Palestine Aerophilately: World War I - 1948

A. Purpose of the Exhibit

This aerophilately exhibit shows the breadth of aviation-related mail for the entire period of British influenced Palestine. Included are its conquest and Military rule by the Egyptian Expeditionary Force (E.E.F.), followed by the League of Nations Mandated Civilian Administration Government of Palestine, through May 1948. The end of the Mandate was marked by the withdrawal of British governance, closure of external air links, and simultaneous pioneering aviation efforts in what would become early Israeli commercial air links and the Israel Air Force. Postal history can document each of these facets.

Palestine was a significant cross-roads for British trade within the Empire, as changes in aviation technology made air expedited transport possible. Air links through the Middle East initially focused on connecting Great Britain with India, and then expanded to include Australia. The value of this transit point of commerce to the British is apparent from the efforts expended to uphold the Mandate, despite outbreaks of major domestic strife in each decade of rule. This required the continuous presence of British Forces, and the unresolved conflicts of the day continue to play out in the daily news now, some 60 years later. Again, available postal history captures each aspect of these historical points.

B. Challenge Factor

This exhibit represents the culmination of over 15 years of avid collecting of this specialty, with some 10 years of serious efforts at acquisition of the best available materials for each field represented. Sales of the collections of Groten and Van As also helped expand the depth and breadth of this exhibit, as this freed many long held pieces. Wherever possible, commercial mail is utilized. Philatelic flight covers are kept limited in number, and used only to illustrate a particularly important route or time point in a route's development.

C. What is Presented

The exhibit begins with early military period mail of aviation units of the Allies and Central Powers. Mail from British (including a small number of Australians), and German units is shown, including all known squadrons on both sides. Next shown is use of airmail by the E.E.F. to communicate between bases, due to turmoil in Egypt that affected communication with Forces in Palestine. Next is the development of trans-Middle East Cairo-Baghdad route, initially by RAF pilots, then as a part of Imperial Air. Imperial expanded connections from Baghdad, on to India and later Australia. The development of links with other international carriers is next shown, followed by the sole domestic carrier, Palestine Airways. Next shown are interrupted mail, Military mail, WWII re-routings of mail, and re-establishment of routes post-war. Mail to illustrate late use of Lydda airport, prior to the end of the Mandate, and early Jewish semi-official foreign links to the outside (prior to Israel's independence) is shown, followed by clandestine mail linking Jewish settlements and the underground military of the Haganah.

This exhibit matches the well known Palestine aerophilately exhibit of the late Fred Blau, except for a couple of unique private flight items, and extends the field by coverage of the early military aviation period (both Allies and Central Powers), expansion of route coverage, and expanded Catapult and Zeppelin coverage. This exhibit also benefited tremendously from the research subsequent to Blau's exhibit by Tom Broyles and Art Groten, referenced below. I am preparing additional information for publication, based on research in the extensive archives of the Museum of Flight, Boeing Field, Seattle.

D. Organization

See attached title page for the exhibit plan.

E. Material Highlights

A few of the exhibit highlights are:

One of the few known single circle postmarks of the "Egyptian Expeditionary Force [EEF] Aerial Post," on thrice re-used Official Mail envelope (remarkable also for a boxed EEF handstamp).

Original correspondence from the RAF base in Baghdad, directed to the Postmaster General of England, in regards to the development of the Cairo-Baghdad air link. Included is a note from the officer in Cairo that received the mail, with

official comments in regards to the lack of success of the flight in regards to its duration. (These astounding attempts by RAF pilots pre-automated instruments of navigation, required low level flying [to visualize a road made through desert terrain] and refueling, including in Palestine).

Earliest known first flight cover of Palestine, Jerusalem to Baghdad, by RAF carrier on Cairo-Baghdad route (See comments in Sacher's <u>Mandate Palestine</u> chapter on Jerusalem, and the confirmatory RAF flight listings in Proud's <u>Postal History of Iraq</u>).

A cover for the second or third possible RAF flight after addition of the Palestine stop, bearing the same very scarce "Air Mail" handstamp is also shown (Recorded Proud, 2006).

First Flight of the Trans-Desert Service of the RAF, from Palestine to Iraq.

Palestine Airways Haifa – Tel Aviv internal air covers.

Czech May 1948 air mail to Palestine, via Haifa airport arrival (Lod closed).

Jewish Underground Haganah flight covers, via clandestine landing strips in British Palestine, including one marked "Secret" to command in the Negev.

Catapult flight mail of the SS Bremen to Palestine

New discovery, LZ-127 Orient Flight **Jaffa "wild drop" mail** (Dieter Leder certificate, 2007), one of two known. Unlisted in Sieger or Blau.

Tel Aviv and Jerusalem LZ-127 Orient Flight "wild drop" mail.

LZ-127 Orient Flight cover to Baghdad, via the Imperial Air Cairo – Baghdad route.

LZ-127 South American Flight covers, originated in Palestine.

LZ-127 Chicago flight cover.

LZ-127 Hindenburg cover, unlisted Sieger.

F. Informational Sources

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