

MEMORY OF THE WORLD REGISTER

First flight across the South Atlantic Ocean in 1922

(Portugal)

Ref N° 2010-69

PART A – ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

1 SUMMARY

This original and unique document is made of two reports, one by Captain Gago Coutinho and the other by Captain Sacadura Cabral, both deriving from the first flight across the South Atlantic Ocean, in 1922, by floatplane, with only internal means of navigation (the Coutinho-invented sextant with artificial horizon) from Lisbon (Portugal), to Rio de Janeiro (Brazil).

This event is an important landmark in aeronautical history, and marks the use of sextant in air navigation for the very first time. Besides, it reflects the courage and bravery of Portuguese in « conquering the airspace », almost 500 years after the discovery of Brazil. Furthermore, this flight has a cultural expression, as this achievement was intended to foster the friendship between the two countries (Portugal and Brazil).

In fact, this achievement got together not only Portugal and Brasil, but also involved Spain and Cape Verde, as the floatplane touched all these territories, making it possible to say that three continents were joined by two men in one floatplane, in a mission that changed the aeronautical navigation and helped shrink the world.

2 DETAILS OF THE NOMINATOR

2.1 Name (person or organisation)

Arquivo Histórico da Marinha – Biblioteca Central da Marinha

2.2 Relationship to the documentary heritage nominated

Custodial body and owner of the document.

2.3 Contact person (s)

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3 ***IDENTITY AND DESCRIPTION OF THE DOCUMENTARY HERITAGE***

3.1 **Name and identification details of the items being nominated**

Reports, from Captain Gago Coutinho and Captain Sacadura Cabral, on the first flight across the South Atlantic Ocean, in 1922, by floatplane, from Lisboa (Portugal) to Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), had been written in Lisbon, in January, 1923. Reference, Loose paper Documentation, Flight over South Atlantic Ocean, between Lisbon and Rio de Janeiro (1919-1923).

3.2 **Description**

Soon after the flight across the North Atlantic Ocean in 1919, Lisbon had the visit of Mr. Epitacio Pessoa, President of Brazil. Regarding such visit as an opportunity, and in order to foster and promote the friendship and good relations between Portugal and Brazil, Captain Sacadura Cabral presented to the former Portuguese Navy Minister, Mr. Victor Macedo Pinto, an ambitious project: to attempt the cross by air over south Atlantic Ocean, linking the two brother nations.

This project was welcomed by Portuguese Government, and Captain Cabral was immediately commissioned to start the necessary studies to prepare such epic adventure.

Soon thereafter, Captain Sacadura, invited Captain Gago Coutinho, to help him in this venture and to perform the role of navigator.

Finally, the journey began at Lisbon, at 16:30h, March, the 30th, in 1922, on board a floatplane monomotor (Fairey F III-D MkII), specially designed for this flight, equipped with a motor Rolls-Royce, having the « call sign » Lusitânia. Captain Sacadura Cabral was the pilot and Captain Gago Coutinho the navigator.

First leg was initiated on March, the 30th, joining Lisbon to Las Palmas (Spain). On the second of April, they took off to perform the following legs:

2 April: Las Palmas – Gando
5 April: Gando – S. Vicente (Cape Vert)
17 April: S. Vicente – Praia
18 April: Praia – S. Pedro (Brazil)
11 May: Fernando Noronha
5 June: Fernando Noronha – Recife
8 June: Recife – Baía
13 June: Baía – Porto Seguro
15 June: Porto Seguro – Vitória
17 June: Vitória – Rio de Janeiro

During the flight, Captain Coutinho used an artificial horizon, adapted to a sextant, in order to measure the height of stars. The use of this instrument was a breakthrough at the time in what concerns to air navigation.

By using the sextant, Captain Coutinho proved that the precision navigation at sea, could be reached also in the air.

Despite they took more than two months to cross South Atlantic Ocean, flight time was only 62:26 minutes, and they've flown 8383 nautical miles, using 3 different floatplanes (Lusitânia, Pátria and Santa Cruz).

The journey ended in June, on the 17th, at Rio de Janeiro, where they were enthusiastically received as heroes.

They have just crossed the South Atlantic Ocean for the first time, with only internal means of navigation (the Coutinho-invented sextant with artificial horizon).

This event is an important landmark in aeronautical history, and marks the use of sextant in air navigation for the very first time. Besides, it reflects the courage and bravery of Portuguese in « conquering the airspace ». Furthermore, this flight has a cultural expression as this achievement got together not only Portugal and Brasil, but also involved Spain and Cape Verde, as the floatplane touched all these territories, making it possible to say that three continents were joined through this flight.

This document is divided into two separated parts, corresponding to the reports from both Captain Sacadura Cabral and Captain Gago Coutinho, and is the historical testimony of this event, that had an important impact in the history of air navigation, and demonstrated once again, the Portuguese contribute to the world in getting closer not only different continents, but also different nations and cultures.

The document is, overall, in a reasonable state of preservation, although a significant part of photos are in an advance state of deterioration. It is currently kept in a horizontal position in a safe.

Document has 80 sheets. Its type of paper is Bond, 70 grams and the size is 22x28 cm, with hard, blue cover.

This document has photographs, all black&white, positive, with the following dimensions (10,5x8 cm, 6,5x8,5 cm, 14x8,5 cm) in a total of 38 photographs. We can divide photos in 2 big groups:

a) **22 aerial views photos:** Lisbon; Lisbon Maritimum Aviation Centre; Belém Tower; Belém; River Tagus; Lisbon outskirts; S. Julião da Barra; Estoril; Cascais fortress; Canaria islands (2); La Luz port; S. Vicente island - Cape Vert (4); Ponta Temerosa lighthouse; Praia island port; S. Pedro e S. Paulo rocks (3);

b) **16 other photos:** Cascais coast view, "Lusitânia" floatplane in Las Palmas; "Lusitânia" in S. Vicente; Vessel "Bengo" anchored at S. Vicente coast; Fernando Noronha presidium; Fernando Noronha peak; Fernando Noronha island (2); floatplane "Fairey I7" hoisting (3); "Fairey I7" in Bahia; "Fairey I7" prepared for hoisting (2); "Fairey I7" on vessel "Carvalho Araújo"; arrival at Victoria;

4 JUSTIFICATION FOR INCLUSION/ ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

4.1 Is authenticity established? (See 4.2.3)

The authenticity of the document is unquestionable from the diplomatic and historical point of view, being dated and signed by both Captain Sacadura Cabral and Captain Gago Coutinho, in Lisbon, January, 1923.

4.2 Is world significance, uniqueness and irreplaceability established? (See 4.2.4)

The document is of world significance because it's the testimony of the first flight across the south Atlantic Ocean, being an important landmark in the progress of air navigation, namely by the use, for the first time, of the sextant, which allowed to reach precision in navigation by air.

This is a unique document. However, Museum of Air has a Sacadura Cabral handmade document related to this event, which served as a draft to this final report.

4.3 Is one or more of the criteria of (a) time (b) place (c) people (d) subject and theme (e) form and style (f) social, spiritual and community significance satisfied? (See 4.2.5)

The document meets all the conditions for inclusion in the Memory of the World Register. It comes from the first quarter of XX century, period during which the air navigation was progressing at fast pace. The « scenario » was the South Atlantic Ocean. The people mentioned in the document are, first of all, Captains, Sacadura Cabral and Gago Coutinho. The other persons mentioned who took part or made this event possible was the former Portuguese Navy Minister, Mr. Victor Macedo Pinto and the crew of Portuguese navy vessels, “República”, “Carvalho Araújo”, “5 de Outubro” and “Bagé”.

The document is the original report on the first South Atlantic Ocean flight cross, written by the two men who piloted the floatplane. The first part of the document, from Captain Sacadura Cabral, reports the reasons and motivations that were on the base of the flight, reporting also the preparations, and the description of every leg of this epic journey.

Second part, from Captain Gago Coutinho reports the technical and navigational point of view of the flight. The document has several photographs, which serve as a superb form of illustration.

4.4 Are there issues of rarity, integrity, threat and management that relate to this nomination? (See 4.2.6)

The document is the only original, signed and dated by the Captains Sacadura Cabral and Gago Coutinho. Although some photos are deteriorating, its integrity is not threatened.