

JF 58817303A



It's a dark night on the shore of one of Africa's great lakes. It's about 9:30 pm, the evening is still young. As we race through the knee-high grass next to the runway, we are heading for their home. Until recently, their family had four members but one had recently and savagely been taken away. I ask the driver where we are going as I hold on to the handrail by the roof of the Toyota Hilux.

In the dark I notice a big square building. I wonder who could live there. In the beams of the headlights I see a red mast appearing. The Hilux stops some ten metres before the mast. "Look," says the driver of the wildlife management unit as he points up above the light beams. And yes, there they are, the 3 remaining crested cranes. As the birds fly away, frightened by the rapidly approaching Hilux, I quickly get out of the car, run to the side of the instrument landing system (ILS) shelter and start the timer of my mobile phone. While the Toyota races off to complete the rest of its runway inspection ahead of the departing KLM Airbus 330, I time how long it takes the crested cranes to return to the top of the ILS mast. After three minutes, one of the crested cranes returns and starts its reconnaissance to see if all is clear. And as I peer around the corner of the building to see if the other two cranes are returning, I see the crested crane looking down at me, stretching its long neck to see if the coast is clear. There I stand, by the shores of Lake Victoria, having a staring competition with a crested crane on a fantastically starry, dark night in beautiful Africa; truly one of the highlights of my career.

But I don't want to talk to you only about the highlight of my career. I want to talk to you about numbers.

A crested crane is a big bird. And just one of them easily causes US\$ 100,000 worth of damage to the wings of an aircraft. One becomes US\$100,000.

The number on the title of my column above is not a randomly chosen number. It is the number that signalled the start of a new chapter in the life of AviAssist. It's the number of the US dollar bill that brought on board the first Friend of AviAssist. That first Friend was Daniel Wanjala from Uganda. He was so pleased and impressed by the work of the Founda-

tion that he committed to contributing US\$50 per year from 2013 onwards.

In turn, we paid his membership forward to Patricia Mawuli from Ghana. The US\$50 from Daniel means Patricia, an inspiring young self-made female aviator from Ghana now receives her quarterly copy of SafetyFocus. With her, the crew of Aviation & Technology Academy in Ghana now has better access to best safety practices.

I am truly excited about the start of the Friends of AviAssist. You can read more about it in this issue of the magazine. Its goal is to source professional aviation safety expertise for AviAssist activities and raise funds to help pay for its programs.

AviAssist is all about applying a multiplier effect. We might get US\$5,000 from a sponsor and turn it into US\$10,000 by using it to mobilize expertise worth US\$4,000 and getting a free ticket worth US\$1,000 from one of our many transport partners. That's how we work.

50 is the number that represents a membership fee. This includes a pay-it-forward contribution that will give another professional access to the work of the foundation.

In its first year, Friends of AviAssist aims to build a membership basis of 100 members. That way, 50 becomes 5.000.

Find out more about the Friends of AviAssist on its Facebook site [FriendsofAviAssist](#).

The labour markets for experienced professionals are heating up in 'Africa rising.' This leads to more and more mobile professionals that don't just need a salary but also want to be captivated and motivated in their job. Our work is part of that - part of captivating and motivating safety professionals through the transfer of knowledge and skills.

Help us make the numbers work to train, captivate and motivate. Safety is priceless but you can help us keep it affordable in Africa's rising economies. With your contribution we can take more of the best safety practices to Africa through our programs. Join the team and become a friend.

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