

Colombian SCADTA airmail stamps on Dutch mail
by Hans Kremer



Note: Just to be clear, I do not own any of the illustrations shown in this article. Nearly all of them were supplied by Bernd Woehlbrandt.

In the CherryStone auction on March 2007 I noticed a cover, very similar, but of lesser quality, to the one shown here. It was described as: "Colombia Air Post handstamped "H" in violet.....".

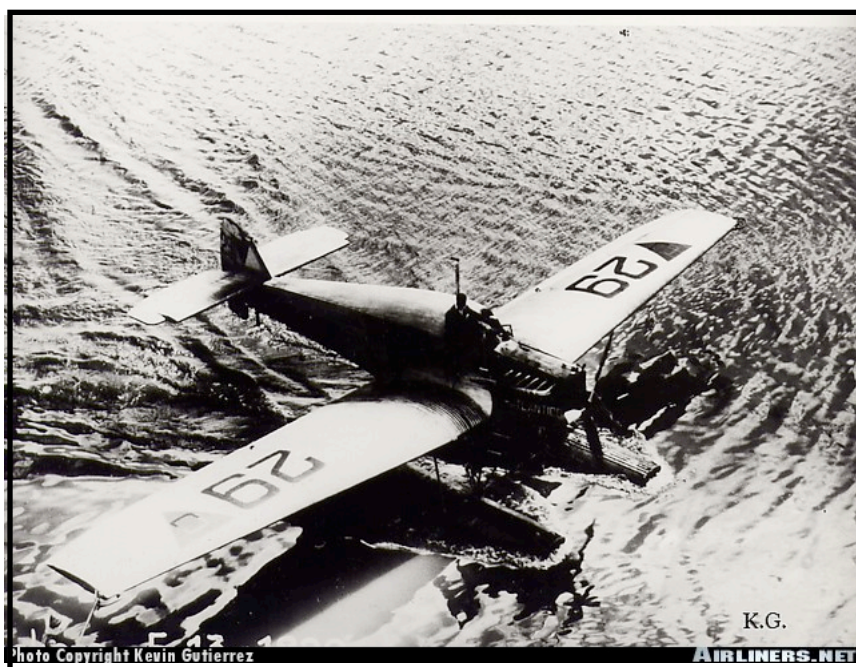
What struck me about that cover was that it was offered as a Dutch cover, but that it had not only Dutch stamps on it, but also stamps from Colombia, which also were cancelled in the Netherlands (just like the cover shown here). How could that be?



I had seen these "H" overprinted stamps before and knew that they were issued by a company named "SCADTA" but I never had paid much attention to these. This time however, I decided to do some research on the Internet to see what I could find out about SCADTA. Going to www.google.com and typing in SCADTA resulted in about 22,000 hits, way too many of course to check them all out. Next I narrowed the search to SCADTA combined with Holland, which brought it down to roughly a thousand hits. Still too many. Next search entered was SCADTA H Holland, which still resulted in 680 hits. I decided that this would be a manageable number, especially taking into account that the first 100 hits probably would include everything I needed to know, or at least would put me on the right track. After checking out various sites I felt that the following would do to describe what SCADTA was about: <http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Avianca>.

“SCADTA (1919 - 1940)

The airline traces its history back to December 5, 1919, in the city of Barranquilla, Colombia. Germans Werner Kämmerer, Stuart Hosie, Alberto Tietjen, and Colombians Ernesto Cortissoz (the first President of the Airline), Rafael Palacio, Cristóbal Restrepo, Jacobo Correa, and Aristides Noguera founded the Colombo-German Company called Sociedad Colombo-Alemana De Transportes Aéreos, or SCADTA for short. The company accomplished its first flight between Barranquilla and the nearby town of Puerto Colombia aboard a Junkers F13 wherein 57 pieces of mail were transported; the flight was piloted by German Helmuth Von Krohn. This and another aircraft of the same type were completely mechanically constructed monoplanes, the engines of which had to be modified in order to be able to efficiently operate in the climatic conditions of the country; there were nine aircraft in the fleet with a total range of 850 km (525 Mi) and could carry up to four passengers and two crewmen. Due to the topographic characteristics of the country, and the lack of airports at the time, two floats were adapted to the Junkers aircraft in order for them to accomplish water landings on the rivers of different towns. Using these floats Helmuth Von Krohn was able to perform the first inland flight over Colombia on October 20, 1920, following the course of the Magdalena River; the flight took eight hours and had to make four emergency landings on the water.



SCADTA's Junkers F13 "Atlantico" on the Magdalena River

Soon after the vision of the founding group had become a reality, German scientist and philanthropist Peter von Bauer became interested in the airline and contributed general knowledge, capital, and a tenth aircraft for the company as well as obtaining concessions from the Colombian government to operate the country's airmail transportation division using the airline. This new contract allowed SCADTA to thrive in a new frontier of aviation. By the mid 1920s, SCADTA, having overcome many obstacles, inaugurated its first international routes that initially covered destinations in Venezuela and the United States. Regrettably, in 1924, the aircraft that both Ernesto Cortissoz and Helmuth Von Krohn were piloting crashed into an area currently known as Bocas de Ceniza, in Barranquilla, causing their deaths. Despite this tragedy the airline continued to thrive under the guidance of German Peter von Bauer until the early 1940s where circumstances related to the outbreak of World War II forced him to sell his shares in the airline to the U.S. owned Pan American World Airways."

This site however, did not go into any detail about the airmail service SCADTA provided. For that we can go to: <http://www.aerogramme.com/exhibits/scadtaps/ExhPg01.htm>:

“SCADTA Postal Stationery

Columbia’s early domestic airmail service was provided by private organizations. The Sociedad Colombo-Alemana de Transportes Aéreos, or “SCADTA”, began operations on October 19, 1920 and acquired an exclusive airmail contract by the end of the year. This exclusive contract lasted just over 11 years, running out on January 1, 1932.

Under the contract, all mail carried by air required franking by airmail stamps, printed and sold by SCADTA. SCADTA was permitted to own and operate its own post offices throughout Colombia. The SCADTA franking paid only the air part of the service within Colombia. Mail originating in Colombia also required franking with Colombian National Government postage appropriate to the particular service. Mail originating elsewhere required proper postage to pay transit to Colombia and SCADTA franking for air service within Colombia.”

By now I had a pretty good idea what SCADTA and the overprinted stamps were about, but of course once you are getting the basics down you’ll try to find out more. Looking at a map of Colombia you’ll notice that the port of entry for mail coming from Europe would be Barranquilla in the Caribbean Sea. Since Colombia is a very rugged country, travel by surface would be very time consuming so SCADTA’s airmail service greatly reduced travel time, in some cases from a week (!) to a couple of hours!

Having ‘exhausted’ my Google SCADTA searches it occurred to me that there might be an organization of stamp collectors who have Colombia as their main interest. Back to Google and so I came to www.copaphil.org, where it reads: “.....The purpose of COPAPHIL is to promote the philately of Colombia and Panama”.

I contacted COPAPHIL and Thomas (Tom) Myers, secretary and Copacarta editor, in particular has been very helpful. He pointed me to other literature available, such as the Sanabria catalogue (The World Airmail Catalogue), a copy of which of the 1966 version I found in the Western Philatelic Library (www.fwpl.org) in Sunnyvale, California, as well to the Michel stamp catalog, which I found less useful.

The overprints were for easier identification and control purposes. The complete list is as follows: A = Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia, A-U= Argentina-Uruguay, B=Belgium, Bo=Bolivia, Br=Brazil, C=Cuba, Ca=Canada, Ch=Chile, CR=Costa Rica, D=Denmark, E=Spain, EU=United States, F=France, G.B.=Great Britain, H=Netherlands or Netherlands Antilles, I=Italy, P=Panama and Canal Zone, Pe=Peru, S=Switzerland and Liechtenstein, Su=Sweden, and V=Venezuela.

I noticed that “H” was not only used in the Netherlands but for the Netherlands Antilles as well, but once one realizes that Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao are just off the coast of Venezuela and thus not far from Colombia there most likely was a fair amount of correspondence between at least Curaçao and Colombia. As you will read later, the Netherlands Antilles had a prominent role during SCADTA’s earlier days

By now I thought I had pretty much exhausted the subject until I got another idea. With the German background of these Scadta stamps maybe more could be found out about all of this in Germany. So back to Google, this time typing in “SCADTA Deutschland” to see what came up, and that’s how I got to www.scadta.de, a beautiful and very extensive Website devoted to SCADTA in all its aspects. It is set up and maintained by Bernd Woehlbrandt. This site is in German, which brings with it some translation problems, but after going thru the Website a couple of times things fall into place and one then realizes how extensive the Scadta subject is. Bernd shows all kinds of material that belongs in an Scadta collection. For this article (which is about the ‘Dutch’ Scadta stamps only) there is information I did not find anywhere else. I contacted Bernd (what a wonderful tool email is!) and will share what I learned from him.

Bernd has a nice series of spreadsheets showing on which Colombian stamps the various overprints (listed by country) can be found.

What I found for the “H overprint is this:

Year of Issue:

1921 (Perf: 11 1/2)	(Eleven Denominations (5 c thru 5 P))	Hand cancelled H in violet and black
1923 (Perf 14)	(Twelve denominations (5 c thru 20 R))	Hand cancelled H in violet and black (red only on the 30 c and 5 P denominations)
1923 (Perf 14)	(Twelve denominations (5 c thru 20 R))	Machine cancelled H in black.

Also listed are the number of overprinted stamps on the 1923 issue. For the “H” stamps the total is 13,575 stamps, of which 4,750 were of the 30 cent (the most common) denomination. Spread out over all countries the total number of overprinted stamps on the 1923 issue comes to 731,500, with about 116,000 of these with the EU (United States) initials.



L to R: Handcanceled H on 1921 issue, 1923 issue, and machine canceled H on 1923 issue

De frankeering van den luchtposttoeslag voor briefzendingen naar Columbia en voor brief- en pakketzendingen naar Ecuador geschiedt nog steeds met de in de Agentschappen der Koninklijke Luchtvaart Maatschappij voor Nederland en Koloniën te s'Gravenhage, Hofweg 9; te Amsterdam, Leidsche Plein of te Rotterdam, Coolsingel 115, verkrijgbare SCADTA-Luchtpostzegels.	
De luchtposttoeslagen naar alle plaatsen in Columbia bedragen:	
voor briefzendingen, voor elke 20 gram of gedeelte daarvan	30 cts.
voor briefkaarten	15 "
voor drukwerken, papiers de commerce, monsters zonder waarde, warenmonsters enz., voor elke 20 gram of gedeelte daarvan	15 "
voor kosten van aantekenen per aangeteckende zending	20 "
De luchtposttoeslagen naar alle plaatsen in Ecuador bedragen:	
voor briefzendingen, voor iedere 20 gram of gedeelte hiervan	30 cts.
voor briefkaarten	15 "
voor drukwerken, papiers de commerce, monsters zonder waarde, warenmonsters, enz., voor elke 20 gram of gedeelte daarvan	15 "
voor pakketten per 300 gram of gedeelte daarvan	1.50 pes.
voor kosten van aantekenen per aangeteckende zending	20 cts.

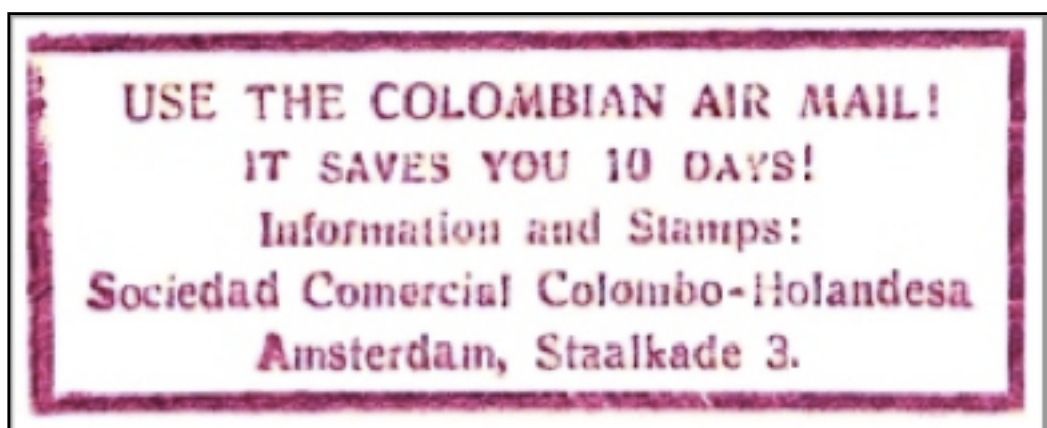
In F.J. van Beveren's publication I found the following 1929 PTT announcement. It gives instructions on how to use these stamps, where to buy them, as well as the airmail surcharges for mail to destinations in Colombia and Ecuador.

The announcement points out that franking to pay for the airmail surcharge in Colombia and Ecuador is still to be made with the SCADTA-airmail stamps, which can be obtained at the K.L.M. agents' offices located at Hofweg 9, 's Gravenhage; Leidsche

Plein, Amsterdam and Coolsingel 115, Rotterdam. The airmail surcharge for letters to all destinations in Colombia was 30 cents per 20 grams; for postcards it would be 15 cents, printed matter 15 cents per 20 grams, and an additional 20 cent for registered mail.

Stamps with the overprint 'H' were sold at the K.L.M. offices in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and The Hague, as well at the Colombian Consulates in the Netherlands and the Dutch West Indies. Since these overprinted stamps were primarily being sold at Colombian Consulates overseas, they are often referred to as "Consular Stamps".

*Stickers to promote the use
of SCADTA stamps*



It should be pointed out that not only the overprinted Scadta stamps could be used, but also the not overprinted ones.

When the Scadta service first started the sender had to use two envelopes to send a letter using the Colombian airmail service. On the outer envelope one had to write "To SCADTA, Barranquilla, Colombia" and one had to use the regular stamps of one's country for this (in our case that would have been Dutch stamps).

For the enclosed envelope, with its Colombian address, one had to use the consular (Scadta)-stamps (30 Centavos for each 20 grams and so on). When the envelope arrived at Barranquilla Scadta opened the outer envelope and then took out the inner envelope. Then Scadta personnel had to put the regular domestic rate Colombian stamps on this cover at their own expense! (the contract with the Colombian government said: Scadta-stamps had to be combined with regular stamps!). This system is referred to as the "Two-Cover-System".

The next page shows an example of such an enclosed (rare) Dutch cover.



Cover which was enclosed in another cover. Outside cover sent from Amsterdam to Barranquilla, then opened and cover was then sent 17-XII-1925 to its final destination (by air) after the 4 cent Colombian stamp (paying for the domestic rate) was added.

After a short time Scadta made arrangements with some countries to simplify the system. Some dates are : Switzerland (1923-07-15), Germany (1923-09-01), USA (1925-06-01), and the Netherlands (1926-06-28). So the Dutch could from then on use only one cover using Dutch stamps for the sea journey to Barranquilla and the Scadta-Consular-Stamps for the airmail part within Colombia. This is called the 'One-Cover-System'.

The last way to simplify these system was: The Dutch could use Dutch stamps only, but when that happened is not known to me. The first countries to use the simple system were Germany: 1926-12-06, and USA 1931-06-15.

After having described the basic Scadta information the reader might want to enjoy some other Scadta covers plus the history behind them.

Dutch auctioneer Wiggers De Vries in the auction catalog of March 2008 shows the following cover:



The description was as follows:

“1930 **SCADTA** cover , Sent 8 september 1930 to Bolivia. Arrival 30 october 1930. Two Bolivian stamps and a 12 1/2 cent Dutch stamp. Cancelled Eindhoven N.V.Philips and Servicio De Transportes Aereos Barranquilla”

The reference to Bolivia threw me off at first. A closer look at the 30 cent stamp reads along the top: “Servicio Bolivariano”, which indeed looks like we are dealing with a Bolivian stamp. However, this is not the case. In the late 1920s SCADTA began using the name “Servicio Bolivariano de Transportes Aéreos” in its marketing, referring to the great liberator of South America Simón Bolívar. So, this is a Colombian stamp, as is the R overprinted stamp (the R in this case stands for Registrado (registered mail); it is not referring to a country ‘R’).

If we take a closer look at this cover we’ll notice that there are no “H” stamps on it, but it is still (correctly) referred to as a Scadta cover. The two Colombian stamps, the (blue) 30 centavos, and (red) 20 centavos stamp (overprinted with an R), are indeed Scadta stamps. In 1929 the letter overprinted stamps had been replaced by these types of stamps.

In the Scott catalog for Colombia we’ll find these stamps described as:

“For International Airmail 1929, June 1

This issue was sold abroad for use on correspondence to be flown from coastal to interior points of Colombia. Cancellations are those of the country of origin rather than Colombia.”

The ‘R’ overprinted stamp paid for the extra 20 centavos registration fee. Since only one 30 centavos stamp was attached the ‘Philips’ letter must have weighted less than 20 grams. 12 1/2 cent was the regular surface mail rate from the Netherlands to foreign destinations during the 1930s.

Now let's have a look at a very rare registered Curaçao SCADTA cover, sent during October 1930 from Willemstad (Curaçao) to Bogotá, Colombia.



Cover sent September 30, 1930 from Curaçao to Bogotá, Colombia. Franked with a 30 cent Scadta stamp, a registered mail Scadta stamp and 85 cents total in Netherlands Antilles stamps.

Aruba/Curaçao and SCADTA

From: <http://www.arubaaviation.com/history.html>

“The coming of SCADTA

In 1923 SCADTA, which was later renamed Avianca, started planning for some routes to the north, namely the U.S, but it realized that fuel and rest stops needed to be made in the Caribbean.

Preparations started in Curaçao where they planned to operate from. Even some small islands were bought by their representative on that island. The idea was to land and dock at the lagoon behind Willemstad, named Schottegat.

Because of several problems in Colombia this was delayed. It was in 1924 when SCADTA and Condor signed an agreement that these plans started taking shape again. Condor had two Italian built Dornier Wall hydro aircrafts at their disposal which were transported via cargo ships to Curaçao. Once in Curaçao these two flying boats, named "Pacífico" and "Atlántico" had to be assembled.

On April 8th 1925 test flights were made from Barranquilla to Curaçao and La Guaira with the "Pacífico", which had an Italian registration namely "I-DOOR". Four local flights were also carried out over Curaçao which cost \$20 p.p. The Pacífico also carried out the first Airmail flights from Curaçao connecting the island with La Guaira & Maracaibo. Passengers were also accepted on these flights for a hefty \$70 for persons which weighted 70 kilos or less (each additional kilo meant an extra \$1!).

On July the 4th 1925 Aruba finally got the chance to see the Pacífico which came from Curaçao. It landed at Paardenbaai (Oranjestad) with governor Brandtjes on board.

Emotions & expectations on the islands were high but sadly just a couple of weeks later in August 1925 SCADTA changed plans and reassigned the planes for a test flight via Central Americato the USA and so removed the Dornier's from the islands. These test flights with the initial plan to open a U.S. route from Colombia were blocked by the U.S. government. SCADTA later re-assigned the "Pacífico" to fly the Panama-Barranquilla-Curacao route and so the SCADTA continued to operate from Curaçao for the next couple of years. However they encountered several obstacles during that time including an incident with the "Pacífico" and Paraguana. Details or where abouts of the aircraft is still unknown. SCADTA later dropped their operation in Curaçao which were later picked up by the emerging PanAm & KLM. Avianca which is still in service today, is the second oldest airline only to KLM and is in any case the oldest airline in the Americas. It was founded in 1919 by German and Colombian industrialists. One could fairly say that it is the airline that has served the islands of Aruba and Curaçao for a longer period of time than any other airline in the world.

For additional Curaçao covers have a look at: http://web.me.com/scadta/Scadta-Philatelie/Konsular_curacao.html

I would like to thank Bernd Woehlbrandt for his enthusiastic help and expert advice and him graciously supplying me with nearly all of the illustrations shown in this article.

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