

South American flying adventure:

Trip update #1

Editor's note: As promised, Vancouver Controllers Hans Sturm and Lawrence McLeod and friend Peter Kaushakis have filed the first report on their trip to South America, flying in a Cessna 210. Sturm e-mailed this trip update to Doug Cook of the Vancouver ACC, in early February.)

Day one

Due to the weather, we got off to a late start in departing from Langley to Bellingham, Wash. After clearing customs, taking on fuel and oxygen, we departed IFR to Jerome County Airport, Idaho. Flight was smooth, at 13,000 feet and no ice.

From Jerome County to St. Johns Industrial Airpark, Arizona, we went IFR at 13,000, but cancelled our destination about two hours into the trip, because of the dark and poor weather conditions. We ended up landing in Winslow, Arizona, where the temperature was -6 degrees on arrival and -10 degrees upon waking up in the morning.

Day two

We arrived at the Winslow airport at 7:30 a.m. There was frost on the airplane and we needed to pre-heat or wait. Around 9 a.m., someone showed up with a heater and got us going. We flew VFR to St. Johns, to get fuel and flight plan to Mexico.

The weather in Chihuahua, Mexico, was -3 degrees with low cloud. With Juarez in snow, we decided to head for Hermosillo instead, which was out of our way, but at least clear.

After one hour in the air we refilled for Culiacan, and arrived three hours later.

Once we had finished with the airport paperwork, it was too late to get to Puerto Escondido, so we decided to spend the night in Culiacan.

After visiting the Control Tower and passing out a NAV CANADA hat and tee-shirt, we were offered a ride into town, where they booked a room for us. Two Controllers joined us for a beer later that evening and we made some new friends.

Día tres

Up at 6 a.m., we arrived at the airport at 7:30. It took almost one and a half hours to flight plan, and pay landing, parking and airspace fees. We flight planned Culiacan to Puerto Escondido, a 780 nm flight, to meet up with Peter (Kaushakis), the owner of CGHFM (the Cessna they are flying).

VFR was good until Guadalajara, after which we required IFR. Shortly after reaching 15,000 feet, we picked up half an inch of clear ice, with the temperature at -1 degree. We got lower, and about five minutes later, it all came off at 14,000 feet. We cancelled IFR and landed at Puerto Escondido after a five hour flight.

The temperature was 32 degrees, so I finally put my ski-jacket in the back of the airplane. We are now one day behind schedule and haven't received our authorization for Panama yet.

Día cuatro

After *desayuno* (breakfast) and assembling some furniture for Peter and Linda, we got airborne at 12:30 p.m., flying VFR direct to Tapachula with Capitan Pedro at the wheel and co-pilot McLeod helping with the chores.

This was our first day of headwinds. After a two-hour flight to Tapachula, we were greeted by Controllers on arrival and paid a short visit to the Tower. The airport *Comandanta* arranged an overflight of Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua, and landing in Costa Rica.

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We departed at 3 p.m., encountering more headwinds almost the entire way. Overflying Guatemala was strikingly green and lush, not at all like Mexico.

Over El Salvador, we were requested to file IFR, and complied. Although we didn't have approach plates for Liberia, Costa

Rica, the weather was forecast to be good and we had the approach in the Garmin data base.

We had the choice of landing either in Managua, Nicaragua, or Costa Rica, so it was clear what we would do. We finally received our clearance over Nicaragua to climb to 9,000 and were handed off to Costa Rica control.

No sooner had we contacted Costa Rica, when we were cleared back to 5,000 and did a Visual following a Continental B737. The Tower guys (in San Jose, Costa Rica) invited us up and booked a room for us at a downtown hotel. Although it was cheap (U.S. \$32 for the three of us), it was noisy and not too clean. It looked much better after a few *cervezas* and a pizza. The wind blew all night and we were very worried about the airplane, as there were no tie-downs at the airport.

Día cinco

We got to the airport early and, after paying our fees, got airborne at 9 a.m. Landing fees were \$7 and I think the Tower guys arranged for our parking and flight plan fees. Unfortunately the passengers had to pay US\$26 departure tax, but I was luckily the pilot on this leg.

Two hours later we arrived at David, Panama. We were met by a crowd of people, first the agricultural inspector, who sprayed the airplane with small can about the size of a can of cola. Two small squirts, one in the front floor and one in the back, cost \$10. (That can must generate \$1,500 of revenue.)

dite our stay for a small fee. We didn't argue, as we still were not sure if we had permission to land in Panama. So, \$35 to the big guy, plus \$37 in other costs, and we were on our way again.

So far not one person has looked into our airplane. It was a pleasure to leave David, Panama.

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Two hours later we were on the ground in Chame, Panama, a small strip with only a couple of airplanes.

We were met by Ron Simard, who has his own hanger and practically lives at the airport. Ron has built a number of aircraft in his time and has an awesome Glasair in the hanger and is in the process of finishing a Nemesis, an absolutely wild looking machine.

Dwight Anderson, retired Tower chief from CYLW (Kelowna), picked us up and took us to our digs for the night. Then, he showed us around Coronado and the new home that he is building. Dwight seems to know everyone in Coronado. I think one day he will be the mayor. Donna Anderson cooked us a wonderful dinner and we retired for the night.

Day six (I think)

Today we flew across the Panama Canal, from the Pacific to the Atlantic, and back to Panama City. We're encountering many issues with landing in Ecuador and Peru. Apparently, Peru may require seven days notice to enter and nobody seems to know exactly what is required for Ecuador and Colombia.

The local Fixed Base Operator charged us \$175 for handling and flight planning plus \$5.60 per gallon. We finally received an

answer that an early morning departure was approved for Quito, Ecuador, with a stop at Cali for fuel.

We spent the rest of the day touring the Canal and Panama, then back to Coronado for the night.

Day seven

Up at 6 a.m. for the one hour drive to Panama and more bad news. Cost for landing in Quito is \$220, plus \$180 for the permit, and \$100 for handling. The Peru permit is \$350. We decided on Guayaquil, Ecuador, via Cali, as it might be cheaper. (The \$35 bribe at David seems like a bargain now.)

We took off at 10:30, flying 7,500 to Cali on top, headwinds all the way grounding at 130 knots, but much less than the headwinds on the ground. We had an occasional glimpse of the Colombian coast through the clouds.

The stop in Cali went fairly smoothly, with everyone extremely friendly and helpful. We had a quick tour of the tower. After finally getting our Certificate of Airworthiness back from the airport official (he forgot it in the photo copier) we were on our way to Guayaquil.

The flight to Guayaquil was three hours, at 10,500 feet on top and IFR for the last 30 minutes for the approach and landing in the dark. Too bad we didn't see any of the country until we broke out at 3,000. The airport was no problem. The officials even arranged a ride and a room at a hotel for us. We're still trying to get permission for Peru. I wonder what's in the cards for us *mañana*?

Día ocho

We agreed on a new plan in the morning: we would split up and approach this Peru thing from a few different directions. I went to the Tower to try the Controller network, while Peter and Lawrence decided to get the airplane ready and try via the airport officials.

The Controllers were very helpful. They phoned Lima for permission, but we were told to send an e-mail, then they would advise what was required. With no e-mail access in the Tower, we went back

to the airport office and e-mailed from there, but it was not received. We had to phone again, and finally faxed all the info from a cargo office at the other end of the airport.

After calling Lima again they said they had received only half of the documents. So, we faxed the missing items, called again, and our contact Ana was at lunch. We were unable to reach the Lima contact, Ana, for the rest of that day.

Oh well, try again mañana. Freddy, the airport worker who helped us with the run-around, joined us for a beer at our hotel.

Día nueve

We started the day off by phoning Lima from the hotel at 8:30. First try no answer; then we were told to call back in 20 minutes. Finally, we went to the airport to see if anything could be done from there.

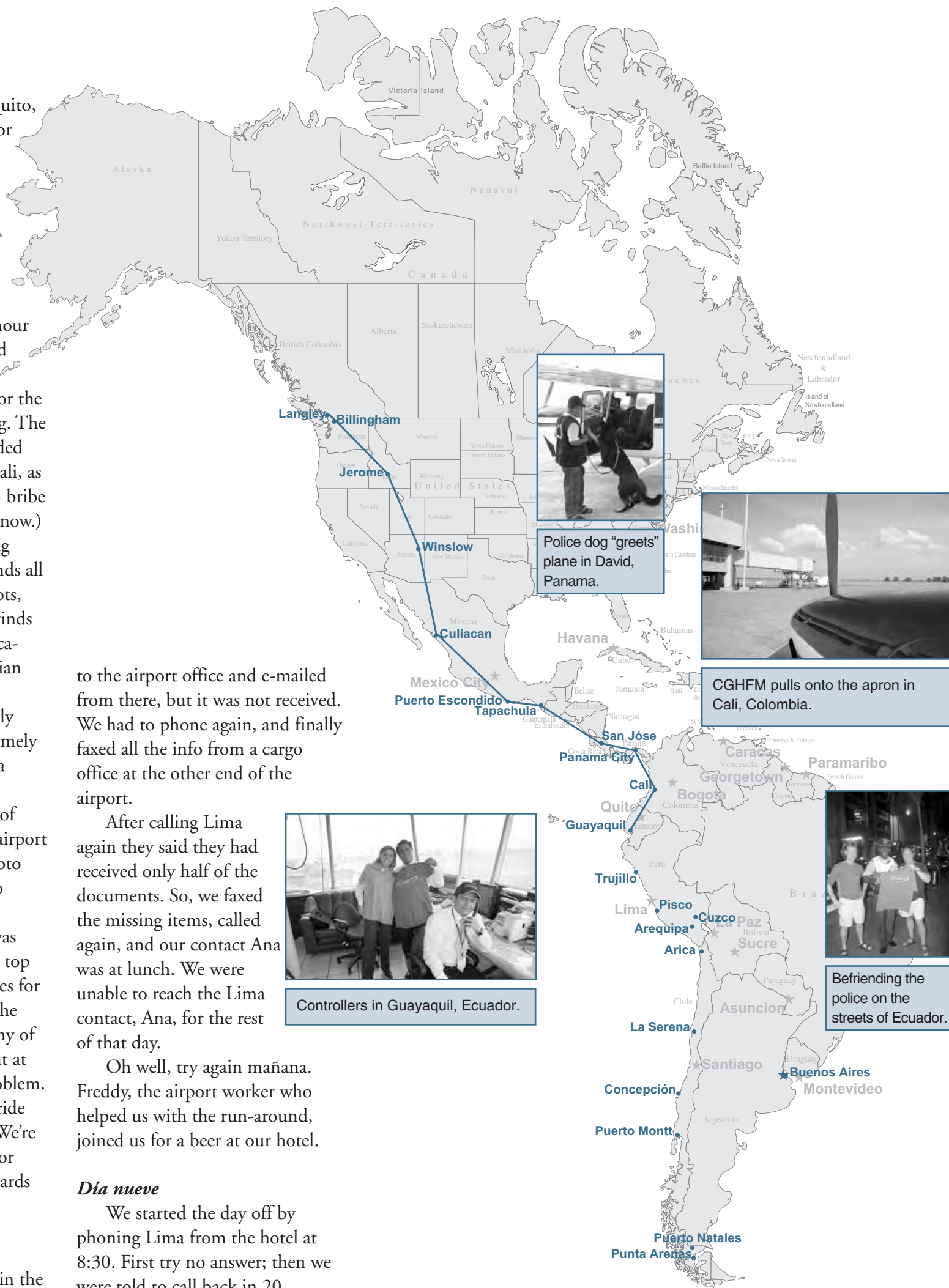
We spent most of the day trying to phone Ana, but when we did reach her she couldn't make a decision. Back to the hotel, where we tried Sky Plan in Calgary to see if they could help. They advised they would work on it and that they had dealt with Ana before.

Day ten

We are still here in Guayaquil as of 10 a.m. waiting to see what will happen. More to follow.

(Tune in next issue, when the intrepid trio manage to overcome obstacles and proceed with their itinerary. Helping to smooth the way was Jeff MacDonald, Manager, ANS Plans and Program Coordination, and Anick Powell, HR Programs

Specialist. At the outset of the expedition, the two had sought assistance from ICAO's Mexico office in providing contact information for each country. ✈



Police dog "greet" plane in David, Panama.



CGHFM pulls onto the apron in Cali, Colombia.



Controllers in Guayaquil, Ecuador.



Befriending the police on the streets of Ecuador.