

Fuerza Aérea Boliviana

Photographed by Marix Sap



Following refit (including glass cockpit) by Kelowna Flightcraft in Canada, the Bolivian Lockheed T-33s are now known as T-33-2000s. This was the first aircraft to be returned to Bolivia, arriving with two others at El Alto air base on 8 August 2003. It served as the test airframe for the upgrade, and underwent extensive ground and air testing before its redelivery.

Right: Eighteen T-33s are to be updated to T-33-2000 standard, although the final unit assignment is not yet known. The first aircraft are expected to form the equipment of the new Escuela de Caza at El Trompillo, while others will go to the Grupo Aéreo de Caza 31, which presently parents the FAB's T-33 force.

Below: Bolivia received its first T-33s in August 1973, in the form of Canadian Silver Star Mk IIIs. Further deliveries included a batch of ex-French T-33SFs (illustrated). More may be acquired from Ecuador. The 18 aircraft due for T-33-2000 modernisation were dismantled for shipment by sea to Canada via the port of Arica. While Grupo Aéreo de Caza 31 at El Alto, La Paz oversees T-33 operations, there are detachments to GAC 32 (Santa Cruz), GAC 33 (Tarija) and GAC 34 (Cochabamba). The T-33's principal roles are counter-insurgency and reconnaissance.



Above: The first batch of 10 Pileatus PC-7s arrived in 1979, followed by 14 more in 1981. In 1986 they were concentrated in Grupo Aéreo de Caza 34 at Cochabamba for advanced/ weapons training, although between 1992 and 1996 six were assigned to the Peace Eagle programme. This was an anti-narcotics effort, and the PC-7s were used for intercepting drug-smuggling light aircraft, a role in which they were highly successful. In 1,527 operational sorties 337 intercepts were achieved.