



Humanitarian Aid Decision

23 02 01

Title: Continuation of humanitarian air service (ECHO Flight)

Location of operation: ECHO flight

Amount of Decision: EUR 7,500,000

Decision reference number: ECHO/FLI/BUD/2007/01000

Explanatory Memorandum

1 - Rationale, needs and target population.

1.1. - Rationale:

Since its establishment in 1994, ECHO Flight has become a vital collaborator to most humanitarian partners operating in the Horn of Africa and Great Lakes region, transporting humanitarian personnel and supplies to many remote locations that would otherwise be cut off from the outside world. ECHO Flight has a highly successful and well renowned record of operation, and has become a visible symbol of EU humanitarian commitment to the Horn of Africa and beyond.

Further to the liquidation of the operator of the ECHO Flight service in 2005, an international open tender was launched in order to provide a comprehensive passenger and freight service to humanitarian partners in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). On 15 May 2006 DG ECHO¹ entered into a one-year service contract with DAC Aviation International Ltd. This contract can be renewed annually three times.

Continuation of a dedicated humanitarian air service is required in the DRC because of the persistent humanitarian needs and EU funded response activities and the appalling air safety record of national Congolese carriers and the very limited availability of reliable alternatives.

The present decision seeks to continue the ECHO Flight services for one year.

¹ Directorate-General for humanitarian aid - ECHO
ECHO/FLI/BUD/2007/01000

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 are coordinated with other humanitarian air services, should they be present, and they should not compete with sustainable commercial airlines offering safe and reliable humanitarian air transport capacity at acceptable cost, thus preventing market distortion.

In DRC, there is no safe and reliable linkage between main humanitarian hubs such as Goma, Lubumbashi, and Kinshasa or effective servicing of destinations of key humanitarian concern such as (currently) Bunia or Mitwaba. Overland travel is dangerous and time consuming, or even impossible due to security constraints or absence of infrastructure. Following the significant improvement of the security situation in DRC, DG ECHO has expanded its engagement in the country, also in geographic terms. This has created an additional need for air transport as many of the locations of DG ECHO funded projects can only be reached by air.

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

1.3. - Target population and regions concerned:

It is envisaged to continue the ECHO Flight operation in DRC. Other ECHO Flight operation areas may be added in Africa, depending on the existence of a concrete need for the safe, reliable and cost-effective humanitarian air transport that ECHO Flight will provide.

DG ECHO is supporting some 40 programmes across DRC run by a roughly similar number of partners. This translates into several hundred staff (both local and international) and hundreds of tons of equipment, although obviously not all require air transport. (Echo Flight transports on average 720 passengers and 60 tons of cargo per month.)

In addition there are other essential humanitarian programmes which, though not directly funded by DG ECHO, would be eligible for air support, including humanitarian and post-emergency development programmes funded by other Commission services or Member States. At present there are at least another forty of these across the country.

1.4. - Risk assessment and possible constraints:

The ECHO Flight network has enabled humanitarian NGOs to work throughout the area despite the fragile nature of the peace accord in DRC. Whilst there is much hope that the positive development continues after the national parliamentary elections held recently, there is, however, no guarantee that favourable conditions will prevail. 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.

2 - Objectives and components of the humanitarian intervention proposed:

2.1. - Objectives:

Principal objective: To facilitate the implementation of humanitarian and/or post-emergency development projects in remote areas.

Specific objective:

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

2.2. - Components:

The main task of ECHO Flight consists of the transport 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 professional carrier, which is constantly guided and monitored by DG ECHO, notably through the ECHO Flight Co-ordination Office established in Goma.

ECHO Flight operates in accordance with the following basic principles:

- ECHO Flight is a humanitarian tool, and is not available for political missions.
- ECHO Flight operations are carried out with a fleet of three aircraft: Two medium passenger/cargo aircraft providing air transport service to Katanga and Ituri. This aircraft serves as a link between the main hubs of Goma, Kinshasa, and Lubumbashi. The other is a small aircraft serving destinations between the main hubs and destinations with short and difficult airstrips in Maniema/South-Kivu. One medium passenger/cargo aircraft is also available on call and positioned in the area of operation as required.
- ECHO Flight operates in accordance with a general schedule. This schedule was established with the agreement of DG ECHO and the flight operator and is based on needs. Flights outside this general schedule are possible, depending on the demand and the specific needs.
- ECHO Flight applies the highest air safety standards.
- ECHO Flight services are free-of-charge for entitled organisations/personnel.
- Access to ECHO Flight is implemented in accordance with eligibility access rules, granting priority access to agencies implementing projects funded by the EU and its Member States, which provides a maximum protection against abuse of the system.
- In order to maximise the impact of the ECHO Flight operation, the Commission will maintain an ECHO Flight Co-ordination Office in Goma/DRC. This office monitors and controls ECHO Flight operations and provides technical assistance capacity and the necessary logistics for the achievement of this task. The costs related to this co-ordination office will be covered by the budget of a separate Decision (ECHO/COD/BUD/2007/01000) for the ECHO support offices in Kinshasa, Goma and Bukavu.

3 - Duration expected for actions in the proposed Decision:

The duration for the implementation of this Decision shall be 13 months.

Humanitarian operations funded by this Decision must be implemented within this period.

Expenditure under this Decision shall be eligible from 1 May 2007.

Start Date : 1 May 2007

If the implementation of the actions envisaged in this Decision is suspended due to *force majeure* or any comparable circumstance, the period of suspension will not be taken into account for the calculation of the duration of the humanitarian aid operations.

Depending on the evolution of the situation in the field, the Commission reserves the right to terminate the agreements signed with the contract partner where the suspension of activities is for a period of more than one third of the total planned duration of the action. In this respect, the procedure established in the general conditions of the specific agreement will be applied.

4 - Previous interventions/Decisions of the Commission within the context of the current crisis

List of previous DG ECHO operations in				
Decision Number	Decision Type	2005	2006	2007
ECHO/FLI/BUD/2005/01000	Non-emergency	EUR 6,500,000	EUR	EUR
ECHO/FLI/BUD/2006/01000	Non-emergency		7,000,000	
	Subtotal	6,500,000	7,000,000	0
	Grand Total	13,500,000		

Dated : 16 November 2006

Source : HOPE

5 - Overview of donors' contributions

There are no other donors contributing to the ECHO Flight programme.

However:

- DG ECHO also contributes some EUR 200,000 from the DRC Global Plan decision to the funding of Aviation sans Frontières (B) which runs a specific air support operation in Ituri with an especially small aircraft and a crew uniquely experienced for the special conditions in Ituri. DG ECHO has chosen to keep this established multi-donor funded programme independent from ECHO Flight.
- UN-World Food Programme has provided an intermittent humanitarian service depending on available funding. At one time, in 2005, they were funded (together with Aviation Sans Frontières (F)) by DG ECHO to provide a stop-gap service.
- Air Serv, a US based organization partly funded by USAID, provides a fee paying humanitarian air service. ECHO flight coordinates with AirServ, so that the services are complementary and maximize their efficiency.
- The United Nations Mission in DRC (MONUC) has a fleet of aircraft but these are dedicated principally to military use.

6 - Amount of Decision and distribution by specific objectives:

6.1. - Total amount of the Decision: EUR 7,500,000

6.2. - Budget breakdown by specific objectives

Principal objective: <i>To facilitate the implementation of humanitarian and/or post-emergency development projects in remote areas</i>			
Specific objectives	Allocated amount by specific objective (EUR)	Geographical area of operation	Potential partners²
Specific objective: To provide safe, reliable, efficient and cost-effective humanitarian air transport capacity	7,500,000	DRC, as well as possibly other regions where relevant needs may arise.	- DAC AVIATION INTL
TOTAL:	7,500,000		

² DAC Aviation International Limited

7 – Evaluation:

Under article 18 of Council Regulation (EC) No.1257/96 of 20 June 1996 concerning humanitarian aid the Commission is required to "regularly assess humanitarian aid operations financed by the Community in order to establish whether they have achieved their objectives and to produce guidelines for improving the effectiveness of subsequent operations." These evaluations are structured and organised in overarching and cross cutting issues forming part of DG ECHO's Annual Strategy such as child-related issues, the security of relief workers, respect for human rights, gender. Each year, an indicative Evaluation Programme is established after a consultative process. This programme is flexible and can be adapted to include evaluations not foreseen in the initial programme, in response to particular events or changing circumstances. More information can be obtained at:

http://ec.europa.eu/echo/evaluation/index_en.htm.

8 - Budget Impact article 23 02 01

-	EC (EUR)
Initial Available Appropriations for 2007	485,000,000
Supplementary Budgets	-
Transfers	-
Total Available Credits	485,000,000
Total executed to date	0
Available remaining	-
Total amount of the Decision	7,500,000

COMMISSION DECISION
of
on the financing of humanitarian operations from the general budget of the European Communities for Humanitarian Aid Flight Service

THE COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community,
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 Democratic Republic of Congo 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 Africa with a view to delivering urgent humanitarian aid;
- (4) An assessment of the humanitarian situation leads to the conclusion that humanitarian aid operations should be financed by the Community for a period of 13 months;
- (5) It is estimated that an amount of EUR 7,500,000 from budget line 23 02 01 of the general budget of the European Communities is necessary to provide humanitarian assistance to vulnerable populations, taking into account the available budget, other donors' contributions and other factors;
- (6) In accordance with Article 17 (2) of Council Regulation (EC) No.1257/96 of 20 June 1996 concerning humanitarian aid, the Humanitarian Aid Committee gave a favourable opinion on 1st March 2007;

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 EUR 7,500,000 for humanitarian aid operations Continuation of humanitarian air service (ECHO Flight) by using line 23 02 01 of the 2007 general budget of the European Communities.
2. In accordance with Article 9 of Council Regulation 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

¹ OJ L 163, 2.7.1996, p. 1-6

Article 2

1. The duration for the implementation of this Decision shall be for a maximum period of 13 months, starting on 1 May 2007.
2. Expenditure under this Decision shall be eligible from 1 May 2007.
3. 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

1. The amount of EUR 7,500,000 shall be conditional upon the necessary funds being available under the 2007 general budget of the European Communities.
2. This Decision will take effect on the date of its adoption.

Done at Brussels,

For the Commission

Member of the Commission