

Joint Church Aid-U.S.A., Inc.

350 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10001 • (212) 594-9300

September 29, 1969

Mr. Bertram H. Gold
American Jewish Committee
165 East 56th Street
New York, N. Y. 10022

Dear Mr. Gold:

You undoubtedly already know of the crash of Joint Church Aid-U.S.A.'s Stratofreighter N 52676 at Uli last Friday night, and the fact that the crew of four and Flight Test Research's Chief Pilot, Alex Nicoll, who was acting as examiner, were killed. They have been buried in the cemetery at Uli in which lie the remains of twenty other brave men who also made the supreme sacrifice in trying to bring food and medicines to the blockaded civilians of Biafra.

Aircraft Commander John Frost, who was upgraded from co-pilot to pilot early last week, was flying a second Stratofreighter into Uli Friday night some ten minutes behind the ill-fated C-97. When he heard of the crash on the Uli radio, he decided the prudent thing to do would be to turn around and return to Sao Tome, since it was not made clear by the "Uli tower" whether or not the crashed aircraft was blocking the airstrip. However, upon reaching Sao Tome, he immediately returned on an Aid By Air DC 6 on the second shuttle to investigate the crash, along with Colonel Wichman, Nordchurchaid's Director of Flight Operations, in an attempt to ascertain what caused it. The details as known presently are in the attached letter.

While JCA-USA did not fly at all on Saturday night, I am pleased to report that the airlift continues without interruption and that as of Sunday night, our Stratofreighters had again begun to fly, and Captain Frost made two landings at Uli, delivering 33 short tons.

Incidentally, word was gotten to Flight Test Research in Long Beach, California, by 8:45 PM EDT, Friday, and I requested to be advised when the next of kin had been informed of the accident. Notification of next of kin had been completed by 1:00 PM EDT Saturday, at which time permission was given to the Catholic Relief Services Office of Information to release the details. JCA International's Public Relations Officer in Geneva released the information to the international press on Saturday morning, Geneva time, without mentioning the names of the crash victims, and at 4:30 AM EDT today, Monday, September 29th, permission was given to Geneva to release the names of the crew.

Mr. Bertram H. Gold

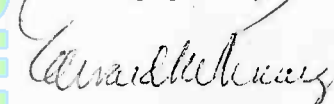
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September 29, 1969

Expressions of condolence have already been received from Canairelief, which itself lost an aircraft and crew early last month, from Nordchurchaid in Copenhagen, from the German Caritasverband and Das Diakonische Werk and from Africa Concern in Dublin.

With kind personal regards, I am

Sincerely yours,



Edward M. Kinney
Secretary-Treasurer

EMK:ch

Enc.: Copy of letter to Undersecretary of Air Force

September 29, 1969

Under Secretary of the Air Force
The Pentagon
Washington, D. C.

Attn: Colonel Joseph D. Cooper

Dear Sir:

I regret to inform you of the crash on Friday, September 26, 1969, at 18:35 GMT, of Stratofreighter N 52976, which was sold to Joint Church Aid-U.S.A. by the Department of the Air Force for Nigeria/Biafra relief. The aircraft fell short of the Uli airstrip on its final approach due, apparently, to radio difficulty, although investigation continues in an attempt to ascertain the exact cause of the crash. The aircraft was totally destroyed and its crew killed.

Flight Test Research's Chief Pilot Alex Nicoll of Southampton, England, A/C John Wilson, Jr. of Santa Monica, California, the pilot, A/C Robert L. Maynard of St. Petersburg, Florida, the co-pilot, Flight Engineer Charles E. Kelly of Sunnymede, California, and Loadmaster Charles R. Jacox of Encino, California, constituted the crew.

The weather was indicated to be "normal," which, at this time of the year over eastern Nigeria, would be broken heavy clouds, and Stratofreighter 676 was considered to be the C-97G in best operating condition on Sao Tome. It is known that the pilot called for the airstrip lights several times, the last time urgently, but it is not known whether the failure to illuminate the airstrip when requested was the immediate cause of the accident. Preliminary examination of the remains of the aircraft indicate that the propeller of engine #2 appeared to have been feathered while the aircraft was en route to Uli.

The unfamiliarity of the new pilot with the Uli run undoubtedly entered into the equation which led to the crash.

At the same time, I am glad to inform the Department of the Air Force that the Stratofreighters sold to JCA-USA had, as of September 28th, landed successfully at Uli 791 times and delivered more than 11,000 short tons of foods and medicines which have played a major part in keeping hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians alive.

Yours very truly,

Edward M. Kinney
Secretary-Treasurer

EMK:ch

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Joint Church Aid-U.S.A., Inc.

350 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10001 • (212) 594-9300

September 30, 1969

Mr. Bertram H. Gold
American Jewish Committee
165 E. 56th Street
New York, N. Y. 10022

Dear Mr. Gold:

I am attaching herewith copies of the wire I dispatched yesterday to the families of the deceased crew (except Mr. & Mrs. Wilson, parents of the pilot, whom FTR has been unable to locate) in the name of the officers of Joint Church Aid-U.S.A.

Bishop Swannstrom also asked me to dispatch a personal telegram for him, and I have attached a copy of this also.

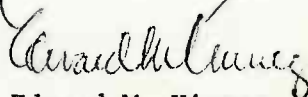
At the present time, we are endeavouring to secure certificates of demise sufficient to enable our insurance underwriters to pay the sum of \$50,000 to the beneficiary on the policy which JCA-USA and Flight Test Research had taken out on behalf of each crew member.

As of yesterday afternoon, I was informed by Mr. Stollenwerk from Sao Tome that, while the bodies of Alex Nicoll, Robert Maynard and John Wilson were buried at Uli following an interdenominational service performed on Saturday, September 26th, the remains of Charles Kelly and Charles Jacox had not been found and probably were consumed in the burning wreckage. Two Biafrans living in a hut close to the site of the crash also died from the intense heat. Stollenwerk advised that, as of midnight Sunday, the wreckage was still burning.

Three FTR men were in Uli yesterday to investigate the crash, and I hope to have a complete, detailed report on the accident in the near future.

With kind personal regards, I am

Sincerely yours,



Edward M. Kinney
Secretary-Treasurer

EMK:ch
Encls.

SEP 29 1969

Tel: 594 9300
(Catholic Relief Services)

MRS. CHARLES E. KELLY
253-15 FILANEE STREET
SUNNYMEAD, CALIFORNIA

THE OFFICERS OF JOINT CHURCH AID-U.S.A. AND THE THREE RELIGIOUS GROUPS THEY REPRESENT
NAMELY CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES, CHURCH WORLD SERVICE AND THE AMERICAN JEWISH
COMMITTEE EXPRESS DEEPEST SYMPATHY ON YOUR GREAT LOSS STOP ALL CONCERNED HAVE LONG
ADMIRERD THE COURAGE AND SELF-SACRIFICE OF THE MEN WHO FLY DESPERATELY NEEDED FOODS
AND MEDICINES TO THE INNOCENT CIVILIAN VICTIMS OF THE NIGERIA/BIAFRA CIVIL WAR STOP
WHILE DEEPLY GRIEVING LAST FRIDAY NIGHT'S LOSS THE PILOTS AND FLIGHT CREWS AT SAO TOME
ARE CONTINUING FLYING UNHESITATINGLY THE MERCY AIRBRIDGE SO THAT THE SUPREME SACRIFICE
WHICH YOUR HUSBAND CHUCK HAS MADE WILL NOT HAVE BEEN IN VAIN STOP YOU HAVE OUR EARNEST
PRAYERS THAT GOD WILL GIVE YOU THE GRACE AND STRENGTH TO BEAR UP UNDER YOUR BURDEN.

(SIGNATURES ON NEXT PAGE)

594 9300

Catholic Relief Services - USCC
451 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y.

PAGE TWO

Tel: 594 - 9300
(Catholic Relief Services)

MRS. CHARLES E. KELLY
253-15 FILAREE STREET
SUNNYMEAD, CALIFORNIA

-PAGE TWO-

(SIGNED)

BISHOP EDWARD SWANSTROM, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
JOINT CHURCH AID-U.S.A., INC.

JAMES MacCRACKEN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
CHURCH WORLD SERVICE

BERTRAM H. GOLD, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT,
THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

EDWARD KINNEY, SECRETARY-TREASURER,
JOINT CHURCH AID-US.A., INC.

594 9300

Catholic Relief Services - USCC
451 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y.

PAGE TWO

Tel: 594 9300
(Catholic Relief Services)

MRS. CHARLES E. KELLY
253-15 FILAREE STREET
SUNNYMEAD, CALIFORNIA

MY DEEP SYMPATHY YOUR GREAT LOSS WILL OFFER HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE
MASS FOR THE REPOSE OF THE SOUL OF YOUR HUSBAND CHUCK ASKING THAT
GOD GRANT HIM ETERNAL REST.

BISHOP EDWARD SWANSTROM

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES-USCC

594 9300

Catholic Relief Services - USCC
451 Madison Avenue, N.Y., N.Y.

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Also sent to:

Mrs. Harriet Maynard, 1488 40th Avenue, N.E., St. Petersburg, Fla., wife of the Co-Pilot on the ill-fated 676, Robert Maynard.

Mrs. Charles R. Jacox, Jr., 166-62 La Maida, Encino, California, wife of the Loadmaster/Mechanic on the 676.

Mrs. Emily Nicoll, Red Lodge, Chilworth Road, Southampton, England, wife of Alex Nicoll, FTR's Chief Pilot and Examiner on the 676.

We have not, to date, been able to locate the parents of John Wilson, Jr., the Pilot, although we have advised his Pastor of his death. Should we get this information we will make it available.

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JR
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Joint Church Aid—U.S.A., Inc.

350 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10001 • (212) 594-9300

October 1, 1969

CONFIDENTIAL

Mr. Bertram H. Gold
American Jewish Committee
165 E. 56th Street
New York, N. Y. 10022

Dear Mr. Gold:

Having returned from Sao Tome about ten days ago with a first hand picture of FTR's staffing of the American segment of the airlift, I found it to be more deficient than I had believed before my visit.

For a period of several months FTR had had a Chief of Operations named Andrew who proved an important stabilizing influence in relating the two major aspects of the FTR operation on Sao Tome, namely, aircraft operation and aircraft maintenance.

When Andrew's term expired, he was not replaced, even though FTR was aware of the friction that existed between Captain Nicoll, FTR's Chief Pilot, and Ken Benesh, FTR's Chief of Maintenance. This friction exploded several times while I was on the island and, in fact, I delayed my departure from Sao Tome in an effort to see if I could not patch things up until I could convince FTR to place a man in the position which Andrew formerly held.

Then, too, the FTR method of staffing has rarely provided us with full crews, and they have, unjustly and unwisely in my opinion, too often exercised the 48 hour cancellation clause which they have in their contract with their Sao Tome employees. For instance, one of our former pilots, Peter Knox, a Canadian, did not know he was being replaced until he was shown a wire by Nicoll while I was there advising that his replacement was arriving the next day. Not only did I think this an unjust procedure, but I thought it unwise inasmuch as the replacement would be an unknown quantity until he arrived and had attempted the Uli shuttle. As it turned out, the arriving pilot from Texas did not even get into one of our aircraft, but after listening to the crews and looking the situation over, concluded the airlift was not for him and returned on the first available commercial flight.

There are a host of other grievances which I have, but which are secondary since they are of a managerial nature and by assuming much of this responsibility as it related to matters other than aircraft operation and maintenance, we have been able to carry out a fairly successful operation.

Bertram H. Gold

October 1, 1969

However, deficiencies in crew selection or the modalities thereof are not within JCA-USA's competence, and it is necessary that we have full confidence in both the ability and accomplishment of our aircraft operator/maintainer.

It happened that while I was on Sao Tome, Mr. Kurt Herzog, Managing Director of Balair, the Swiss charter company, visited Sao Tome to discuss the operation and maintenance of our C-97s by Balair. This company has now had considerable experience in the handling of Strato-freighters as the organization responsible for the ICRC airlift. With ICRC not flying, Balair felt that it could well handle the JCA-USA segment of the Sao Tome airlift. I listened with interest and told Mr. Herzog that at the moment I was preoccupied with other problems, but that perhaps some time in the future we could discuss it further. This time seems to be at hand. Accordingly, I have asked Mr. Herzog to come to New York for discussions on the subject.

Please note that I am not indicating a recommendation or a decision to negate our relationship with FTR. What I am indicating to the officers of Joint Church Aid-U.S.A. is that I am engaging in conversations with Balair and, after reviewing them in detail and comparing them with FTR's cost and performance, I plan to make a considered recommendation in this matter.

With kind personal regards, I am

Sincerely yours,



Edward M. Kinney
Secretary-Treasurer

EMK:ch