

Humanitarian Aid Decision

Article 23.02.01 of the general budget of the European Union

<u>Title:</u>	Continuation of humanitarian air service (ECHO-Flight)
<u>Location of operation:</u>	Horn of Africa/Eastern Africa and Central Africa, as well as possibly other regions where relevant concrete needs may arise.
<u>Amount of decision:</u>	€ 9,000,000
<u>Decision identification number:</u>	ECHO/FLI/BUD/2004/01000

1 - Rationale, needs and population targeted:

1.1 Rationale :

Since its establishment in 1994, ECHO Flight has become a vital partner to most humanitarian agencies operating in the Horn of Africa and Great Lakes region, transporting humanitarian personnel and supplies to dozens of remote locations that would otherwise be cut off from the outside world.

Over the years, ECHO Flight has gained an excellent reputation for providing a safe, reliable and flexible service to remote areas in what must be regarded as a hostile environment for aircraft operations. 2002 saw the extension of the network into the Democratic Republic of Congo.

From its base in Nairobi, and satellite hubs in Mogadishu and Hargeisa (Somalia) and Goma (DRC), ECHO Flight provides free air transport capacity to aid agencies operating relief and development programmes in Somalia, north-eastern Kenya, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Personnel and cargo are flown aboard scheduled flights using a fleet of five light aircraft. Since its launch in May 1994, the service has clocked up over 50,000 missions and carried more than 200,000 aid workers and 6000 tonnes of food and medical supplies to some of the world's most desperate populations. The service has also carried out more than 200 emergency medical or security evacuations.

ECHO Flight is currently operated by the Danish company Aviation Assistance A/S, based on a contract which will expire at the end of April 2004. This contract can no longer be extended.

In order to continue ECHO Flight operations for up to three years after the expiry of the present Aircraft Charter Agreement, the Commission has published a call for tender (OJ S 148/2003 of 5th August 2003. Notice published pursuant to Council Directive 92/50/EEC), with a deadline for submissions of proposals of 10th October 2003.

The invitation to tender specified that the contract will be awarded to the most economically advantageous tender. The following award criteria were applied:

1) Qualitative award criteria

- Quality of the service, facilities and aircraft provided;
- Quality of the structure, organisations and management of the service to be provided;
- Quality of previous experience in providing similar services, in particular in Africa;
- Client references and certificates of appreciation.

2) Price

Based on the bids received ECHO recommends that from Rossair Contracts (Pty) who is a well known South African aviation company, as the one representing the most economically advantageous offer, with the highest quality and with the best price.

The present decision seeks to extend the ECHO Flight services for one year. For continuation beyond this year a further funding decision will need to be presented.

1.2. - Identified needs:

The provision of ECHO Flight services, including the choice of destinations, is based on concrete needs for humanitarian air transport. As a basic operating principle, ECHO Flight services do not duplicate similar humanitarian air services or compete with sustainable commercial airlines offering safe and reliable humanitarian air transport capacity at acceptable cost.

In both ECHO Flight current main countries of operation (Somalia and DRC), where overland travel is dangerous and time consuming, or even impossible due to security constraints or absence of infrastructure, the need for ECHO Flight services remain unabated.

In **Somalia**, notably its central and southern part, there is no alternative to ECHO Flight. Sustainable safe and reliable local services that could possibly replace ECHO Flight do not exist. The use of the Khat-Flights (private planes transporting drugs into Somalia and occasionally offering seats and cargo space to other passengers), known for their disrespect of any air safety standards, is clearly unacceptable. The UN Co-ordinated Air Services (UNCAS) only covers a reduced route network and provides a lower priority to International NGOs, which are the main customers of ECHO Flight.

Due to its long-standing service of destinations in Somalia, ECHO Flight is well known among virtually all warlords, faction leaders and militias for its impartial and exclusive humanitarian character. This considerably facilitates access to even the remotest strips in highly volatile areas.

In the **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**, there is currently no safe and reliable linkage between main destinations such as Goma, Kisangani, and Kinshasa or effective servicing of destinations of key humanitarian concern. While in principle, MONUC has the capacity to serve such destinations, only a few seats are made available for humanitarian NGOs on an occasional basis. Sustainable commercial alternatives do not yet exist. Following the

significant improvement of the security situation in DRC ECHO has, also in geographic terms, expanded its engagement in the country. This has created additional need for air transport as many of the locations of ECHO funded projects can only be reached by air. ECHO is envisaging to respond to the increased demand by adding destinations to its current DRC network.

The use of ECHO Flight services enable humanitarian organizations to reduce inventory stockpiles at field locations which often run the risk of confiscation or theft by armed bandits or local militia. It increases productivity of field personnel due to the ability to plan rest and recreation rotations at an appropriate frequency; and it increases the quality of humanitarian operations as supervisory visits can be conducted more frequently. In addition the ECHO Flight stand-by evacuation capacity remains for many agencies a *sine qua non* for continuing project implementation.

In the area of its operations, ECHO Flight is currently serving some 100 different agencies implementing about 150 humanitarian and post-emergency development projects, mainly international NGOs but also members of the UN and Red Cross / Red Crescent families, with an overall project value of more than 200 million Euro.

Consequently, ECHO Flight is making an active and considerable contribution to the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance, currently to an estimated 7 million people in need.

1.3 Target population and regions concerned:

ECHO is currently operating in Somalia, Northern Kenya and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Other ECHO Flight operation areas could be added in Sub-Saharan Africa, or possibly other regions, depending on the existence of a need for safe, reliable and cost-effective humanitarian air transport that ECHO Flight could provide.

1.4. - Risk assessment and possible constraints:

In response to relevant needs, ECHO Flight has extended its operations in **DRC**, and has now established bases at Goma and Kinshasa. With stability gradually taking hold in many parts of DRC there is now increasing access to needy populations in areas which have been inaccessible for a long time. Meeting the additional needs for air transport will be a great challenge for ECHO Flight in the year to come.

In **Somalia** no major changes of the difficult humanitarian and security situation are currently expected so that the servicing of the country by ECHO Flight is likely to remain unchanged. As experienced in the past, sudden deteriorations in the security situation may require ECHO Flight at any time to temporarily change its schedule or to discontinue service to certain destinations.

Given its proven flexibility, and its long and successful history of ad-hoc interventions in other countries and regions (such as Rwanda, Angola, Sudan, Uganda, Ethiopia, Mali among others), it is not excluded that additional operation areas may be added depending on concrete needs.

2- Objectives and components of the humanitarian intervention proposed :

2.1 Objective

To provide safe, reliable, efficient and cost-effective air transport capacity for the implementation of humanitarian and post-emergency development projects, in particular those which are EU funded, in relevant target areas.

2.2 Components

The main task of ECHO Flight consists of the carriage of humanitarian personnel and cargo. In addition, ECHO Flight performs emergency security and medical evacuations on an *ad-hoc* basis, and offers a highly valued pouch system.

ECHO Flight operations are implemented by a contractor, the ECHO Flight Operator, which runs several bases (currently Nairobi, Mogadishu, Hargeisa, Kinshasa, and Goma), and which is constantly monitored and controlled by ECHO, through the ECHO Flight Co-ordination Office (EFCO), itself part of the ECHO Regional Office in Nairobi, Kenya.

ECHO Flight is operating in accordance with the following basic principles:

ECHO Flight is a humanitarian tool, and is not available for political missions. While development projects are also served by ECHO Flight, the choice of destinations, and the frequency by which these destinations are served, is guided by humanitarian imperatives.

ECHO Flight applies highest air safety standards.

ECHO Flight services are free-of-charge for entitled organisations/personnel.

ECHO Flight operates in accordance to a general schedule. Flights outside this general schedule are possible, depending on the demand and the specific circumstances.

ECHO Flight does not compete with commercial services where these offer a safe and reliable humanitarian air transport capacity at acceptable cost.

ECHO Flight is implementing a system of access management, granting priority access to agencies implementing projects funded by the EU and its Member States.

ECHO Flight is service-oriented and customer friendly. This includes transparency concerning all customer relevant procedures through the publication of Standard Operating Procedures.

3 –Duration foreseen for actions within the framework of the proposed decision:

Under this decision it is planned to sign with the selected aviation company a 12 month service contract starting on 1 May 2004. As the contractor will need time to set up the operation the contract should be signed not later than beginning of February 2004. Therefore, the duration of the funding decision shall be for a period of maximum 15 months.

5 - Other donors and donor co-ordination mechanisms:

ECHO Flight remains to 100% financed by ECHO. It remains ECHO Flight's basic operating principle not to compete with other sustainable commercial or similar humanitarian services.

6 –Amount of decision and distribution by specific objectives:

6.1. - Total amount of the decision:

9,000,000 Euro

6.2. - Budget breakdown by specific objectives

Specific objectives	Allocated amount by specific objective (euro)	Potential partners	Possible geographical area of operation
Specific objective : To provide safe, reliable, efficient and cost-effective humanitarian air transport capacity.	9,000,000	Rossair Contracts (Pty)	Horn of Africa / Eastern Africa and Central Africa, as well as possibly other regions where relevant needs may arise.
TOTAL	9,000,000		

COMMISSION DECISION

of

on the financing of humanitarian operations from the general budget of the European Union in Horn of Africa / Eastern Africa and Central Africa, as well as possibly other regions where relevant concrete needs may arise.

THE COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Communities,

Having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/96 of 20 June 1996 concerning humanitarian aid¹, and in particular Article 15(1) thereof,

Whereas:

1. In vast parts of the Horn of Africa / Eastern Africa and Central Africa access by road to humanitarian, rehabilitation and development projects is impossible because of infrastructure conditions and security risks;
2. As a consequence, there is a need for a safe, reliable, efficient and cost-effective air transport capacity notably for relevant EU funded projects in the regions concerned;
3. In emergencies such air transport capacity should also be made available in other parts of the world with a view to delivering urgent humanitarian aid;
4. An assessment of the humanitarian situation leads to the conclusion that ECHO Flight should be continued to be financed by the Community for a period of 15 months,
5. It is estimated that an amount of 9 million Euro from budget line 23 02 01 of the general budget of the European Union is necessary to provide humanitarian assistance to vulnerable populations taking into account the available budget, other donors' interventions and other factors.
6. In accordance with Article 17 (2) of Regulation (EC) No 1257/96 the Humanitarian Aid Committee gave a favourable opinion on 19 February 2004.

HAS DECIDED AS FOLLOWS:

Article 1

1. In accordance with the objectives and general principles of humanitarian aid, the Commission hereby approves a total amount of 9 million Euro for the continuation of humanitarian air services (ECHO Flight) by using line 23.02.01 of the general budget of the European Union.

¹ OJ L 163, 2.7.1996, p. 1-6

2. In accordance with Article 2c of Regulation (EC) No 1257/96, the humanitarian operations shall be implemented in the pursuance of the following specific objective:

To provide safe, reliable, efficient and cost-effective humanitarian air transport capacity.

Article 2

1. The duration for the implementation of this decision shall be for a maximum period of 15 months, starting on the 1st of February 2004. Expenditure under this Decision shall be eligible from that date.
2. If the operations envisaged in this Decision are suspended owing to *force majeure* or comparable circumstances, the period of suspension shall not be taken into account for the calculation of the duration of the implementation of this Decision

Article 3

This Decision shall take effect on the day of its adoption.

Done at Brussels,

For the Commission

Member of the Commission