

115/23/37

Your file:

Our file: 3/88/1

15:34 (45193)

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FROM: NEW YORK C04464/NYK  
 TO: WELLINGTON DEFENCE WGTN UNSC  
 CC: CANBERRA HARARE OTTAWA WASHINGTON

Willberg	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Forsyth	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ward	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rider	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hughes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Kember	<input type="checkbox"/>
McMaster	<input type="checkbox"/>
Foster	<input type="checkbox"/>
McCormick	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rugh	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tyne	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dalton	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watson	<input type="checkbox"/>

18-May-1994  
 Priority  
 Priority  
 Routine  
 Routine

MFAT (UNC, MEA, HRU, DEV, DSP3)  
 DEFENCE HQNZDF (OPS, DSIA)  
 DEFENCE MOD  
 P/S MFA  
 PMC (HILL)

Subject

RWANDA: POSSIBLE NEW ZEALAND LOGISTICS CONTRIBUTION TO UNAMIR

Summary

- The UN urgently needs logistics support to mount the expanded force in Rwanda
- An offer of a New Zealand C130 to operate as part of the aerial supply line from Nairobi to Rwanda would be an invaluable contribution to a UN operation and a country in desperate need

Action

Consideration of and advice on whether New Zealand is prepared to offer the UN this kind of assistance.

Report

As you will appreciate, one of the major problems facing the UN in mounting and sustaining the expanded UNAMIR force called for in Res 918 will be logistical support. An immediate problem is likely to be in getting African troops (eg from Ghana and Zimbabwe) from their home bases to Rwanda. Even more important will be the longer term task of sustaining the force in the field.

2 The landlocked nature of Rwanda and the terrain of the interior as well as that of neighbouring countries mean that much of the expanded force and its supplies will have to be flown in, preferably to Kigali airport. If Kigali airport is not available, then the UN plans to fly into a couple of grass strip runways in other parts of the country.

3 We understand that the UN is hoping that the United States will assist with the first task of getting troops and equipment to Rwanda in the same way it ferried the expanded ECOMOG forces to Liberia (though the current American caution to the whole concept of the expanded force has cast some doubt on that score). The UN are currently exploring the options for securing heavy airlift capacity for the longer term supply operation.

4 At present, the supply load is falling exclusively on the aircraft that the Canadians have made available to UNAMIR, but that single plane will have to be reinforced when the expanded force is put into the field. Because of the distances and quantities involved, as well as the possibility that unsealed strips may have to be used, Hercules C130s are the aircraft of choice.

5 It occurs to us that one extremely valuable contribution that New Zealand might be able to make the Rwanda operation without putting New Zealand lives unduly at risk, and which would not detract from or complicate a possible NZ contribution to Bosnia, would be for New Zealand to make available to the UN an RNZAF C130 and crew for a defined period. The principal task would be to operate the Nairobi-Kigali supply route, but it might also be that the UN would ask that the aircraft also be used to ferry African troops to Rwanda.

6 We have not discussed this idea with the Secretariat. But we know from the comments they have made to us about the difficulties of securing the necessary logistic support capability and from remarks by other delegations that an indication of possible New Zealand assistance in this area would be highly welcomed.

7 Obviously, we would need to obtain more details about how the supply operation is envisaged before New Zealand could commit itself to such an undertaking. But it would be difficult to do that without raising hopes across the road. We therefore need to find out from you whether the idea is feasible and attractive to you.

8 We think a New Zealand contribution to the Rwanda operation would be a very appropriate contribution to a particularly needy UN operation and to a country and people desperately in need of international assistance. It would also be a concrete demonstration to the UN and to African countries of the comments made by the Minister to the Secretary-General last month about the importance of giving African issues equal importance with those in Europe. It might also be useful in domestic terms, particularly if, as seems increasingly likely, Australia were to offer troops and equipment for the expanded UNAMIR.

9 By coincidence, the Argentine Ambassador told us yesterday that Argentina is also considering providing a

Hercules for the Nairobi-Kigali supply run. However, he added that it would be difficult for them to give a positive response because that were already making make 4 C130s available to UNPROFOR to do a similar supply run from Brindisi to Zagreb. He pricked up his ears when we noted that we were on the point of suggesting to you that New Zealand might offer something precisely along those lines. He said that one option might be for New Zealand and Argentina to share the load by, for example, doing three months each.

10 If Ministers and Defence were interested in a New Zealand offer of a Hercules, our preference would be to make it available for say six months in order to maximise the value of the offer. On the other hand, and bearing in mind the commitments on the RNZAF C130s once the Antarctic season gets under way later in the year, it occurs to us that a shared operation with Argentina might have some attractions if New Zealand were to do the first three months.

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End Message