Congress May Vote More Aid for Zimbabwe after Election

October 8, 1980

Summary

Prime Minister Mugabe's highly successful visit to the United States in August stimulated support for increased U.S. aid to Zimbabwe -- from the Administration, the Congress and the major media. President Carter decided not to commit the U.S. to a major new aid package when he met with Mugabe, but since then Congressman Solarz, Chairman of the House Africa Subcommittee, has been trying to build support for aid to Zimbabwe in the Congress. The full house may vote after the November election on an amendment to the fiscal year 1981 foreign aid appropriations bill that would increase the level of aid to Zimbabwe by $20 million. We are asking for your support for this measure.

The Recent Record on Aid to Zimbabwe

The long war for independence and the heritage of colonial rule have created a need for substantial foreign assistance for Zimbabwe. Rural reconstruction and refugee resettlement, estimated to cost $350 million, are the most urgent needs. In addition, Zimbabwe is seeking outside capital for long-term development programs, especially the redistribution of land.

The Carter Administration promised during the Lancaster House conference that it would participate in a multi-donor, regional aid program for southern Africa, but it made no specific commitment as to the level or types of aid it would offer to Zimbabwe. Although no Zimbabwe program was included in the 1980 foreign aid bill, $22 million in grants for resettlement and reconstruction was reprogrammed from that bill for resettlement and reconstruction projects for Zimbabwe. In addition, the Administration looked deep into all the "pockets" from which small aid programs could come, and arranged for the following additional programs: another $6.6 million for refugee repatriation and subsistence; $25 million in loans from the Housing Investment Guaranty program; $150 thousand for "labor development activity"; $750 thousand for science and technology co-operation. An agricultural assistance program is also being developed, and Export-Import Bank financing under discussion may total as much as $150 million. To date, according to AID Assistant Administrator for Africa Goler Butcher, the United States has spent $59.2 million in aid for Zimbabwe.

The Administration didn't request any money for Zimbabwe in the fiscal year 1981 bill (which the Congress is currently considering), because its aid figures were presented to Congress in January, before Zimbabwe's independence. The Congress is considering including up to $30 million for Zimbabwe in the foreign aid authorization bill, to be taken from the $39 million that the Administration requested for regional programs in southern Africa.

Increased aid for Zimbabwe is getting astonishingly broad support in the media. The Christian Science Monitor called the aid to date "paltry"; the Washington Star said: "...if present indications persist, the Mugabe government may turn out to be worthier of Western support than many 'reformist' regimes currently enjoying it"; the New York Times wrote: "Both the domestic and foreign interests of Zimbabwe and the United States happen to coincide. That makes it all the more remarkable that Washington has been so stingy with the kind of economic assistance that could help assure Mr. Mugabe's success."

The Strategy in the Congress

Prime Minister Mugabe made a very favorable impression on the 35 members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee with whom he met, including Chairman Clement Zablocki. To take advantage of this mood, Congressman Solarz introduced a bill, H.R. 8184, to authorize a multi-year, $200 million authorization
of grant assistance under the "Economic Support Fund" (a type of foreign aid not linked to designated development programs). Cyrus Vance and Averill Harriman testified on September 23rd in support of increased aid before Solarz's Africa Subcommittee. Secretary Vance said, "We have already made a substantial political and moral investment in Zimbabwe... How can we foster and support this important investment? ... If we do not now join with others to meet Zimbabwe's needs, opportunists and ideologues, both within and outside that country, will claim their day."

Representative Solarz is trying to accomplish two goals: (1) increase the amount of aid that can be spent in Zimbabwe in fiscal year 1981; and (2) generate a record of support for aid now that will encourage passage of a significant amount of aid for Zimbabwe in the fiscal year 1982 foreign aid bill (which Congress will begin debating next spring).

Rep. Solarz hopes that the Africa Subcommittee and the full House Foreign Affairs Committee will vote to support H.R. 8184 in the "lame duck" session after the November election. But there is no chance that this large, separate bill could get all the way through the legislative process this year. So, in addition, Rep. Solarz is working with Rep. Julian Dixon, a member of the Black Caucus who serves on the Appropriations Committee, to try to add $20 million to the fiscal year 1981 foreign aid appropriations bill, H.R. 7854, which the full House hasn't yet voted on.

It is unclear whether this specific strategy will work, but it is worth supporting as a way of maintaining the current pro-Zimbabwe sentiment in the Congress. There are procedural problems involved in adding a new country program to the appropriations bill that wasn't included in the authorizing bill. In addition, it is possible that the Congress won't pass a foreign aid appropriations bill this year. At the moment, this bill is the first item on the House agenda when it reconvenes on November 12th. But foreign aid often falls to the bottom of the priority list in Congress, and it is possible that the Congress won't complete action on it. The Congress never passed a foreign aid appropriations bill last year, so the Administration is operating on a "continuing resolution" which provides for spending only at the previous year's levels. This could happen again, undercutting the strategy for increasing aid to Zimbabwe this year.

What You Can Do

Please write to members of the full House Foreign Affairs Committee and the Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee, urging their support for aid for Zimbabwe. Time your letters to arrive in members' Capitol Hill offices right after the election. The address is House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. 20515. Refer to H.R. 8184 when communicating with Foreign Affairs Committee members, and to a possible $20 million floor amendment to the appropriations bill, H.R. 7854, when writing to the Appropriations Committee members. (As with all appropriations bills, the Senate will only begin its committee consideration of H.R. 7854 if and when the House completes its vote on the measure. So you can hold off on lobbying Senators until you hear from us about the results in the House.)

Foreign Affairs Committee members:
Democrats: Zablocki (WI), Fountain (NC), Fascell (FL), Rosenthal (NY), Hamilton (IN), Wolff (NY), Bingham (NY), Yatron (PA), Collins (IL), Solarz (NY), Bonker (WA), Studus (MA), Ireland (FL), Pease (OH), Mica (FL), Barnes (MD), Gray (PA), Hall (OH), Wolpe (MI), Bowen (MS), Flitman (IN), Bedell (IA).
Republicans: Broomfield (MI), Derwinski (IL), Finkley (IL), Buchanan (AL), Winn (KS), Gilman (NY), Guyer (OH), Lagomarsino (CA), Goodling (PA), Pritchard (WA), Fenwick (NJ), Quayle (IN).

Appropriations Foreign Operations Subcommittee members:
Democrats: Long (MD), Yates (IL), Obey (WI), Lehman (FL), Dixon (CA), McHugh (NY), C. Wilson (TX).
Republicans: Young (FL), Kemp (NY), Smith (NE).

Ranking majority and minority members of full committee: Whitten (MS), Conte (MA).