



Birkemo Flight Briefing

October 2009

Mission Aviation Fellowship

Dear Friends,

We hope and pray this letter finds each of you well and rejoicing in the Lord. Since our last letter we have been extremely busy! Summers on our program tend to be that way as it is an ideal time for co-workers with school-age kids to furlough. We are so grateful to safely get through what has been a very busy flying schedule!

It continues to be exciting to be a part of MAF work here in Congo. Recently we have been doing quite a bit of flying in support of the national health infrastructure. As you might imagine, Congo is a country that is severely underdeveloped in terms of its health care. Lack of adequate staff, training, funding, and the ever-present scourge of corruption necessitate the intervention of many relief efforts to save and enrich the lives of millions of Congolese.

One such opportunity that we look forward to being a part of in the near future is in serving the national Mennonite church. Soon we will begin flying medicines and medical supplies to remote health stations from an interior city. The church approached MAF to assist with this transportation need as the options by road were far more costly in time and money!

In most cases, MAF in Congo is the sole provider of service to the many remote destinations we fly. Sometimes, however, we find that while other aviation operators do provide regular service to a particular destination, MAF still remains the only option. Due to the safety history of aviation in the Congo, many major aid agencies have forbidden their personnel from flying with most of the aviation operators in DRC.



Dr. Gilbert, Director of MSH, in a training session with local doctors

Because MAF maintains very high operational standards, we have been blessed to remain eligible to assist such agencies in reaching their objectives.

One of the organizations we have recently begun flying regularly is Management Sciences for Health. MSH is seeking to strengthen the health care in remote areas through a number of different efforts, perhaps the most exciting of which is by seeking to develop the leadership/management skills of local healthcare professionals. This is exciting because, while massive infusions of foreign funding into Congo's healthcare system remain vital, the effectiveness current and future efforts will undoubtedly be multiplied by the disciplines MSH instills in national staff.

Nate has had the privilege of being on two flights now taking the Director of MSH, Dr. Gilbert, to various project sites far into the interior. While the flights have been difficult from the standpoint of having to remain several days away from home, it has been refreshing to spend some time on the ground in these remote areas, seeing the good that has come and will continue to come, as God uses a few small planes and people like you to spread His love.

"I lift up my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth." Psalms 121:1-2 NIV

PRAISE

- We continue to enjoy generally good health
- Our team is back to full strength
- 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
- Safety on the ground and in the air
- Continued faithfulness of prayer and financial partnership
- 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 the Congolese Church to be spurred to greater outreach
- That the government would grant us full exoneration in our operations

Serving Him with you in the Congo!

Nate, Terra, and Gracie



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