

Gero's Bush Diary #4

Diversions ...

A)

Today, I am flying together with a colleague of mine. This is actually big fun, especially when you go along well, and when both have the same mother tongue. Beyond that, we don't have to start until late morning.

11:35 Departure for Pagak, close to the Ethiopian border. A Japanese NGO (non-governmental organization) is developing a special Aids project in that area, amongst others.

12:50 A message from the satellite phone: are we able to divert on our return flight to Chot Bura? A sick lady has to be brought to Nassir (on a stretcher), and this would be our next destination anyways.

Quick calculation: the extra flight time will be an additional 20-25 min's: Yes, we can!

13:35 Overflying of Pagak to check the airstrip condition. It looks pretty muddy, and I have no experience how soft this Black Cotton Soil will be (check out my explanations in the previous diary). My colleague has already quite some experience and thinks it is landable.

13:40 Touchdown, breaking action = 0. But with reverse thrust it works. Some very muddy parts we avoid, the remainder parts are better than I thought.

14:11 Takeoff for Chot Bura, Landing 14:37. The flocks of birds, which gave us some hard time 4 days ago, are gone. Good.

I am caring for the plane and the takeoff preparations, and my colleague cares for our sick person and ties her safely down.

14:55 Let's roll, departure for Nassir.

15:23 Landing in Nassir. Again my colleague helps disembarking the sick lady, even the return of the stretcher which we have to take to Juba later. I am unloading the cargo and help the other passengers.

Fuel calculation: due to the diversion to Chot Bura less than planned, but well in the limits.

15:37 Only 15 min's later, we are on our way back to Juba, flying time about 1:30 h.

17:12 A nice tail wind lets us arrive in Juba early. Our ground staff receives the passengers and helps them through the terminal. We finish our documents and lock the plane for the night.

Just before 18:00, we are back at the MAF compound, time to walk Bono (who is, like me, living in Juba for a few weeks).

All us Singles live together in the team house; today, we are cooking hamburgers for dinner. The 1st one turns too black, so Bono can enjoy that one :-)

Later, we enjoy a cinema-size movie, thanks to my projector and a white & empty room wall. Brilliant!



B)

2 "rotations" are planned for today. First, I am flying to Waat to pick up a team of 9 for Juba, then I shall deliver some drums of diesel fuel to Pieri. This could become time critical, as it appears that I might have to shuttle the 9 passengers (pax) out to a neighboring (and longer) airstrip, because of limited takeoff weight.

7:50 Pre-flight check is done. But as mostly usual, there is some delay with the airport security and pax control. So I have to wait. I would have to be "airborne" 9:00, in order to finish both rotations as planned.

9:27 Lift off. Maybe too late ...

10:47 Double overflight of Waat, to check length and airstrip quality. Looks rather good.

After landing, I walk the amazingly firm surface: 860 m usable length. Enough to takeoff with the whole team and to save the time for shuttling.

11:43 Departure towards Juba, arrival 13:05. In flight, I had already informed our ground staff to have everything ready for the second flight. I want to be in the air before 14:00, to avoid hectic.

13:43 Calling the Tower to get my startup clearance. Answer: No flight plan exists, so no startup clearance for the engine. I am surprised: seconds ago, our ground staff gave me the flight plan.

A phone call clarifies: I got the copies of the flight plan without them being processed to the tower!

Now I tell my ground crew, that it would be too tight, if I have to wait for the flight plan to be processed (officially at least 30 min's).

Another colleague tries to persuade me to try the flight: as soon as the tower knows a flight plan is coming, he would let you startup. I shouldn't have done that, see below ...

14:10 in the air. 1:25 h later, it is only 10 more miles to Pieri, but a squall line of thunderstorms is right in front of me. Pieri behind seems to be dry according to my weather radar, but how to get there?

14:44 I decide to turn back. My fuel reserve is limited (and the ones inside the cabin, I cannot use). I should have stucked to my decision not to takeoff late.

17:01 Landing in Juba. That was an expensive and unsuccessful journey for our customer.

After everything is unloaded, I am driving home and note:

Not always, things are working according to the plan: sometimes it helps, sometimes not ...



Drainage ditches can take a lot of water from the strip

