New York, N. Y. The American Committee on Africa today described the State Department's decision to recommend licensing the sale of Cessna light aircraft to South Africa as "shocking, coming so soon after the Security Council vote for a mandatory arms embargo." In a telegram to President Carter, George M. Houser, ACOA Executive Director, charged that "light aircraft are used in counter insurgency surveillance operations."

On July 24, 1975 ACOA Research Director Jennifer Davis testified before the U. S. Senate Foreign Relations Sub-committee on Africa concerning U. S. violations of the arms embargo of South Africa. In her testimony, Ms. Davis charged that the licensing of so-called civilian aircraft to South Africa was "little more than a polite legal fiction; any aircraft can be easily converted for military use, and in South Africa the existence of a para-military group such as the Air Commandos makes it possible for the military to use civilian aircraft while maintaining the legal fiction."

Ms. Davis, an exiled South African economist, described the all white Air Commandos as "a flying militia, made up of volunteers using their own planes... paid by the government when they fly in times of emergency or war."

"Many of these Commando members fly U. S. light planes such as Pipers and Cessnas," she charged in her testimony.

She also noted that, according to the respected International Institute for Strategic Studies, "Cessnas are used in a squadron assigned to the army, and in both the Reserve squadrons and the Air Commando Squadron."

Ms. Davis quoted a South African military journal, Paratus, concerning the use of the light aircraft in maneuvers of the South African military. According to Paratus, "Cessnas can be used to control ground fire onto specific targets and to report subsequent enemy movement."

"It is these aircraft that will be in the forefront of the inevitably bloody suppression of any black attempt to oppose continued white minority rule," Ms. Davis concluded.

"The South African government will interpret this authorization as a victory" ACOA's telegram stated, while "The people struggling for liberation will interpret it as another instance of American duplicity and hypocrisy."

ACOA urged the Administration to cancel the authorization.

Funded in 1953, the ACOA is devoted to supporting the African people in their struggle for freedom and independence.

Portions of the testimony referred to are reprinted and enclosed.

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U.S. Planes in South African Skies

Finally, it is important to be aware of what is probably the simplest—and perhaps also the most disturbing—evidence of the long range direction of United States policy in South Africa. Despite all assurances to the contrary the United States has allowed a situation to develop in which American aircraft, supplied to South Africa after the imposition of the 1963 embargo, are being used by the military for purposes that cannot, by any stretch of the most bureaucratic imagination, be described as non-military.

In 1971 ACOA testimony before the House Subcommittee on Africa the question of the arms embargo indicated that one of the major items of trade between South Africa and the US was an increasing number of light aircraft. Commenting on such sales in that year Secretary Newsom explained US policy as follows:

"There has been no change in the arms embargo which we have maintained since 1963 on the sale of military equipment to South Africa... and which, among other things, precludes the sale of any aircraft to South Africa for military purposes, including military training and reconnaissance. However, normal trade with South Africa in civilian-type goods for non-military purposes continues, and we are prepared to consider licensing for VIP transport purposes limited numbers of small un-armed executive civilian-type aircraft which will not strengthen South Africa's military or internal security capacity."

ACOA pointed out that such sales of "civilian" aircraft to South Africa showed the fallacy of the licensing system under which aircraft are sold for "non-military purposes". This is little more than a polite legal fiction; any aircraft can be easily converted for military use and in South Africa the existence of a para-military group such as the Air Commandos makes it possible for the military to use civilian aircraft while maintaining the legal fiction.

The Air Commandos

The all white Air Commandos, established in 1964, can best be described as a flying militia, made up of volunteers using their own planes. These men are not members of the regular military forces but are paid by the government when they fly in times of emergency or war. The establishment of 12 squadrons was authorized in 1964. The Commandos attend an annual two-week training camp, during which all their expenses are paid by the government. Their training entails radio operation with army and mobile police striking forces, reconnaissance, practice bombing and general cooperation in maintaining the internal security of both South Africa and South West Africa. Many of these Commando members fly U.S. light planes, such as Piper and Cessnas. Thus, even if the licensing procedures were adhered to technically in the sense that no planes were sold to the military, such planes would become available to the military, and, most important of all, form part of the "security planning" of the government. Recent reports from various South African sources, including the military journal, Paratus, indicate that the South Africans are now concentrating very seriously on training their military forces to cope with what they term "anti-insurgent" operations so that the importance of the Commando role is increasing. One such recent operation, held in the Kwa Zulu Bantustan in 1974 went on for eight days, involving the Army, Air Force, Navy and Police. The exercise covered the following aspects of counter-insurgency operations:

- Search and destroy operations.
- Patrolling, road blocks, ambushes, counter penetration operations along a coastline. Follow-up operations.
- According to the Paratus report the air arm was provided by a squadron of Citizen Force volunteer pilots with their own aircraft. They were used for visual recce, contact recce, evacuation of casualties, communication flights and special operations.

It is now increasingly clear that there have been even more serious erosions in the formal arms embargo, and that both light aircraft such as Cessnas and heavy transport planes, such as the Lockheed Hercules C 130s have been provided directly to the South African Government for military use, long after the supposed imposition of an embargo in 1963. According to the International Institute for Strategic Studies there are now at least 7 C 130s operating in transport squadrons of the South African Air Force. Cessnas are used in a squadron assigned to the army, and in both the Reserve squadrons and the Air Commando squadrons.

These aircraft play a direct military role in operations quite openly described by the South Africans in their publications. Thus, in an article depicting the role of Aircraft of the Border, Paratus refers both to the usefulness of the C 130s and to the invaluable role played by the Cessna, commenting that "without these aircraft, the helicopter, Cessna and Dakota, problems of supplies and communication would be insurmountable." Among the tasks performed by these planes are:

- "Reconnaissance: Low level visual reconnaissance with a pilot and observer is done with the Cessna because of its maneuverability and low fuel consumption. These small aircraft keep the one thousand mile border under constant surveillance."
- "Aerial observation post: Cessnas can be used to control ground fire onto specific targets and to report subsequent enemy movement."

Thus US aircraft are being built into South Africa's system of military repression in the most direct way possible. It is these aircraft that will be in the forefront of the inevitably bloody suppression of any Black attempt to oppose continued white minority rule. It should be remembered that in South Africa a terrorist is defined, by law, as anyone who attempts to embarrass the affairs of state. Therefore, even peaceful demonstrators or striking workers might find themselves the targets of these US built airplanes, and it is certain that in any development of a liberation war such as that just ended in Mozambique, American planes would be used to search out and destroy African freedom fighters.

Excerpts of testimony by Jennifer Davis before U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Africa July 24, 1975