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Box 1

File: ADMIN ZAIRE (K) 7.  
Ambassador Hinton  
1174

October 25, 1974

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OFFICIAL-~~INFORMAL~~

Dear Deane:

This is a long over-the-phone explanation of where we've come so far here on the military assistance question, where we stand now and where we hope to go. Don Basum has probably briefed you on much of this, but I thought it would be useful to fill you in on a number of points as seen from our level.

By the time you get this, I hope you will have received a cable answering some of your previous questions on specific military items mentioned by the GOZ. I say "hope" because for several weeks now we have been engaged in a dialogue with both DOD and FM which, put euphemistically, has been difficult at best. Our purpose was to give you some information and guidance on the points you have raised; however, even after Bob and I were able finally to work out an agreed draft with Defense, FM dug its heels and at this writing we are still locked in battle with them. FM believes strongly that we should not be discussing arms assistance or even sales with the GOZ until an over-all "policy decision" had been made here regarding our future military relationship with Zaire. This has been the major reason we have not been able to get out to you even preliminary views and guidance on some of the points raised by the GOZ.

DOD's position has been--and is--that, so long as we have a \$40 million ceiling on military assistance to Africa and existing priority demands (chiefly from Morocco and Ethiopia), anything Zaire wants from us will have to be cash on the barrel, either through FMS

The Honorable  
Deane R. Hinton  
Ambassador  
American Embassy  
Kinshasa

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sales or straight commercial transactions. However, DOD and AF did agree to seek an increase in Zaire's FMS credit level to \$9.5 million a year for FY 76 and 77. Our idea is to provide enough to cover the cost of one C-130 and associated spares and training in each of those years with a million or so left over for other items which we and the GOZ might agree on. Jim Blake made this pitch last week at an inter-agency meeting on security assistance, chaired by Under Secretary Maw, and the consensus of those present (PM dissenting) was favorable. Of course this proposal is predicated on getting some relief next year from the \$40 million ceiling. The favored strategy now seems to be to try to get the Maghreb countries excluded from the limit, leaving the \$40 million for black Africa. While this move may be approved by the Administration, Congressional approval is another matter. Given Congress' increasingly bearish mood on military aid, ~~now~~ around here at this point are willing to put such money on Congress' taking favorable action. If there is no relief from the ceiling, we will simply have to fight for whatever we can get within it, and this will be uphill all the way.

On MAP, AF has proposed an increase from the current level of \$350,000 to \$750,000 to cover a modest amount of conus pilot training. This was a purely notional figure which we chose because it seemed to be at the upper limits of the possible (it would put Zaire just behind Morocco and Ethiopia, which are now receiving \$1 million and \$800,000, respectively). Jim Blake was less successful in putting forth this proposal, however. It was argued by others that this type training would involve grant aid, which the US is trying to reduce world-wide; that C-130 pilot training could be done by Lockheed; and that as a general proposition we should encourage foreign governments to purchase (e.g., FMS sales) pilot training in the US, such as Nigeria has been doing for some time.

I should stress that no definitive decision has yet been taken on either of these matters. However, I understand Mr. Maw will draw up the Department's position

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very soon and it will then go over to OMB. We will keep you informed as this moves forward.

What all this seems to add up to is that the most we can realistically shoot for now is some increase in FMS credit (assuming a give in the Africa ceiling) and moving ahead on the M-16s. Of course this does not preclude Saire's buying other equipment and training from US sources, and from our standpoint this would clearly be the preferred option. In fact, it may well be the only one. Saire would still encounter such problems as availability and high costs, and we would want to look carefully at what effect commercial financing of any large amounts of military purchases would have on Saire's over-all level of indebtedness. I realize it will not be easy--and may be impossible--to persuade Mobutu that he is better off buying from us than accepting communist assistance on concessionary terms; but I think we should continue pushing the idea of purchases and make sure the GOS has no illusions as to what it can expect by way of assistance. Meanwhile, we will continue our efforts here to come up with at least some help in the defense field and perhaps also in other areas of concern to Mobutu, i.e., Angola.

A word about air defense. According to our DOD contacts, the only thing now in our arsenal which is designed to meet the kind of low-level threat against which Saire wants protection is the shoulder-fired, heat-seeking Red Eye, our equivalent of the Soviet SAM-7. There is absolutely no chance of getting this for Saire, and DOD was unwilling even to mention it in the cable. There is concern not only about the possibility of this weapon falling into the hands of terrorists but also about distributing a weapon which does not distinguish between friend and foe. Beyond the terribly expensive, sophisticated and unsuitable Vulcan/Chapparel system and the unavailable Red-Eye, there are no other possibilities, Defense tells us. The old reliable Ack-Ack gun has been retired to museums. If Zanish can put us on to something DOD is hiding up its sleeve, let us know and we will go

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after it.

As for the related issue of helping to assess Saire's defense needs, Defense is very wary of getting involved in a full-blown survey, either in a joint commission or by sending out a team of our own to review the situation in its entirety. They argue that, if done seriously, such an undertaking would involve a large number of personnel over a lengthy period time; could involve us in disagreements from the outset with respect to assessing threats, capabilities and needs; and, no matter what we might say to the contrary, would lead to GOS expectations of our helping to provide whatever defense equipment and systems that might be prescribed. Defense initial reaction is therefore to avoid a large-scale or comprehensive effort and instead offer to provide very limited technical advice on one or another specific element (e.g., air defense) of whatever defense plans the GOS/AF can itself draw up. While we have not yet consulted with FM, they have already indicated their intention to adamantly oppose any kind of US involvement in a survey of Saire's defense needs on the grounds that this would be a first and dangerous step toward a deeper US-Sairian military relationship at a time when FM believes the US should be moving away from such ties on a global basis.

At this point I tend to have some reservations about getting too heavily involved in a comprehensive survey, particularly if we are not able to follow through in helping to fulfill defense requirements which we ourselves have helped to identify. On the other hand, the fact, that we may be able to offer so little in meeting these requirements makes it all the more important that we find some way to be responsive to what can be viewed as a legitimate effort by Mobutu to develop a rational set of priorities. To reject Mobutu's request out of hand would, I am convinced, visit serious strains in our political relations not to mention the possible opportunity for communist penetration. (I have, incidentally,

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asked for an INR/CIA assessment of the latter point.) Unless Mobutu decides to fall away from this proposal-- and the fact that he did not raise it at all in his meeting with you and Don leaves me wondering on this point--I think we should work toward approval here of sending out some sort of team, either to look over plans the GOZ/FAZ have been able to put together or at least to comment on selected elements of those plans. There are various ways this might be done and I am enclosing some drafts--one by DOD and two by AF/C--to give you an idea of some of our preliminary thinking.

All of this is for your background information only at this point and not for discussion with the GOZ. We will of course be communicating with you through regular channels as we develop and refine our views. In the meantime, you might have your people thinking about some of the questions we are likely to ask you to send in as part of the policy-formulation process: a.g., to what extent would Mobutu be willing to purchase arms, without FMS credit, from the US? Is he serious about turning to communist sources if we don't offer help? Or is this primarily a cold-war bluff? Does the GOZ have the resources to develop at least the framework of a defense plan of its own? Would Mobutu be satisfied with US military experts advising on the technical aspects of a GOZ/FAZ plan? What would be the extent of damage to US interests in Zaïre were we to reject all requests for military assistance? For a defense survey? For both? In what ways and in what other areas of our relations could we take steps to compensate for a failure to meet Mobutu's military requests?

I look forward to pursuing this with you at Lusaka and Kinshasa, although hopefully by then we will have made progress toward sorting out a US response.

With warmest regards,

Sincerely,

Walter L. Cutler

Enclosure:  
As stated

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