



Birkemo Flight Briefing

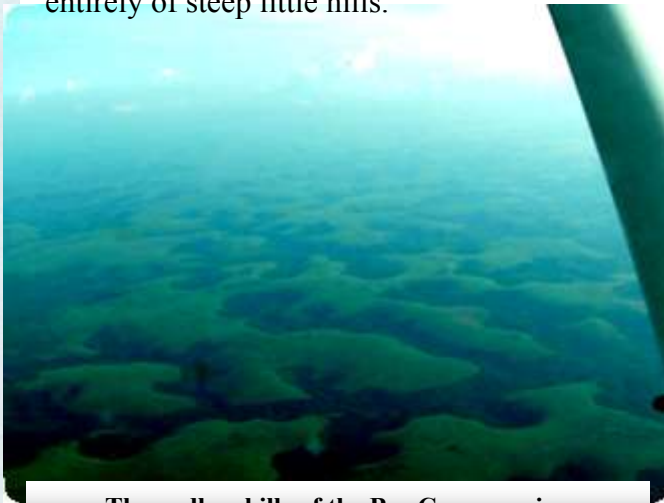
December 2009

Mission Aviation Fellowship

Dear Friends,

We hope and pray this letter finds each of you well and contemplating the true wonder of Christmas. God IS with us!

Recently I, Nate, was on a flight and received a special reminder of this truth. The flight is one that we conduct on a weekly basis for the church community in an area known as Bas Congo or Lower Congo. The terrain in this region is particularly nasty in that it consists entirely of steep little hills.



The endless hills of the Bas Congo region

As you may imagine, walking is one of the main methods of traveling in Africa. The Congolese don't think twice about setting out on a foot journey of 20-30 miles. However, when there are as many 200-foot hills to climb as there are miles to cover, even young bucks like me think twice before setting out. The flight day in Bas Congo can be very exhausting, as it usually means making 12 stops! That's 12 landings and takeoffs on the sides of the aforementioned steep little hills, as many loadings/unloadings, 2 refuelings out of jerry-cans...sometimes in the middle of such hard work it can be easy to forget that God is with us and He keeps us here.

Coming in for my ninth landing on this particularly tiring day, there was a storm front approaching the area. On final approach the wind really began to blow and I had to abort the landing. Shoving in the throttle I climbed away towards clearer skies, bumping and slewing in the gusts. We landed uneventfully at a strip 12 miles away. For over two hours we sat on the ground in the plane, the wind and rain buffeting us, waiting for the weather to clear. My five Congolese passengers seemed not the least bit concerned about this unexpected setback. My spirit, however, was as dark as the sky outside. Thoughts crept in like "What am I doing here?"; "Is this really worth the risk?"; and just feeling quite alone in a difficult situation. Just when I was almost sure we'd be spending the night, the rain began to let up, and I took the opportunity to walk the airstrip. Walking back towards the plane, I received my reminder. By now the plane was surrounded with children laughing and playing, the sky in the direction I needed to go was looking better. Best of all was a rainbow that arced over the top of the plane. It was a simple and timely reminder of God's love, not just for me, but for all people and a testament of His active presence in our lives.



"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed for I am your God..." Isaiah 41:10a

SUPPORT ADDRESS

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PRAISE

- We continue to enjoy generally good health
- For the jet fuel powered aircraft on our program
- Stability in the region
- Availability of avgas
- Enjoying the work
- New ministry opportunities
- Continued faithfulness of prayer and financial partnership
- Safety in the air and on the ground

PRAYER

- Patience and the love of Christ in dealing with cultural challenges
- Provision of a second Caravan (turbine aircraft) for our program
- That we would raise Grace well
- That we would grow in our relationship with the Lord
- For Nate as he helps fly the new plane down here from Holland
- That the government would grant us full exoneration in our operations
- Continued safety in our operations

Merry Christmas from the Congo! 2009 Nate, Terra, and Gracie

“...and they will call him “Immanuel”- which means, “God with us.” Matthew 1:23b

