

Dear All,

"I have a flight permit number for you." These were good words to hear over the satellite phone when I called to give my regular half hourly position report. I had less than an hour to run to Beira International Airport in Mozambique which was my first port of call on a flight taking people up who were involved in a re-development project. The trip had been arranged at relatively short notice but a national holiday in Mozambique the previous day had prevented us obtaining the official permit number. The only way forward was to set off early in the morning and have the Mercy Air office phone whilst the flight was taking place. Being armed with this short assortment of 'official' letters and numbers would potentially avoid a lot of hassle and red tape on my arrival at Beira.



Causing the usual excitement as we arrive with a team in Mocuba.

I was met by a Christian friend of ours who lives and works in Beira. Knowing we were coming his way he had asked us to buy some 'hard-to-obtain' groceries in South Africa and bring them up. He was glad for the small stash of luxury we could provide. He is also a pilot and introduced me to Hans, a German friend of his who was refueling his plane just in front of ours. Hans was doing low level game count survey flying and two days earlier had been taking off after refueling at Cuamba, a military airfield two hours flight to the north. He had heard a 'rat-ta-tat' and after years of flying in the Congo recognised it as machine gun fire. He quickly banked and flew at tree top level away from the airfield. On landing back in Beira he found two bullet holes, one had gone through the wing and missed the fuel tank by less than 30cm, the other had hit the belly of the aircraft, entered a tool box and had destroyed a monkey wrench. Had it gone further it might well have hit his wife who was sitting in the back seat. We looked at the bullet holes and exchanged stories. Mercy Air had been in Cuamba only two weeks earlier in the very plane I was flying and Cathy and I had taken a mission team up there the previous year.

This is a very isolated incident but it just got me thinking that when we ask you to pray for safety, it doesn't just cover weather, good decision making and the mechanical integrity of the aircraft. Added to that, a few weeks ago we were awoken at two in the morning by four men trying to break into our house. They broke three of six welds on the burglar bars but were frightened away when Paul went investigating with a torch. We are now in the process of upgrading our alarm system!



Matthew helping to weld the burglar bars back on.

Other than that, Cathy has delivered 4 or 5 babies since we last wrote and Matthew spent two weeks with us as he had a wedding shoot in our area. He also managed to fix our computer so it worked at a modern speed.

Next week we are both off to Moz with a team doing a medical mission in the Zambezi Delta. Likely another shorted update then.

Thanks again for your prayers and support.

Paul and Cathy