# AIR PICTORIAL

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## **Aviation in Costa Rica**

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LESSER KNOWN LANDS — I

### **Aviation in Costa Rica**

by M. J. Hardy

This is the first of a series of articles dealing with civil and military aviation in lesser known lands, a feature of which will be the incorporation of the civil registers of the countries in question.

BORDERING PANAMA on the west, the Republic of Costa Rica takes its name from the Spanish for "rich coast" and although the smallest of the five countries making up the Central American Common Market (the others are Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala), Costa Rica has a strong mercantile and trading tradition, producing a sound economy which, allied to a stable political environment in a region noted for revolutionary upheavals, has provided a sound base for the growth of aviation. As one of the world's richest coffee-producing areas (56 per cent of the crop was exported in 1962), and with bananas, cacao, cattle and meat as other staple exports, the country's chief imports are manufactures and machinery.

These basic facts, with the emphasis they have placed on air transport (more particularly, in recent years, small taxi and charter operators) and aerial agriculture, have shaped the composition and size of the country's civil register, which now totals 145 aircraft—a total which, in terms of numbers if not size and speed, is actually just larger than that of Pakistan.

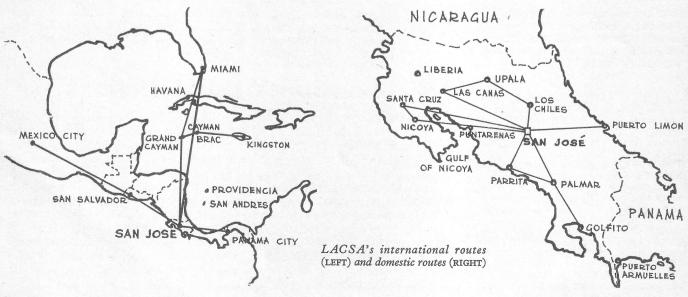
The mountains which stretch down the length of Costa Rica provided a further incentive to air transport's expansion, particularly before the war when surface communications were not so well developed; the capital, San José, is situated over 3,200 ft. up in a fertile central plateau in the Cordillera Central and is often showered with ash from the 11,500-ft.-high active volcano of Irazu to the east. Before the war the grass airfield of La Sabana near the city centre was the hub of air services, but this has now been superseded by the jet-standard El Coco International airport 11 miles to the west.

LACSA's first BAC One-Eleven, TI-1056C
"El Tico", at San Salvador on its way to
Mexico City. It carries the red, white and
blue national flag on the rear fuselage and
Carretas (traditional Costa Rican farm cart
wheel) badge on the fin (Photos: Peter V.
Clegg unless stated otherwise)

By 1938 there were already three domestic operators and the register had grown to sixteen aircraft-more at this time than several other much larger Latin American countries such as Chile and Peru. Aerovias Nacionales Empresa Roman Macaya, a nationally owned and subsidised carrier, was operating from San José to Santa Cruz, to San Isidro and other domestic points with four Curtiss Kingbird D.2s, three Travel Airs and a Continental biplane, the latter replacing a Waco UEC owned previously. Empresa Nacional de Transportes Aereos was the most important of the three, with a network linking San José to Santa Cruz, Porto Jiminez, Nicoya, San Ramon, Ananagua and Villa Quesada, and with an international route from San José to David in the Republic of Panama. Equipment consisted of a Ford Trimotor, a Pratt & Whitney Hornet-powered American Pilgrim 100-A highwing monoplane (one of the earliest production transports to be fitted with freight-loading doors), and four Travel Airs, one of these being a Travel Air 6000A. The third of the pioneer air lines was Transportes Aereos Costarricense which operated a pair of Boeing 40B4 single-engined biplanes.

#### The TACA era

Meanwhile back in 1931, before air transport in Costa Rica had begun to develop, a New Zealander called Lowell Yerex had formed TACA (Transportes Aereos Centro-Americanos) in Honduras, originally to develop air freighting and to provide charter and non-scheduled services in an area where surface communications were usually bad, consisting often of a few



stretches of narrow-gauge railway and rough and inadequate roads. The original TACA rapidly developed into a group of airlines which, for the next decade in particular, were Pan American's most powerful rivals in Central America. The TACA system comprised at various times subsidiaries in all the Central American republics (those in Mexico and Panama being non-operating companies) as well as in Colombia, Venezuela, Brazil and Paraguay (the Paraguayan subsidiary never started operations). Lowell Yerex also founded British West Indian Airways in 1939. But after the war TACA's influence and fortunes reached their peak and then declined until in 1949 only TACA International Airlines of El Salvador was left as an operating company under TACA control; the TACA system could not match Pan American's great financial strength and had never aspired to longhaul international routes, preferring to concentrate on domestic and regional routes, using second-hand aircraft.

In 1939 the tide of TACA expansion moved southward toward Costa Rica and the three pioneer national airlines were bought up and consolidated into a single unit known as TACA de Costa Rica S.A.; a San José-Managua (Nicaragua) route was opened on 20th October of that year with Lockheed 14s, bringing the Costa Rican capital into the TACA trunk route down the Central American isthmus. TACA de Costa Rica's fleet in 1940 consisted of three Lockheed 14s, a Curtiss Condor biplane, a Kingbird, three Ford Trimotors and two Travel Airs; this remained substantially unchanged for the next few years. As the war drew to a close and normal commercial conditions returned, Pan American started to gain footholds in TACA's territory in Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica by helping to form national airlines (respectively SAHSA, LANICA and LACSA) with the assistance of the Governments concerned and local interests; in all three cases the TACA associate in these countries succumbed to competition and was eventually taken over by the Government-backed Pan American subsidiary.



Beds, bedding, rice, sugar, insecticides and a bicycle formed a 4,000-lb. cargo for Short Skyvan G-ASZJ, flown into a jungle airstrip during a demonstration tour in Costa Rica (Photo: Short Bros. & Harland)

In Costa Rica this was Lineas Aereas Costarricenses S.A. - LACSA, formed in December 1945 with a 40 per cent Pan American financial interest, the Costa Rican Government holding 20 per cent and Costa Rican investors 40 per cent; Pan American, which provided technical and operational assistance, reduced its holding in later years to 36 per cent and later to 33 per cent. LACSA started operations in June 1946 with two DC-3s, concentrating on domestic routes and the carriage of freight, and in 1947 a joint service in pool with LANICA (Lineas Aereas de Nicaragua S.A.) from San José to Managua, the Nicaraguan capital, was started at a once-weekly frequency, while one of the domestic routes was extended across the border into Panama to the town of Puerto Armuelles, and a service to Panama City was inaugurated on 16th August 1947.

In May 1948 there was a revolution in Costa Rica from which President Figueres emerged as the winner, and as a result he disbanded the country's armed forces on 1st December of that year. Costa Rica had never, in fact, possessed an air force or naval air arm but a disconcerting consequence of the revolution for LACSA was that its entire fleet of three DC-3s was captured in the uprising, taken to Nicaragua and never returned, the airline being obliged to re-equip itself afresh,

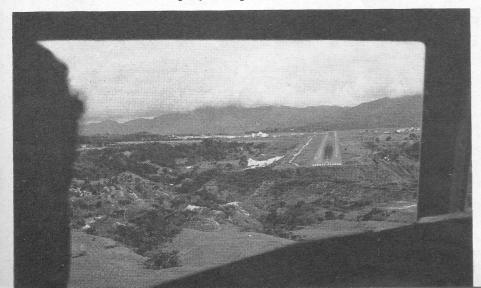
although the post-revolutionary government ultimately assumed the loss and reimbursed LACSA for the value of its missing DC-3s. By 1949 the airline had added a Curtiss C-46D, TI-1008, to its DC-3s TI-1005, '1006 and '1007, while TACA de Costa Rica had five DC-3s, TI-1000 to '1004 and a Cessna 120 TI-201. At this time two Boeing 247Ds, TI-70 and '71, together with UC-64A Norseman TI-72, were being operated by Compania Avo (Aerovias Occidentales) and another interesting veteran was the Douglas B-18B Bolo TI-205 owned by Leon Pacheco.

In 1949 LACSA was designated by the Government as the national flag carrier with a view to international expansion to the U.S.A. The following year a threeyear C.A.B. foreign air carrier permit was obtained for a San José-Miami route, Miami being served both direct and via Havana (Cuba), at first on a nonscheduled basis. Another international route to Mexico City via San Salvador (El Salvador) was also started that year. In 1954 the airline's U.S. permit was amended to add Grand Cayman in the Cayman Islands south of Cuba as an alternative stop to Havana; but the really important event of that year was the delivery, on 5th March, of the first of two Convair 340s, TI-1016C (c/n. 176), followed fourteen months later by the second, TI-1015C (c/n. 160), thus giving LACSA the competitive advantages of pressurised equipment for the first time.

#### LACSA takes over

An even more important competitive benefit had been the taking over by LACSA in 1952 of its chief competitor, TACA de Costa Rica; the latter had lost a good deal of connecting traffic through San José following the decline of the TACA system and its international operations, and had also suffered when the Government had transferred most of the airmail contracts to LACSA. The two airlines' domestic networks duplicated each other almost exactly and TACA de Costa Rica, with no international routes or Government backing, could not have survived the introduction of more advanced equipment by LACSA on important domestic sectors. Although Pan Am self-

Pilot's eye view of the approach to El Coco International Airport at San José, seen from One-Eleven TI-1056C. The approach is being made from the west, up the valley. San José itself, the capital of Costa Rica, lies beyond and to the left of the airport, on the plateau behind





One of LACSA's two DC-6Bs, TI-1017C "San José", on the apron at El Coco International Airport, San José, loading cargo for Miami

#### Costa Rica...

interest was at work here, the takeover was beneficial to Costa Rica's air transport as a whole, as it freed it from the too common Latin American pattern of a string of small and often short-lived operators, each with its handful of DC-3s or C-46s, lacking the economic advantages of scale, often under-capitalised or having to rely on ad hoc charter work and unable to stand up to the traffic inroads made by major international carriers, or to secure worthwhile traffic rights.

The way was now clear for further international expansion and in 1956 a new route to San Juan (Puerto Rico) via Panama City was started, but this proved to be uneconomic and was discontinued after a year. By this time there were four Convair services a week to Miami, two of which stopped at Grand Cayman and/or Havana, and in 1955 LACSA had been approached by the British West Indian authorities on behalf of the local community to develop services in the Cayman Island group and to Jamaica. At this time B.W.I.A., although it linked Grand Cayman to Jamaica, was losing money heavily and incurring some criticism, largely because of the number of uneconomic "social service" type inter-island routes in its network. Not surprisingly, perhaps, B.W.I.A. was unwilling to extend itself further in setting up an airline for the Caymans, and so Cayman Brac Airways Ltd. was formed in February 1955 as a wholly owned LACSA subsidiary to provide DC-3 and Beech C-45 flights initially from Grand Cayman to Cayman Brac, services to Jamaica starting in 1963. There is currently a twice-weekly DC-3 service to Kingston from Grand Cayman, Little Cayman and Cayman Brac, and a similar sector is flown by B.W.I.A. Boeing 727s as part of the Trinidad-Miami route.

This is an unusual, if not unique, instance of a British colonial airline being set up by a non-British carrier, and Grand Cayman was a very useful stop for LACSA to fall back on when the Havana call had to be abandoned following Fidel Castro's accession to power in 1958. LACSA has plans for enlarging and developing its subsidiary, possibly under the name Air Cayman, with British Government and U.S. private financial backing, and as the islands' advantages as a tax-

free area are currently being canvassed to British companies, this should be a potentially lucrative investment. The DC-3 and two Beech C-45s previously used may be replaced by Twin Otters or Herons.

In 1960 a DC-6A/B, TI-1017C, was acquired from Aramco (the Arabian-American Oil Co.), being one of a fleet of three used for regular flights of Aramco personnel from Dhahran (Saudi Arabia) to New York. A second DC-6B, TI-1018C, was leased from Pan Am on 17th September 1962 and bought outright a year later, taking over the registration used by a third, ex-United Convair 340 (c/n. 17) originally destined for reengining with Elands for Allegheny. This replaced LACSA's first Convair 340, TI-1015C, which was sold to North Central Airlines as N9706R on 7th October 1960, while TI-1016C was sold some months later to American Airmotive as N46348, and then to North Central.

#### Jet services

Following Pan Am's introduction of the Boeing 727 to the Caribbean, LACSA decided to follow TACA and LANICA in ordering the BAC One-Eleven, and this inaugurated jet services between San José and Miami on 14th May 1967, providing a 150-minute schedule and cutting two hours off the DC-6B flight time. The One-Eleven was put on to the Mexico City/San Salvador and Panama routes, and also serves Grand Cayman. Named "El Tico"—a central American colloquialism for the Costa Rican-LACSA's One-Eleven is to be joined by a second due for delivery in November this year. The C-46s will soon be due for replacement on the domestic routes by a type such as the Twin Otter or Islander; there are DC-6B freight services to Miami, and both DC-6 have freight doors.

Supplementing LACSA's domestic network and providing it with feeder traffic are no fewer than nine small air taxi and charter operators — Aerovías Cariari, TICA, ANYAS, ASCA, Viajes Especiales Aereos, Taxi Aéreo de Costa Rica, Líneas Aéreas Cañas, Aerotransportes Batalla and Agencia de Aeronaves—equipped mostly with single-engined Cessnas. Three more have graduated to scheduled feeder and third-level services. Aerovias Puntarenas S.A. (APSA) operates from the capital's old La Sabana airport to Puntarenas on

the Gulf of Nicoya and other domestic points. Aerovias del Valle Ltda., also known as AVE Airlines, began operations in December 1951 and now flies daily scheduled services from San José to a dozen other domestic points; this operator took delivery of Islander TI-1063C (c/n. 14 ex-G-AVXS and G-51-3) a year ago but this was lost in an accident at Puerto Cortes on 8th October last year. AVE Airlines carries over 2,500 passengers a month and nearly 500 tons of freight a year; the Islander was its first twin. Also operating similar services, this time from La Sabana airport, is Aerolineas al Pacifico S.A. (ALPA) which serves thirteen domestic points, including the banana plantations at Golfito.

Yet a fourth air taxi and charter operator, which began life in April 1951 as Expreso Aereo Costarricenses S.A.-EXACO when it was formed by Dr. Francisco Vanolli, has since 1966 expanded into international operations, for which it uses the title Lineas Aéreas del Caribe Ltda. Vanolli also owns Servicio Aéreo Fumigación, the country's major crop-dusting operator, as well as road transport vehicles to provide a road-cumair freight service with EXACO all over Costa Rica; C-46 freight services are also operated under contract for Pan American in Central America. International operations began with DC-3 and C-46 flights to the Colombian islands of San Andres and Providencia off the coast of Nicaragua, which are noted tourist centres. A DC-6A was bought from the U.S.A.F. for these services in mid-1967, and a second may be acquired later; the first does not appear on the current register, possibly because it is registered in the United States or on lease through a U.S. dealer. Two Beech Queen Airs were also operated in 1967 but again do not appear on the current register, while a DC-3 was sold to LACSA in July 1967 in exchange

There are plans to extend the San Andres route to Kingston (Jamaica), Port au Prince (Haiti), Ciudad Trujillo (Dominican Republic), and San Juan (Puerto Rico). Most of the traffic rights have already been obtained, and if these plans mature Lineas Aéreas del Caribe will begin to rival LACSA as an international operator. The former's general manager, Constantino Ouiros, owns his own cargo airline in the Netherlands Antilles island of Aruba. Caribichi Luchtvaart Transport (CLT), as it is called, operates cargo charters to Kingston, Miami and Curacao with a DC-4 and a C-46.

for a Curtiss C-46 and Beech C-45.

All in all, aviation, and especially air transport, has served and continues to serve the 1.3 million people of Costa Rica particularly well.

NOTE: The registration suffix letters "C", "L", "F", "P", etc., are a comparatively recent innovation and it seems probable that they denote the C. of A. category. "F" stands for "Fumigacion" or crop-spraying (i.e., an aerial work C. of A.), "C" for commercial and "P" for private.

#### COSTA RICAN REGISTER

	COSTA	A RICAN REGISTER							
Registration Type Owner									
Helicopto TI-11C TI-15L	ers Bell 47G-2 Bell 47G-2	Servicio Nacional de Helicópteros Servicio Centroamericano de Fumigación							
Single-engined Types									
TI-200C TI-219C	Cessna 182 PA-18 Super Cub	Aerovias Cariari Transportes Internos Costarricenses Aéreos— TICA							
TI-223C TI-225C TI-242P TI-252P TI-257P	Cessna 180 Cessna 180 PA-12 Super Cruiser PA-18 Super Cub Piper PA-22	Aerovias del Valle Ltda.—AVE Airlines Aerovias del Valle Ltda.							
TI-259P TI-262C	Luscombe Silvaire Model 8-F Cessna 180	Ernesto Lohrengel S.							
TI-263L	PA-II Cub Special	Transportes Internos Costarricenses Aéreos— TICA Cia. VOLTA							
TI-268P TI-271P	Aeronca Champion Cessna 180	Zaira M. de Aspinall Ernesto Lohrengel S.							
TI-272E TI-274C	PA-18 Super Cub Cessna 172	Luis Agüero J. Aerovias Cariari							
TI-277P TI-279C	Piper PA-22 Cessna 180A	Céspedes y Barboza Transportes Internos Costarricenses Aéreos—							
TI-281P	PA-18 Super Cub	TICA Dr. Fernando Cruz R.							
TI-286C TI-304C	Cessna 180 Cessna 180B	Aerovias del Valle Ltda.							
TI-306G	Cessna 180	Aerovias Nicoyanas Ltda.—ANYAS Aerovias del Valle Ltda.							
TI-308L TI-309E	PA-18 Super Cub PA-28 Cherokee	Osa Productos Forestales IACA							
TI-318F	Boeing-Stearman	Servicio Aéreo Fumigación—SAF							
TI-323P TI-324C	Cessna 180D Cessna 180E	Fabio Pacheco Aerovias del Valle Ltda.							
TI-325P	Cessna 172	Carlos Saalau							
TI-326C TI-327C	Cessna 180B Cessna 185	Expreso Aereo Costarricense Inversiones Lutz							
TI-338L	Cessna 182	Standard Fruit Co.							
TI-339L TI-341F	Cessna 172 PA-25 Pawnee	Maxwell Cone Servicio Aéreo Fumigación—SAF							
TI-343P TI-344F	Cessna 182E PA-18A Super Cub	Urbina y Fernández							
TI-345P	Cessna 170	Oldemar Alvarado Luis Agüero J.							
TI-346L TI-347C	Cessna 150 Cessna 180F	Luis A. Jiménez Aerovias del Valle Ltda.							
Ti-348F	Boeing-Stearman	Aviación Agrícola							
TI-349C TI-351C	Cessna 180 Cessna 180	Inversiones Lutz Aerovias Nicoyanas Ltda.—ANYAS							
TI-352P TI-355P	Cessna 182	Dr. Randall Ferris							
TI-356F	Aeronca IIAC Chief Boeing-Stearman	Aviación Agrícola							
TI-357P TI-358C	Cessna 180 Cessna 180	Alejandro Čarrillo Aerolineas al Pacifico—ALPA							
TI-359C	Cessna 180	Expreso Aereo Costarricense							
TI-362L TI-363L	Cessna 182 Cessna 180	Piñera Americana Harbord Land Cattle							
TI-364F TI-365L	Boeing-Stearman Cessna 210C	Aviación Agrícola Cía. Ganadera Guacimal							
TI-367P TI-369L	Cessna 172 Luscombe Silvaire	Dr. Rafael Lachner Ch.							
	Model 8E	Promar (R. Law)							
TI-372L TI-373F	Cessna 180B PA-18A Super Cub	Manuel E. Guerra V. Oldemar Alvarado							
TI-375P TI-376F	Aeronca 7EC Champion PA-25 Pawnee	Joaquín Roberto Trejos M. S.N.H.							
TI-377C TI-378P	Cessna 180G	Aerovías San Carlos Ltda.—ASCA							
TI-379F	Cessna 180H	Teodoro Picado Expreso Aereo Costarricense							
TI-380L TI-381P	Cessna 180H Cessna 182H	Viajes Especiales Aereos (Daniel Calvo) Carlos MI. González A.							
TI-382C TI-383C	Cessna 180 Cessna 180H	Aerovias del Valle Ltda.							
TI-385P	Cessna 172	Aerovias Nicoyanas Ltda.—ANYAS Francisco Pereyra							
TI-386L TI-389F	Cherokee Six PA-25 Pawnee	Enrique Pozuelo Aviación Agricóla							
TI-390C TI-391C	Cessna 180H Cessna 180H	Aerovias San Carlos Ltda.—ASCA							
TI-393C	CallAir	Aerovias Nicoyanas Ltda.—ANYAS Aerofumigadora C.R.							
TI-395L TI-396P	Cherokee Cessna 182	Hacienda Bremen Lic. Aurelio Amador							
TI-397L TI-398E	PA-24 Comanche	Taxi Aéreo de Costa Rica							
TI-399C	Cessna 172H Cessna 180H	IACA Líneas Aéreas Cañas							
TI-400 TI-401F	Cessna 182H Snow S-2C-600	Agencia de Aeronaves—ADA Servicio Aéreo Fumigación—SAF							
TI-402F	Snow S-2	Servicio Aéreo Fumigación—SAF							
TI-403F TI-405A	PA-25 Pawnee PA-18 Super Cub	Servicio Aéreo Fumigación—SAF Renta Aviones Ltda.							
TI-406E TI-408F	PA-18 Super Cub Snow S-2C-600	José Ma. Crespo Servicio Aéreo Fumigación—SAF							
TI-409F	Boeing-Stearman	Aviación Agrícola							
TI-410F TI-413	PA-25 Pawnee Cherokee	S.N.H. H. T. Purdy							
TI-414E TI-415F	PA-18A Super Cub PA-25 Pawnee	Luis Agüero S.N.H.							
TI-416F	PA-25 Pawnee	S.N.H.							
TI-417L TI-418F	Cessna 180 CallAir	Aerotransportes Batalla Aerofumigadora C.R.							
TI-420F TI-421P	Cessna 188 Agwagon Maule "M-9-210C"	S.N.H. Alvaro González							
TI-423L	Cherokee	B.E.M.O.							
TI-424L TI-426F	Cessna 182J Snow S-2C-600	Cia. Music de Costa Rica Servicio Aéreo Fumigación—SAF							
TI-427 TI-429	Dornier Do 27 Cessna 177 Cardinal	Union Export							
TI-431F	PA-25 Pawnee	Agencia de Aeronaves Aviación Agrícola							







TOP: LACSA C-46A TI-1024C at Puerto Limon. CENTRE: DC-3 TI-1052C of Cayman Brac Airways at Grand Cayman (Owen Roberts Field). BOTTOM: Beech C-45G TI-1027C in LACSA colours (since sold to Coopesa) and a C-46 at El Coco

TI-432P TI-433F TI-435C	Cessna 172D PA-25 Pawnee Cherokee Six	Aviac Trans	lictor MI. Pi ión Agricol sportes Inte	Ch.  Costarricenses Aéreos—			
TI-437L TI-438L TI-449L TI-440L TI-442L TI-444L TI-445F TI-445C TI-450L TI-455L TI-452F TI-506SP TI-506SP	Cherokee Cessna 182L Cessna 182L Cherokee Six Cessna 180C Cessna 182A PA-25 Pawnee Cherokee Cessna 180A Cessna 182A Cessna 182L PA-25 Pawnee Cherokee Cessna 180B Cessna 180B Cessna 185B Cessna 185B	TICA Farmall (Jose M. Arce) James Adams Hacienda Atirro (Rojas) Inversiones 66 (Carr Pechtel) Viajes Especiales Aereos (Daniel Calvo) Distribuidora Exportadora S.A. Aviación Agrícola Aerotransportes Batalla C.E.F.A. (C. Saalau) Lineas Aéreas Cañas Hacienda La Rosita Abonos Superior (R. Gurdían) H. T. Purdy José Rotschield Ch. Gobierno de Costa Rica Gobierno de Costa Rica					
TI-509SP	Cessna 185B	Gobie	erno de Cos	sta Ric	a		
Registration Multi-eng TI-1000C	n Type ined Types Aztec	C/n.	Previous Identity		Owner reso Aereo Costarricense		
TI-1007C TI-1008C TI-1010C TI-1017C TI-1018C TI-1024C	Curtiss C-46A Curtiss C-46D Curtiss C-46D Douglas DC-6B Douglas DC-6B Curtiss C-46A	30374 33379 33348 45059 43530 180	42-96712 44-77983 44-77952 N710A N6530C TI-1009	LAC EXA LAC	SA CO SA. Named "San Jose" SA. Named "Caviari"		
TI-1025L TI-1027C TI-1028C TI-1029C	Apache Beech C-45G Beech C-45G Apache	,	43-47109	Coop Aero APSA	vías Cariari A—Aerovias Puntarenas,		
TI-1033L TI-1040L TI-1047L TI-1050L TI-1051C TI-1054L TI-1056C TI-1057L TI-1058L TI-1061C TI-1064 TI-1066L TI-1066C TI-1066C TI-1066E	Apache Douglas B-26 Cessna 310B Grumman Douglas C-47B Douglas DC-3 Aztec One-Eleven 411AY Cessna 310L Super Apache Aztec Cessna 310F Cessna 337C Douglas DC-3 Beech Baron	108		Frank Aviad Flora LAC Rawd LAC Stand Unite Aero AS Agen Asfat LAC	J. Abarca k Marshall J. ción Agrícola a de Wells SA SA SON		
.1-1000L	Descri Daron			20016	edad Ganadera El Cortez		