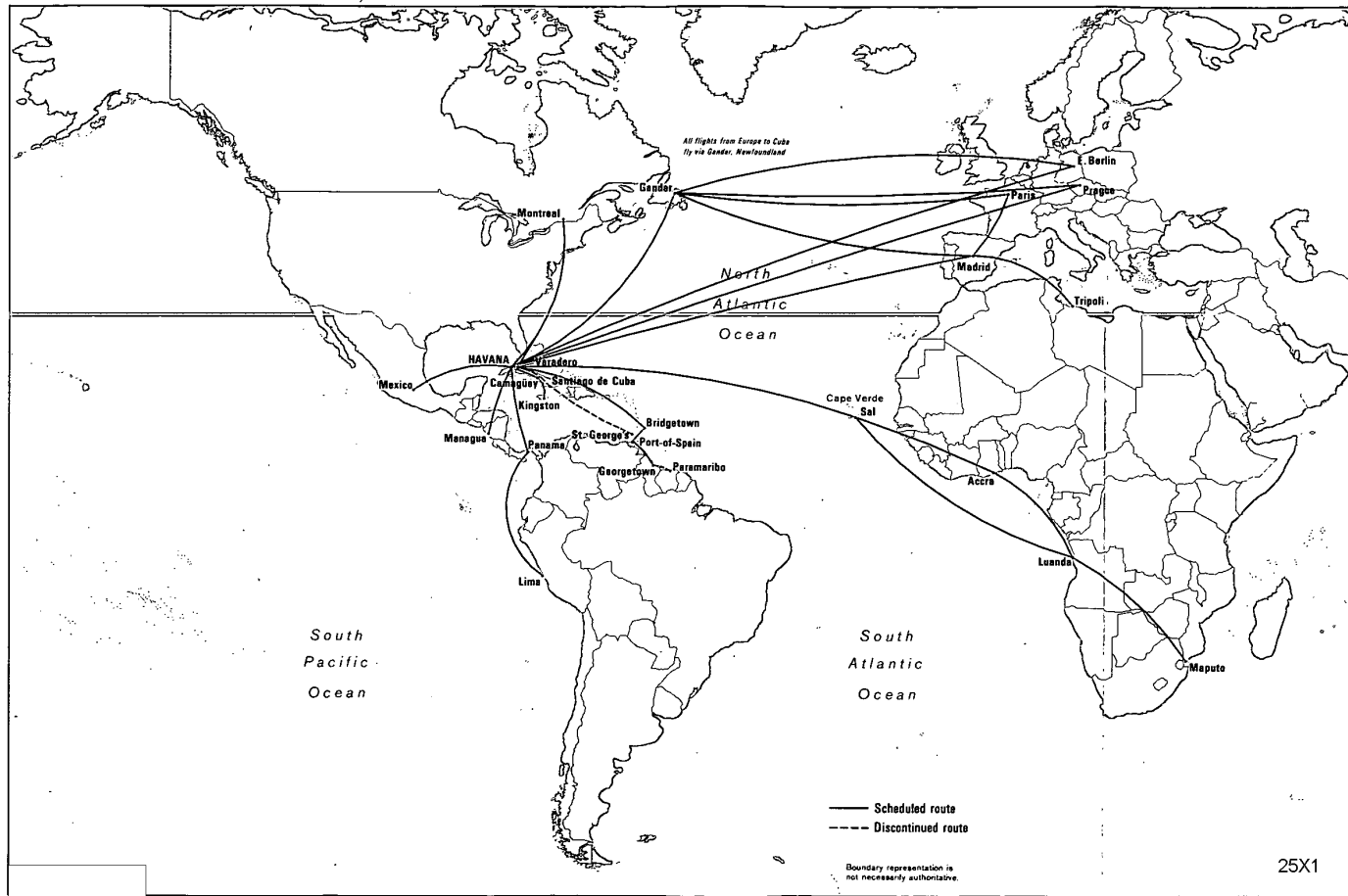
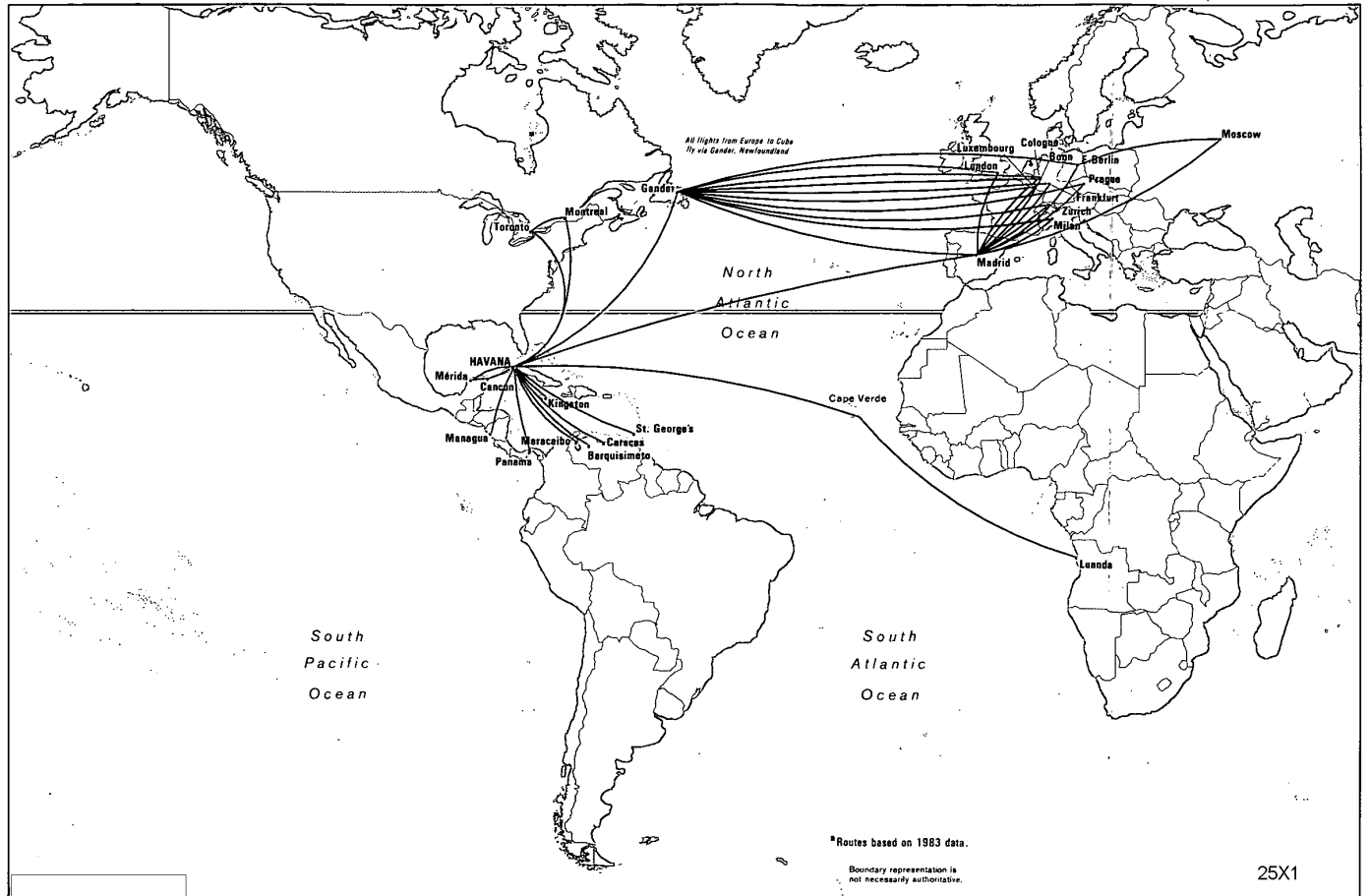


Figure 2
Cubana Airlines and Aero Caribbean: International Nonscheduled Routes*



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