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THE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

24 October 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR Mr. Helms ✓
Ambassador Thompson
Mr. Walt Rostow

Attached for your consideration is a copy of a memorandum from Bus Wheeler to me concerning the Congolese Air Force problem. As of this time, I have not reached any conclusion on General Wheeler's specific recommendations.

In light of the recent developments in the Congo, I believe that we should be prepared to discuss and to make decisions on the Congolese air problem at our next 303 meeting.

CHAS VANCE

Copy to:
Mr. Jessup

OSD REVIEW COMPLETED



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THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

CM-1834-66

17 OCT 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: Congolese Air Force (U)

1. (S) Reference is made to CINCSTRIKE/USCINCPACAFSA message STRJ5-3133, dated 30 September 1966, which:

a. Recognizes that present USG-GDRC conversations may lead to a withdrawal of the U.S. -sponsored air force prior to the orderly development of a Congolese Air Force (FAC).

b. Expresses concern over this possibility since it is imperative that the Congolese Army (ANC) have access to a responsive air capability, if for no other reason than to assist in maintaining internal stability within the Congo.

c. Recommends several short-term steps which will lead to the development of such capability as an interim measure.

2. (S) Those short-term steps recommended by CINCSTRIKE/USCINCPACAFSA which appear feasible at this time are:

a. Expand the 210th mercenary squadron by transferring to it the 12 USG-controlled T-28 aircraft.

b. Encourage the GDRC to replace the USG-controlled contract pilots with mercenary pilots.

c. Continue reliance on the present CIA-contracted aircraft maintenance organization (WIGMO), but shift monetary support as rapidly as possible to the GDRC.

d. Utilize initially the present U.S. supervisors and managers until qualified replacements are available.

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3. (S) The message also recommended, as an immediate action, removing the six U.S.-loaned B-26 aircraft from the Congo. This action, however, is not necessary to the development of a GERC-controlled air capability and may be harmful to the preservation of internal security. The longer range of the B-26s has proven invaluable against targets too distant for attack by T-28s. A careful in-country analysis of the need for continued operation of B-26 aircraft is essential before any firm decision is made to discontinue their use.

4. (S) The disposition of the three CIA-operated C-46 aircraft is not addressed in the CINCSTRIKE message. These aircraft have been recognized for some time as essential, not only for support of the Air Force, but for the ANC. An evaluation of the impact if these aircraft are withdrawn is also required in-country.

5. (S) The CINCSTRIKE message also asks that the additional longer-range tasks required to develop an effective FAC be undertaken. These tasks are outlined in his study "Force Aerienn Congolaise," dated 24 April 1966 (forwarded to OASD/ISA and State for information on 22 June 1966). When the short-range measures currently under consideration are accomplished, the longer-range requirements can be addressed.

6. (S) It is concluded that:

a. The CINCSTRIKE recommendations listed in paragraph 2, above, are valid.

b. The recommendations are generally compatible with those contained in the study of the Congolese Air Force, forwarded under CM-1461-66, dated 24 May 1966, and the CINCSTRIKE study referred to in paragraph 5, above. The minor differences are attributed mainly to the present need for expeditious transfer action.

c. There may be a continuing need for the six B-26 and three C-46 aircraft to insure support of the government's internal security campaign.

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d. This subject should be brought to the attention of the 303 Committee since it has expressed its interest in the CIA-supported air operation in the Congo.

7. (S) It is recommended that the 303 Committee consider this matter and direct that:

a. Discussions be held with Congolese authorities on the subject of phasing out U.S. air operations in the Congo.

b. In discussions with the Congolese and in formulating plans for the withdrawal of CIA support from the FAC, the need for the maintenance of internal security in the Congo be considered paramount.

c. No decision be taken to phase out the B-26 or C-46 operation until an in-country evaluation supports the feasibility of such a withdrawal.

d. The specific CINCSTRIKE recommendations outlined in paragraph 2, above, be adopted in such a withdrawal.

(Sgd) EARLE G. WHEELER
EARLE G. WHEELER
Chairman
Joint Chiefs of Staff

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