

AIR AMERICA: BOEING 727s

by Dr. Joe F. Leeker

Last updated on 23 August 2010

The types of missions flown by Air America's Boeing 727s:

Although three Boeing 727s had been ordered by Air Asia, none of them was ever operated by Air America, but all of them were used by Southern Air Transport on an MAC contract. Connie Seigrist, one of the pilots who flew the 727s, recalls: "February 1967 – I left Intermountain Aviation of Marana, Arizona to rejoin the CAT Complex of the Agency to fly B-727's of Southern Air Transport. All of my flying was in support of the Agency's requirements in the area. Part of the flying was for the Korean troops, transportation to and from Korea to Vietnam. The flying was routine: Military personnel and cargo transportation. Enemy ground fire was always a threat on final when landing at Saigon or take-off at night from Da Nang. 3 January 1968 – My last flight into Da Nang flying a B-727 was slightly more than routine. I had arrived at night from Kadena. I went to Operations to file clearance and the Ops Officer said for us to move fast that the airfield would be under attack within an hour. I rushed the crew and asked the Officer to call traffic to have the aircraft off-loaded and loaded for departure immediately. We rushed to the aircraft for departure. [...] As we turned for take-off, I saw the other end of the runway looking like a dozen fourth of July celebrations in one. The tower operator called again to say they were closing down and that we were on our own. I knew we were dead ducks sitting still on the ground or in making any attempt to return to a parking area to off load our passengers. We turned off all lights entering the runway for a rolling take-off. We were light in weight. The B-727 was airborne half way down the runway. As we lifted off I made a tight left turn out practically scraping the buildings on the parking ramp with the left wing, with tracers flying all around us. Sounds impossible, but we didn't take a single round." (Connie Seigrist, *Memoirs*, p.83, in: UTD/Leary/I B9F16). Later one of Air America's Boeing 727s was used by CAT. The crash of that aircraft on 16 February 68 meant the end of Civil Air Transport as an airline.

Statistics according to official Air America documents:

- Inventory of 1 February 66, in: UTD/Herd/B2: 3 planned
- Inventories of 31 March 72 > 30 November 72 (in: UTD/CIA/B1F10): 2 > 0

The individual aircraft histories:

| Type | registration / serial | c/n (msn) | date acquired | origin |
|----------------|-----------------------|-----------|---------------|-----------------------------------|
| Boeing 727-92C | N5055 | 19173 | 3 Oct. 66 | bought new; acquired via Air Asia |

Service history: officially acquired by Air America on 31 October 66 (List "Accumulated costs" as of 31 December 67, in: UTD/CIA/B40F8), previously probably owned by the Pacific Corporation; leased to Southern Air Transport, Miami, on 3 October 66; assigned to contract F11626-67-C-0022 providing flying services to MAC for use out of Yokota (Aircraft status as of 1 May 68, in: UTD/Herd/B2); ferried from Seattle to the Far East in October 66 by Clifford A. Costa (Written summary of an interview with Cliff Costa that William Leary tape recorded on 5/6 November and 4/5 December 84); can be seen in the *Air America* documentary; photo in UTD/Luckett/B1F14; underwent a 4D Heavy Inspection at Tainan between 15 and 18 July 68 (Tachikawa monthly report for July 68, in: UTD/Lewis/B1F10); assigned

to contract AF0016-4379 for use out of Tachikawa by Southern Air Transport 16-30 June 69 (F.O.C. of 15 June 69, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B) and 16-31 August 69 (F.O.C. of 15 August 69, in: UTD/ Hickler/B1F1), maintained by Air Asia; used on flights to South Korea (*Air America* documentary); wet leased to China Airlines between 22 May 70 and 10 June 70 (Minutes ExCom-AAAC/AAM of 28 April 70, in: UTD/CIA/B8F4; CAA of Taiwan, letter dated 21 May 70, asking temporary airport passes for 8 American crew members, in: UTD/Bisson/B5 reel 3); assigned to contract

Encl. 4

OFFICE OF SECRETARY - LEGAL COUNSEL
TRANSLATION No. 30440

Copy for CATCL

Directive No. JAN-59-04555 Date: May 21, 1970

To : Taipei International Airport Office

From : Civil Aeronautics Administration

Subject : Crew Temporary Passes

1. Civil Air Transport Company Limited having applied for temporary airport passes for 8 American crew members on the ground of performance of flight duties on Boeing 727 N5055 under wet lease to China Airlines for period May 22 through June 10, and the wet lease by CAL having been approved by this office to enable performance of flights by N5055 in B-1520's stead, please issue temporary passes accordingly.

2. A list of the crew members is enclosed.

Civil Aeronautics Administration

cc: Garrison Department, TGOHQ
Taipei International Airport Coordination Center,
TGOHQ
Civil Air Transport Company Limited

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|---------------|--------------------------------------|----------|
| Distribution: | President VPFO DEY File (2) | Remarks: |
|---------------|--------------------------------------|----------|

for Office of Secretary - Legal Counsel
May 22, 1970

0816-007-00

CAA of Taiwan, letter dated 21 May 70
(in: UTD/Bisson/B5 reel 3)

F11626-71-C-0042 for use out of Yokota, Japan, 1-31 July 71, still with Southern AT (F.O.C.s of 1 July 71 and 15 July 71, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B); returned to Air America on 30 June 72 (Minutes BoD-AAM 17 May 72, in: UTD/CIA/B4F2).

Fate: sold to Continental Air Lines, Los Angeles, on 3 October 72 (Letter by Clyde S. Carter dated 2 November 72, in: UTD/CIA/B15F4) for \$ 3,570,000 (Minutes BoD-AAM 17 October 72, in: UTD/CIA/B4F2); rereg. as N18476 on 17 October 72; transferred to Air Micronesia, Guam, in February 73; renamed Continental Micronesia Inc, Honolulu, in 1993; aircraft sold to Nationsbank of Tennessee Trustee, Richmond, VA, in May 93; at Los Angeles in basic Continental AL colors on 9 May 93; stored at Sherman, TX, in May 93; seen there on 11 October 93; reg. canx in June 94; sold to Kelowna Flightcraft Air Charter, Kelowna, BC, as C-GKRV; regd. on 27 June 94; fleet no "708"; current in 1997.



Southern Air Transport Boeing 727 N5092 at Nha Trang in 1968
(UTD/Misc.Mat./B4F4)

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|----------------|-------|-------|-----------|--------------------------------------|
| Boeing 727-92C | N5092 | 19174 | 5 Nov. 66 | bought new; acquired via Air Asia |
|----------------|-------|-------|-----------|--------------------------------------|

Service history: officially acquired by Air America on 3 November 66 (List "Accumulated costs" as of 31 December 67, in: UTD/CIA/B40F8), previously probably owned by the Pacific Corporation; leased to Southern Air Transport, Miami, on 5 November 66; a wing fuel tank exploded during maintenance service at Tainan on 13 September 67, killing Fu-Shyong Ho; repaired and returned to service on 19 September 67 (Memorial file, in: UTD/LaShomb/B16F3; Minutes ExCom-AAAL/AAM of 3 October 67, in: UTD/CIA/B8F2); assigned to contract F11626-67-C-0022 providing flying services to MAC for use out of Yokota (Aircraft status as of 1 May 68, in: UTD/Herd/B2); sustained an A.P.U. failure on 13 July 68; repaired (Tachikawa monthly report for July 68, in: UTD/Lewis/B1F10); assigned to contract AF0016-4379 for use out of Tachikawa by Southern Air Transport 16-30 June 69 (F.O.C. of 15 June 69, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B) and 16-31 August 69 (F.O.C. of 15 August 69, in: UTD/Hickler/B1F1), maintained by Air Asia; photo in UTD/Misc.Mat./B4F4; used on flights to South Korea (*Air America* documentary); seen at Bangkok on 16 April 71 (*Aviation Letter* 58, September 1971, p.2); assigned to contract F11626-71-C-0042 for use out of Yokota, Japan, 1-31 July 71, still with Southern AT (F.O.C. of 1 July 71, 15 July 71, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B); returned to Air America on 30 June 72 (Minutes BoD-AAM 17 May 72, in: UTD/CIA/B4F2).

Fate: sold to Maple Leaf Leasing Ltd., Ontario, on 26 October 72 for Pacific Western Airlines, Vancouver, as CF-PXB (Letter by Clyde S. Carter dated 2 November 72, in: UTD/CIA/B15F4) for \$ 3,600,000 (Minutes BoD-AAM of 17 October 72, in: UTD/CIA/B4F2; Summary of aircraft sales, in: UTD/CIA/B40F6); sold to Continental Air Lines, Los Angeles, on 17 June 77; rereg. N18479 on 30 June 77; transferred to Air Micronesia, Guam, in 1978 and again in 1980; the undercarriage collapsed on landing at Yap on 21 November 80; the aircraft skidded off the runway and caught fire; written off.



CAT Boeing 727 B-1018, taken at Taipei in January or February 68
(UTD/Foster/B1)

Boeing 727-92C N5093 19175 10 Dec. 66 bought new; acquired via
Air Asia

Service history: immediately sold to Southern Air Transport; regd. to Southern Air Transport in the *US Civil Aircraft Register* of 1 January 68, p. 95; operated by Southern Air Transport; a photo taken at Saigon in February 67 showing N5093 in Southern colors can be seen in: Love, *Wings of Air America*, p. 82; bought by Air America on 16 January 68 (Minutes BoD-AAM of 16 January 68, in: UTD/CIA/B3F6).

Fate: sold to Air Asia for use by CATCL the same day, that is on 16 January 68 (Minutes BoD-AAM of 16 January 68, in: UTD/CIA/B3F6); regd. to Civil Air Transport, Taipei, as B-1018 on 3 January 68; a photo is preserved in: UTD/Foster/B1; crashed 11 kilometers north west of Taipei on 16 February 68, while on approach to the airport; 21 killed (List "Aircraft destroyed or lost", in: UTD/CIA/B49F2). The pilots, Captain Stuart E. Dew and Captain Hugh H. Hicks, were charged with criminal responsibility for the crash, but were acquitted by the Taipei District Court on 20 January 1969. For details see the following documents published by the CIA: <http://www.foia.cia.gov/AirAmerica/C05266618.pdf>, <http://www.foia.cia.gov/AirAmerica/C05266619.pdf>, <http://www.foia.cia.gov/AirAmerica/C05266625.pdf>, and <http://www.foia.cia.gov/AirAmerica/C05268590.pdf> .



The remains of CAT 727 B-1018 after its crash, with Ward S. Reimer and C. T. Yang standing in front of the wreck
(with kind permission from Ward S. Reimer)

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|-----------------|--------|-------|----------|--|
| Boeing 727-173C | N695WA | 19509 | late 69? | leased from World Airways N695WA, who had leased it to Ariana Afghan Airlines, Kabul, until 18 July 69 |
|-----------------|--------|-------|----------|--|

Service history: not current on 15 August 69 (F.O.C. of 15 August 69, in: UTD/Hickler/B1F1); current on 1 July 70 (Leary, *The aircraft of Air America*, p. 20), probably subleased to Southern Air Transport; not current on 1 July 71 (F.O.C. of 1 July 71, in: UTD/Hickler/B8F7B).

Fate: probably returned to World Airways in August 70, who leased it to Japan Air Lines from 8 August 70 to 31 March 71; leased to Air Mali, Bamako, in July 71; sold to them as TZ-ADR on 15 September 74; sold to Federal Express, Memphis, TN, as N199FE on 13 July 88; named "Ms. Mali"; cancelled on 16 August 2004 (request submitted to the FAA on 30 March 2006 at <http://162.58.35.241/acdatabase/>); transferred to the collection of the Kansas Aviation Museum, Wichita, KS (e-mail dated 27 March 2006, sent by Robert J. Wilson to Judy Porter who kindly forwarded it to the author).

The Mandarin Jet:

Another jet aircraft should be mentioned here, although it was never operated by Air America: Convair 880-22M B-1008, c/n 22-00-44, the famous *Mandarin Jet*, which was owned by Air Asia, but operated only by Civil Air Transport on international schedules out of Taipei all the time (Aircraft status as of 7 July 64, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1; Aircraft status as of 1 November 65, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1; Aircraft status as of 8 April 66, in: UTD/Kirkpatrick/B1F1; Aircraft status as of 4 May 66, in: UTD/Hickler/B1F2). During this

time it was often used by Air America personnel who flew to Hong Kong for recreation. On the video tape made by Ed Eckholdt there are many photos showing Air America people sitting relaxed in the *Mandarin Jet* on their way to Hong Kong. The aircraft was acquired by Air Asia/CAT on 12 July 61 and had only few accidents. An in-flight separation of the cowling resulted in minor damage over Taipei on 23 October 62 (Aircraft accidents 1962, in: UTD/CIA/B49F2), but it was easily repaired. Photos of the *Mandarin Jet* can be found in: *Air Pictorial*, Aug. 64, p. 241, in: *Airliners*, summer 93, p. 15, in: UTD/Foster/B1; in: *Skyliners* 3, p. 80, on the video tape made by John Tarn at 0.01.30 minutes, and on UTD/Kirkpatrick slide A 5542, taken at Taipei on 3 August 64. In January 1968 the *Mandarin Jet* was sold to Cathay Pacific Airways, Hong Kong, as VR-HGA.



CAT Convair 880M B-1008 (*The Mandarin Jet*) at Taipei in the early sixties
(UTD/Foster/B1)

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