

997.524/2-152
XR 837.06 XR 911.5237

FOREIGN SERVICE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Security Information
BUREAU OF
INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS
DESP. NO. 1267

FROM : AMEMBASSY, HABANA FEB 8 1952
TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.
REF : Embtel 512, January 25, 1952

February 1, 1952

AIR POUCH

PRIORITY
INFO
PSA

For Dept.
Use Only

SUBJECT: Attitude of Cuban Labor On Current Aviation Problems c

R FEB
E 7
C
D ACTION
A ARA
C
T INFO
I REP
O DCR
N OLI
E
I UNA
N
F
O CAB
COMM
FRB
LAB
NSRB

Last week the local press carried a report that the Cuban Federation of Air Workers had threatened to seize all Cuban airports as a protest against the Government's failure to take action on a number of issues in which labor is interested. Among the demands and grievances listed by the aviation workers were the following:

(a) A rapid solution of the problem created when the United States suspended the permit of Compania Cubana de Aviacion to operate a non-stop service between Habana and New York.

(b) A settlement of the labor dispute with Royal Dutch Airlines (KLM).

(c) The prohibition of the use of the Army airport at Camp Columbia by commercial airlines.

(d) The nationalization of all airports.

(e) Government intervention in Radio Aeronautica de Cuba, S.A. (RACSA).

(f) The establishment of a retirement fund for aviation workers.

(g) The compliance by all foreign airlines with Cuban social legislation.

Comment

It is interesting to note that when the labor unions desire to prod the Government into taking action along certain lines, the workers threaten to call a strike.

In the case of the suspension by the United States of Cubana's New York permit, the Cuban Government has indicated its desire to negotiate this matter with United States officials. The Embassy is informing the Cuban State Department that it is willing to carry out limited talks on this question in Habana during which the views of the Cuban Government can be communicated and United States policy explained.

RLHarrell/ecv
REPORTER(S)

RESTRICTED
Security Information

PREPARATION TIME

ACTION COPY - DEPARTMENT OF STATE

The action office must return this permanent record copy to DC/R files with an endorsement of action taken.

937.524/2-152
997.524/2-152
RECEIVED
FEB 13 1952
RP

The dispute between KLM and the union is about a collective labor contract and the establishment of a check-off system.

The two Cuban airlines, Aerovias "Q" and Cuba Aeropostal, which operate from the Army airport at Camp Columbia, do not employ union labor. The Cuban Federation of Air Workers wishes the Government to prohibit these companies from using Camp Columbia and to force them to use Rancho Boyeros where union labor is employed. On the day the aviation workers declared they were going to seize the airports (January 28, 1952), a Presidential Decree appeared in the Official Gazette ordering all commercial operations at Camp Columbia to cease in ten months.

The three largest airports in Cuba (Rancho Boyeros, Camaguey and Santiago) are owned by Pan American Airways. Compania Cubana de Aviacion operates these fields for PAA and in addition, owns and operates a number of small airports throughout Cuba. The Municipality is constructing a new, modern international airport at Santiago. The labor union would like to have all these airports nationalized.

The two airlines, Aerovias "Q" and Cuba Aeropostal, that operate from Camp Columbia employ non-union operators for their own radio network. These two companies do not use the facilities of Radio Aeronautica de Cuba (RACSA), which employs union operators to provide radio service for all the other airlines that operate in Cuba. Last August RACSA employees were successful in persuading the Government to close the teletype circuit which National Airlines operates from Rancho Boyeros to its city offices in Habana and Miami. After remaining closed for almost four months, the Government finally authorized National Airlines to reopen the circuit which RACSA employees had hoped they would be permitted to operate.

Despite these threats by the Cuban Federation of Air Workers, the Embassy is of the opinion that the situation will remain quiet for the time being, or at least until a final decision is reached on the question of direct flights between Habana and New York. However, in the event that the CAB does not relax the conditions in the New York permit which Cubana officials consider excessively restrictive and which would reportedly prevent the airline from starting the non-stop service between Habana and New York, the labor union may call a serious and crippling strike which would tie up all operations at Rancho Boyeros. The Embassy understands that Cubana has promised its airport workers an increase in salaries as soon as the company improves its financial condition by starting the New York flights and, if these raises are denied them it is likely that they will declare a strike as they have threatened.

For the Ambassador:

Raymond L. Harrell
Raymond L. Harrell
Attache