Large-scale distributions of tropospheric nitric, formic, and acetic acids over the western Pacific basin during wintertime

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Large-scale distributions of tropospheric nitric, formic, and acetic acids over the western Pacific basin during wintertime

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Abstract. We report here measurements of the acidic gases nitric (HNO₃), formic (HCOOH), and acetic (CH₃COOH) over the western Pacific basin during the February–March 1994 Pacific Exploratory Mission-West (PEM-West B). These data were obtained aboard the NASA DC-8 research aircraft as it flew missions in the altitude range of 0.3–12.5 km over equatorial regions near Guam and then further westward encompassing the entire Pacific Rim arc. Aged marine air over the equatorial Pacific generally exhibited mixing ratios of acidic gases <100 parts per trillion by volume. Near the Asian continent, discrete plumes encountered below 6 km altitude contained up to 8 parts per billion by volume (ppbv) HNO₃ and 10 ppbv HCOOH and CH₃COOH. Overall there was a general correlation between mixing ratios of acidic gases with those of CO, C₂H₂, and C₂Cl₄, indicative of emissions from combustion and industrial sources. The latitudinal distributions of HNO₃ and CO showed that the largest mixing ratios were centered around 15°N, while HCOOH, CH₃COOH, and C₂Cl₄ peaked at 25°N. The mixing ratios of HCOOH and CH₃COOH were highly correlated \( (r^2 = 0.87) \) below 6 km altitude, with a slope \( (0.89) \) characteristic of the nongrowing season at midlatitudes in the northern hemisphere. Above 6 km altitude, HCOOH and CH₃COOH were marginally correlated \( (r^2 = 0.50) \), and plumes well defined by CO, C₂H₂, and C₂Cl₄ were depleted in acidic gases, most likely due to scavenging during vertical transport of air masses through convective cloud systems over the Asian continent. In stratospheric air masses, HNO₃ mixing ratios were several parts per billion by volume (ppbv), yielding relationships with \( \text{O}_3 \) and \( \text{N}_2\text{O} \) consistent with those previously reported for \( \text{NO}_3^- \).

1. Introduction

Acidic gases are important trace participants in photochemical and heterogeneous processes occurring in the Earth's troposphere. The principal acidic gases of interest are sulfuric (H₂SO₄), hydrochloric (HCl), nitric (HNO₃), and the monocarboxylics formic (HCOOH) and acetic (CH₃COOH). Our focus here is on the latter three, which we measured over the western Pacific Ocean during the NASA Pacific Exploratory Mission - West (PEM-West B) in February–March 1994.

Measurements of acidic gases in the troposphere over the western Pacific basin are scarce. Mixing ratios of HNO₃ and aerosol NO₃⁻ were surveyed over the basin's equatorial and southern (to 24°S) portions during the Global Atmospheric Measurements Experiment on Tropospheric Aerosols and Gases (GAMETAG) in the late 1970s [Huebert and Lazrus, 1980]. There was no latitudinal trend in the mixing ratio of HNO₃, with a median value of 120 parts per trillion by volume (pptv) observed. Mixing ratios ranged from <30 to 540 pptv in the free troposphere, and the molar ratio of HNO₃/NO₃⁻ generally ranged from 3 to 5. This situation was reversed in the marine boundary layer with values of this ratio always less than 1.0, presumably due to uptake of HNO₃ vapor onto sea-salt aerosols [Huebert and Lazrus, 1978].

Shipboard measurements of the mixing ratios of HNO₃ and aerosol NO₃⁻ in the equatorial Pacific marine boundary layer generally agree with the GAMETAG results, but the values were somewhat lower [Huebert, 1980]. The average mixing ratio of HNO₃ was 38 pptv, while aerosol NO₃⁻ was typically several times greater than this. Again no latitudinal gradients were found from 7°N to 9°S.

Nitric acid vapor and aerosol NO₃⁻ have also been measured at the Mauna Loa Observatory (MLO), Hawaii, and between this site and the western United States from aircraft during the NASA Chemical Instrumentation Intercomparison Test and Evaluation (CITE 2) [Galasyn et al., 1987; Huebert et al., 1990; Norton, 1992; Lee et al., 1994]. These studies revealed that in this region of the Pacific basin the mixing ratios of HNO₃ and aerosol NO₃⁻ are commonly less than 100 pptv and 50 pptv, respectively, except during short events where air masses with apparent continental influences were sampled.

Carboxylic acids were measured from shipboard platform over the western Pacific in April–July 1987 [Arlander et al., 1990]. The average mixing ratios of HCOOH and CH₃COOH were 800 ± 300 and 780 ± 130 pptv, respectively, in the northern hemisphere compared to 220 ± 130 and 280 ± 180 pptv in the southern hemisphere. These marine boundary layer values are similar to those observed during September–October 1991 from an airborne platform in the NASA Pacific Exploratory Mission - West (PEM-West A) [Talbot et al., 1996; Gregory et al., 1996]. Both of these data sets showed that the largest mixing ratios were associated with...
air masses recently influenced (\(<5\) days) by continental emissions. In the free troposphere, mixing ratios were generally twofold less than the average values in the boundary layer air [Talbot et al., 1996; Gregory et al., 1996]. Free tropospheric air masses sampled in May 1988 at the MLO exhibited average mixing ratios of 63 and 94 pptv for HCOOH and CH$_3$COOH, respectively [Norton, 1992]. These values are about a factor of 2 smaller than what was observed in aged free tropospheric air over the western Pacific during PEM-West A [Gregory et al., 1996].

The eastward transport of air masses originating over the Asian continent across the northern Pacific basin is well established [Merrill, 1989]. Transport of air mass associated materials peaks in late winter and springtime [Duce et al., 1980; Prospero et al., 1985]. The large high-pressure system that significantly inhibits direct outflow of Asian continental boundary layer air in summer and fall is displaced much farther eastward at other times of the year. Thus it is expected that the PEM-West B data should show a major influence of Asian natural and anthropogenic emissions. An objective of PEM-West B was therefore to sample these emissions using the NASA Ames DC-8 airborne platform and then to assess their impact on atmospheric chemistry over the North Pacific. We present here the large-scale geographic and vertical distributions of HNO$_3$, HCOOH, and CH$_3$COOH observed during the PEM-West B expedition. Companion papers describe specific aspects of the distribution of acidic gases over the western Pacific basin [Dibb et al., this issue; Talbot et al., this issue].

2. Experimental Methods

2.1. Study Area

The airborne component of PEM-West B was conducted using the NASA Ames DC-8 research aircraft. Transit and intensive site science missions comprised 16 flights, each averaging about 8 hours in duration and covering the altitude range of 0.3 to 12.5 km. The base of operations for these missions progressed from (1) Guam (four missions) to (2) Hong Kong (two missions) and on to (3) Yokota, Japan (four missions). The data used in this paper were obtained in the geographic grid approximately bounded by 0° - 60°N latitude and 110° - 180°E longitude. Data obtained on transit flights between these locations was also utilized in this paper. A geographic map of the study region is shown in several companion papers [e.g., Talbot et al., this issue].

The overall scientific rationale and description of individual aircraft missions is described in the PEM-West B overview paper [Hoell et al., this issue]. The features of the large-scale meteorological regime and associated air mass trajectory analyses for the February-March 1994 time period are presented by Merrill et al. [this issue].

2.2. Sampling and Analytical Methodology

Acidic gases were subsampled from a constant high-volume (300 - 800 liter per minute, LPM) flow of ambient air using the mist chamber technique [Talbot et al., 1988, 1990]. Sample collection intervals were typically 10 min. The inlet manifold consisted of a 1.3 m length of 35 mm ID porcelain coated steel pipe (Figure 1). The pipe extended from the DC-8 fuselage to provide a 90° orientation to the ambient air streamline flow. To facilitate pumping of the high-volume manifold flow, a diffuser was mounted over the end of the inlet pipe parallel to the DC-8 fuselage. The diffuser was "torpedo shaped," having a forward opening of 80 mm and 55 mm aft (430 mm in length). This design provided a "shroud" effect by slowing the flow of ambient air through it slightly below the true air speed of the DC-8 and adding a 50 mbar pressurization to the sampling manifold. This eliminated the reverse venturi effect (=40 mbar) on the sampling manifold. An additional feature of the diffuser was a curved step around the porcelain manifold which provided the streamline effects of a backward facing inlet. Its function was to facilitate exclusion of aerosol particles greater than \( \approx 2 \) \( \mu m \) in diameter from the sampling manifold. Aerosol smaller than this were removed from the sampled airstream using a 1 mm pore-sized Zefluor teflon filter that was readily changeable every 5 - 10 min. The effectiveness of the shroud in depleting the sampled air stream of large aerosols was examined by sampling in the marine boundary. The manifold prefilter was analyzed for sodium and chloride and these concentrations were compared to those from an aerosol sample collected simultaneously with a forward facing isokinetic probe. These tests showed that the diffuser effectively
produced an air stream nearly devoid (>90%) of sea-salt aerosols. Vacuum was applied to the inlet systems using externally mounted high-flow venturis located at an aft station on the DC-8.

In addition to the features described above, the inlet manifold was equipped with the capability for conducting a standard addition of HNO₃ into the manifold ambient air stream. This spike was added 10 cm downstream inside the manifold pipe through a 6.5 mm OD teflon tube mounted perpendicular to the air flow. This tube was 20 mm long and was maintained at 40°C to facilitate passing of calibration gas through it. This design effectively tested the passing efficiency of the entire manifold system.

The calibration system for HNO₃ consisted of a permeation oven held at 90°C and a single-dilution flow of ultra zero air (1.5 LPM) which swept the oven outflow to either a nylon filter for output quantification or the sampling manifold. The heated teflon tubing through which the HNO₃ stream passed was kept equilibrated by a flow design that allowed the calibration gas to constantly pass to the near point of injection into the manifold flow before being dumped aft through a return line (Figure 1). The mixing ratio of HNO₃ in the 1.5 LPM flow was typically 200 parts per billion by volume (ppbv). This spike was then diluted several hundred times by the high flow rate of ambient air in the sampling manifold, producing standard additions of 100 - 1200 pptv.

The permeation oven output of HNO₃ was monitored on the ground and in the air in near real-time. The permeation source was constant to ±15% at any given altitude but varied by a factor of 2 from ground level to 12.5 km altitude due to lack of sophisticated pressure control in this preliminary version of a calibration system. The operating characteristics of the calibration system were satisfactory, however, for a "first-cut" evaluation of the passing efficiency of the sampling inlet.

The concentrations of acidic gases were quantified using a custom built dual ion chromatography system equipped with a computer interface for data acquisition. The system was composed primarily of Dionex components with the detectors and flow system thermostated to 40°C. Eluants were constantly purged with He gas. Nitric acid was measured using a fast anion column, while the carboxylic acids were determined using an AS4 column. Concentrator columns and electronic suppression was used in both chromatography systems. Calibration curves generated on the ground and in the air agreed within ±2%. We thus were able to determine atmospheric mixing ratios of acidic gases in near real-time.

In addition to data for acidic gases, we present selected information on several important trace gases including ozone (O₃), carbon monoxide (CO), nitrous oxide (N₂O), ethyne (C₂H₂), and perchloroethylene (C₂Cl₄). Due to questions regarding the exact suite of compounds being measured by current total reactive nitrogen (NOy) instruments (S. Sandholm et al., Comparison of NOy budgets from NASA's ABLE3, PEM-West, and TRACE A measurement programs: An update, submitted to Journal of Geophysical Research, 1996)(hereinafter referred to as Sandholm...
3. Results of HNO$_3$ Instrument Tests

To assess the measurement precision of acidic gases, we conducted simultaneous sampling with two mist chambers during three flights out of Guam. These data were obtained in aged free tropospheric air of relatively uniform composition (e.g., CO 75 ± 5 ppbv). The results of these comparisons for HNO$_3$ are shown in Figure 2. There was excellent agreement in the simultaneously determined mixing ratios of HNO$_3$ over the range of about 50 - 250 pptv. The median percent difference, $[(\text{MC 1} - \text{MC 2})/\text{MC 1}] \times 100\%$, indicated that the precision of our HNO$_3$ measurements is of the order of ±10%. The precision for HCOOH and CH$_3$COOH was even better than this, averaging ±7%.

On every flight during the PEM-West B expedition, we conducted multiple passing efficiency checks to quantify the transmission of HNO$_3$ through the inlet assembly. These tests were conducted on level flight legs by making several ambient measurements that bracketed in time standard additions into the same airstream. This allowed us to have reasonable confidence in the ambient air subtraction to determine the spike recovery. In some cases the ambient variability was too large (> ±30%) to make a meaningful assessment of the passing efficiency. These data were discarded, leaving 175 data points for evaluation purposes. As shown in Figure 3a, these tests were conducted over the entire operating range of the DC-8 aircraft, from 0.3 to 12 km. The mean passing efficiency was 76 ± 7 % (Figure 3b), with no apparent dependence on altitude. Although the initial 10 cm of the manifold was not included in the passing efficiency tests, this represents only 8% of its total length. It is unlikely that significant loss of HNO$_3$ occurred in this initial section of the manifold. Our experience in passing HNO$_3$ through tubing indicates that most of the wall losses occur in the last half of the flow path.

Great effort was placed on performing passing efficiency tests as close to ambient HNO$_3$ mixing ratios as possible. The standard
additions were thus conducted at mixing ratios of 50 - 100% above the ambient ones. Spikes performed in the few-ppbv range always yielded passing efficiencies of 100 ± 10% (not shown). Our experience indicates that it is essential to conduct standard additions for HNO₃ at near-ambient levels to meaningfully test the measurement system.

The HNO₃ data presented in this paper have not been corrected for passing efficiency. This decision was based on the uncertainties associated with the permeation oven output and background subtraction. Improvements to maintain precise flow and pressure control in our calibration system plus an increase in the measurement time resolution should rectify these problems in the future. Based on the passing efficiency tests and other potential errors in the sampling and analysis, the overall uncertainty of the HNO₃ measurements is estimated to be ±35%. The limit of detection is 5 pptv for a 15-min sampling interval. Extensive ground-based tests for HCOOH and CH₃COOH indicate that (1) their passing efficiency through our inlet is >90%, (2) the overall measurement uncertainty for these species is ±20 and 25% and, (3) their limits of detection for a 15-min sampling period are 10 and 15 pptv, respectively. Our experience indicates that these carboxylic acid species are significantly less prone to wall loss problems than HNO₃.

4. Distribution of Acidic Gases Over the Western Pacific Basin

The latitudinal distribution of acidic gases over the western Pacific basin is shown in Figure 4a. These data (n = 900) encompass the 0.3 - 12 km altitude range. Subsets of the data presented in

Figure 4c. Same as Figure 4a except for an expanded scale (larger mixing ratios not shown) to show details of data obtained above 6 km altitude. The apparent increase in the mean value of the HNO₃ mixing ratio with northerly latitude is probably driven by inputs of stratospheric air masses during tropospheric folds.

Figure 5. Vertical distribution of the mixing ratios of acidic gases for all measurements performed over the western Pacific Ocean (n = 900). The enhanced mixing ratios of HNO₃ at 9 and 11 km reflect measurements during tropospheric folds. These data indicate that Asian continental outflow of acidic gases was primarily confined to altitudes below 6 km.

Figure 4a are shown in Figures 4b and 4c on an expanded (mixing ratio) scale cropped to remove the upper 5% of the values. The data depicted in Figures 4b and 4c are for the altitudes bands 0 - 5.9 km and 6 - 12 km respectively. This break in the vertical distribution was based on the fact that the majority of the continental outflow occurred below 6 km altitude (Figure 5).

In a companion paper, we developed an air mass classification scheme for the PEM-West B data based on backward isentropic trajectories and their associated transit time from the Asian continent [Talbot et al., this issue; Merrill et al., this issue]. This analysis showed that the majority of the PEM-West B data reflect
rapid advection (<2 days) of air masses from over the Asian continent to the western Pacific troposphere.

The principal outflow of acidic gases from the Asian continent was concentrated in the 5 - 25°N latitude band (Figure 4a). The enhanced mixing ratios of HNO₃ near 40°N were observed during a tropospheric fold over the Sea Japan (see section 5). Thus the discrete continental plumes containing highly elevated mixing ratios of acidic gases that were observed leaving the Asian continent were not evident near Japan (30 - 40°N). In fact, most of the air masses sampled east of Japan were apparently influenced by precipitation scavenging [Talbot et al., this issue]. During PEM-West B, mixing ratios as large as 7 ppbv HNO₃ and 10 ppbv HCOOH and CH₃COOH were observed within 250 km eastward from the Asian continent. In contrast, the mixing ratios in this same region during PEM-West A did not exceed 500 pptv for HNO₃ and 1000 pptv for HCOOH or CH₃COOH [Talbot et al., 1996].

A significant component of the material outflow from the Pacific rim region appears to originate from anthropogenic combustion activities. Evidence for this source is derived from C₂Cl₄, C₂H₂, and CO (Figure 6). While CO is a general indicator of combustion emissions [Warneck, 1988], this is the only known source of C₂H₂ [Singh and Zimmerman, 1992]. C₂Cl₄ is released exclusively by industrial processes [Blake et al., 1996]. Although we did not identify exceedingly strong correlations ($r^2 > 0.7$) between acidic gases and other species, the similarity in their latitudinal trends with combustion tracers is clearly apparent (Figures 3a and 5). This same lack of high correlation between carboxylic acids and other atmospheric species has been observed in free tropospheric air at Mauna Loa, Hawaii [Norton, 1992], and in boundary layer air over the eastern United States [Talbot et al., 1995].

Peak mixing ratios of HNO₃ exclusive of individual plumes were centered around 15°N latitude (Figure 4b), similar to those of CO (Figure 6). This correlation and the absence of a coincident one with C₂Cl₄ points to nonindustrial sources (e.g., space heating, cooking, or vehicle emissions) as the potentially dominate emissions contributor in this area. During the growing season, HCOOH and CH₃COOH probably have dominate sources from biogenic emissions [Talbot et al., 1995]. However, it is likely that anthropogenic sources dominate in wintertime [Talbot et al., 1988]. The apparently synonymous distributions of HCOOH and CH₃COOH with C₂Cl₄ around 25°N latitude is indicative of an industrial pollution source for these species. The falloff in the distributions of HCOOH and CH₃COOH at high latitudes compared to that of C₂Cl₄ is probably due to wet removal. Indeed, the smaller mixing ratios of HNO₃ below 6 km (Figure 4b) compared to those
Figure 8. Vertical distribution of the mixing ratios of CO, C$_2$H$_2$, and C$_2$Cl$_4$ over the western Pacific basin during PEM-West B.

Table 1. Comparison of the Median Mixing Ratios of Acidic Gases During PEM-West A and B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>&lt;2 km</th>
<th>2-7 km</th>
<th>7-12 km</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HNO$_3$</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCOOH</td>
<td>704</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CH$_3$COOH</td>
<td>708</td>
<td>612</td>
<td>387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HNO$_3$</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCOOH</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CH$_3$COOH</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>481</td>
<td>631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CO</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCOOH</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CH$_3$COOH</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>425</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First row for each species refers to PEM-West A and the second one to PEM-West B. Mixing ratios are stated in pptv. Values for PEM-West A are taken from Talbot et al. [1996] or Gregory et al. [1996] and from Talbot et al. [this issue] for PEM-West B. NA, not available; no data were obtained in this air mass classification during PEM-West A.

In Table 1 we present a comparison of the median mixing ratios of acidic gases measured during the PEM-West A and B flight programs. These data are divided into three types of air mass classification regimes based on backward isentropic trajectories [Merrill et al., this issue]. The details of this classification scheme are described elsewhere [Talbot et al., 1996, this issue]. Briefly, air masses that passed over the Asian continent due to the presence of enhanced mixing ratios of moderately reactive hydrocarbons, nitric oxide (NO), and $^{210}$Pb in these plumes [Blake et al., this issue; Dibb et al., this issue]. Vertical transport of this nature over the Asian continent also appeared to be a prevalent mechanism leading to outflow of polluted air masses during PEM-West A [Dibb et al., 1996; Talbot et al., 1996].

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Pacific for at least 5 days are grouped in the marine category.

In general, the carboxylic acids were present at significantly lower mixing ratios during PEM-West B compared to PEM-West A. We believe that this difference reflects the nongrowing season conditions and subsequently reduced natural emissions of HCOOH and CH$_3$COOH during PEM-West B. Evidence for depressed biogenic metabolism processes on the Asian continent is provided by the 2-3% increase in CO$_2$ mixing ratios during PEM-West B compared to the PEM-West A study period [Talbot et al., this issue]. The rather enhanced mixing ratio values for the continental south boundary layer during PEM-West B appear to be driven by sampling of anthropogenic emissions from Taiwan [Talbot et al., this issue].

Much larger mixing ratios were observed for HNO$_3$ in PEM-West B compared to PEM-West A. Based on the HNO$_3$ inlet passing efficiency tests conducted during PEM-West B and the nearly identical instrumental parameters during both PEM-West field campaigns, we have no reason to believe that these differences are measurement related. In fact, in the direct boundary layer outflow from the continental north region (< 2 km altitude), the median mixing ratios of HNO$_3$ were identical between the two PEM-West field expeditions. In general, however, there appears to have been anomalously low reactive nitrogen (e.g., NO, HNO$_3$, and PAN) during PEM-West A compared to other field programs [Sandholm et al., this issue]. The reason for this discrepancy is unclear but it may be related to the sequestering of traditional NO$_x$ species into unknown nitrogen-containing aerosol forms following the eruption of Mount Pinatubo just prior to the PEM-West A field expedition [Sandholm et al., this issue].

The partitioning of atmospheric nitrate between HNO$_3$ vapor and aerosol NO$_3^-$ during PEM-West B favored the gas phase at all times, including in the marine boundary layer (Figure 9). In the 0 - 5.9 km altitude range the median value of the ratio HNO$_3$/NO$_3^-$ was 2.5 (mean ±1σ = 5.7 ± 8.4), with the largest values observed in pollution plumes. At altitudes of 6 - 12 km the ratio increased with a median value of 5.3 (mean ±1σ = 8.3 ± 9.7). Some of the lowest
values of \(\text{HNO}_3/\text{NO}_3\) were found in aged (i.e., air masses that have not passed over continental areas for >5 days) marine boundary layer air over the equatorial Pacific where the ratio was typically about 2 [Talbot et al., this issue]. This partitioning is very similar to that observed at various time of the year at Mauna Loa, Hawaii. Galasyn et al. [1987] found boundary layer \(\text{HNO}_3/\text{NO}_3\) ratio values near 3.5, while Norton et al. [1992] observed values of about 2 during May 1988.

To examine the relationship between \(\text{HNO}_3\) and \(\Sigma\text{NO}_y\), the ratio \(\text{HNO}_3/\Sigma\text{NO}_y\) is shown as a function of latitude and altitude in Figure 10. Due to the heterogeneous nature of the continental outflow, there was clearly a wide variation in this ratio. However, a few generalities appear to be appropriate. In the boundary layer the \(\text{HNO}_3/\Sigma\text{NO}_y\) ratio tended to exhibit the smallest values near 20 - 30°N latitude, averaging 0.25. In this region there was significant outflow of continental emissions, containing enhanced unoxidized \(\Sigma\text{NO}_y\) [Talbot et al., this issue]. In the tropics (<10° latitude), \(\text{HNO}_3\) was commonly the dominate component of \(\Sigma\text{NO}_y\), probably due to rapid thermal decomposition of PAN releasing \(\text{NO}_x\) to subsequently form \(\text{HNO}_3\) [Wunderli and Gehrig, 1991]. Air masses in low-latitude regions typically exhibit small PAN/\(\text{NO}_x\) ratio values [Singh et al., 1986; Ridley et al., 1990]. The vertical distribution of the ratio \(\text{HNO}_3/\Sigma\text{NO}_y\) showed that \(\text{HNO}_3\) composed on average 60% of \(\Sigma\text{NO}_y\). The most significant deviation from this value occurred in stratospheric air masses, where the ratio was =90%. These special cases are described below.

5. \(\text{HNO}_3\) in Stratospheric Air Masses

On several occasions during PEM-West B the DC-8 encountered stratospherically influenced air masses. These events all occurred north of 20°N latitude [Dibb et al., this issue], with the most significant one at 11 km altitude over the Sea of Japan on March 11, 1995 (mission 17). This later event lasted nominally 90 min, with peak \(\text{O}_3\) mixing ratios of 600 ppbv. Numerous acidic gas measurements and a 15-min period of standard additions for \(\text{HNO}_3\) were performed within this stratospheric air mass (data break around JD 70.075). These standard additions yield a mean recovery of 98 ± 1% (see Figure 3a, at 11 km), giving high confidence to the data obtained on this flight leg. Undoubtedly, the large ambient mixing ratios of \(\text{HNO}_3\) and the dry environmental conditions in this air mass facilitated the unity passing efficiency observed for our inlet assembly. In addition, \(\text{O}_3\) and \(\text{N}_2\text{O}\), were constant (±5%)
during this test interval, suggesting that the ambient HNO₃ was also reasonably stable at ≈1200 pptv.

Selected data obtained during this mission 17 flight leg are presented in Figure 11. The mixing ratio of HNO₃ ranged from 750 to 2500 pptv. Coincident measurements of the carboxylic acids were typically found in lower stratospheric air [Murphy et al., 1993].

To provide a more general picture of HNO₃ relationships in the stratosphere, we show in Figure 12 a summary of its correlation with O₃ and N₂O. The data plotted in Figure 12 reflect all measurements of HNO₃ in stratospherically influenced air masses (n = 25) obtained during the PEM-West B expedition. It is evident from examination of Figure 12 that both of these correlations were linear and well defined (r² ≥ 0.95). The slope of the relationship between HNO₃ and O₃ was 6.06 × 10⁻³. This slope is essentially identical to the typical values of NOₓ/O₃ (≈6 × 10⁻³) observed by Hübeler et al. [1990] and lies in the middle of the 2 × 9 × 10⁻³ range observed for HNO₃/O₃ by [Bregman et al., 1995]. For correlation with NOₓ and N₂O, that is, a positive correlation with NO₃ and a negative one with N₂O. Nitric acid also mimicked the NOₓ/O₃ relationship. The values observed for NOₓ/O₃ were, however, on the high side of those (0.002 - 0.004) typically found in lower stratospheric air [Murphy et al., 1993].

The partitioning of atmospheric nitrate favored HNO₃ vapor over aerosol NO₃⁻, even in the marine boundary layer. The median value of the ratio was 2.5 below 6 km and 5.3 above this altitude. The largest ratio values were found directly in continental outflow plumes. Here mixing ratios of HNO₃ were generally in the few ppbv range (up to 8), while those of aerosol NO₃⁻ never exceeded 0.4 ppbv.

At latitudes >20°N, stratospheric air was sampled on several occasions. The largest event occurred at 11 km altitude over the Sea of Japan. Peak O₃ mixing ratios were around 600 ppbv, while HNO₃ approached 3 ppbv. Overall, we found linear relationships between HNO₃ and O₃ or N₂O that yielded slopes of 6.06 × 10⁻³ and -9.20 × 10⁻², respectively, consistent with those previously reported for NO₃⁻.

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6. Conclusions

The large-scale distribution of acidic gases over the western Pacific basin shows that the largest mixing ratios occurred below 4 km altitude near the Asian continent in the latitude band of 5 - 25°N. Here discrete plumes were highly enriched in acidic gases and CO, CH₄, C₂H₄, C₃Cl₃, indicative of emission inputs from combustion and industrial sources. These general source influences were apparent up to 10 km altitude, but individual plumes were depleted in acidic gases above 6 km. Scavenging of soluble species during vertical convective transport over the Asian continent is the most likely explanation. This same mechanism also appeared to be responsible for the vertical distribution of acidic gases during PEM-West A.

Below 6 km altitude, mixing ratios of HCOOH and CH₃COOH were highly correlated (r² = 0.87), with a slope characteristic of the non-growing season at midlatitudes in the northern hemisphere. This same correlation was significantly poorer between 6 and 12 km altitude (r² = 0.50), possibly reflecting the effects of transport through convective systems.

References


