

DECLASSIFIED
PA/HO Department of State
E.O. 12958, as amended
April 21, 2005

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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February 6, 1969

HAK:

SUBJECT: NSC Review Group Meeting, 3 p.m. today

The NSC papers on Biafran relief tell the President:

(1) We cannot reasonably expect to expand relief under our present low-involvement policy with Federal Nigeria. The Feds are literally on the verge of breaking with us now. Yet, present relief is by all odds not adequate to the need and will leave us under severe criticism here at home.

(2) If we want to expand relief anywhere near the need, we have to become more involved in supporting Federal Nigeria. Or we move toward Biafra to offset the losses we take in breaking with the Feds.

The attached talking points for this afternoon's Review Group meeting are designed to highlight this basic choice. The IG options paper, as it stands, is useful in arguing the pros and cons of specific policies -- "neutrality", arms supply, etc. -- which have been loudly and imprecisely urged from the Hill and elsewhere.

It makes sense, however, to pinpoint the basic choice and focus the discussion by doing a concise summary paper here, somewhat along the lines we followed with the Middle East discussion. We could certainly clear such a summary paper informally with Pedersen, et al. before we send it with the others to the NSC.

Your talking points also ask for some minor but useful additions to the relief systems paper (the first paper):

- They skipped a step by omitting an airlift system, technically feasible, which could meet the maximum estimated need in Biafra.
- The paper should point clearly at the degree of direct U.S. involvement, including military participation, necessary to make these systems work in the real world.
- There should be some discussion, pro and con, of the ideas for a Presidential Relief Coordinator or Citizens' Committee, which have such currency on the Hill and in academic circles.

In sum, your talking points say (a) we need minor revisions on the relief paper, and (b) we will do a summary paper here which puts the options more precisely in the perspective of the basic policy choices they pose.

Roger Morris

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February 6, 1969

NSC Review Group
3 p.m., Thursday, February 6, 1969

TALKING POINTS

1. The two papers on Nigeria we have before us -- (1) alternative relief approaches and (b) principal policy options as they affect relief -- are intended to tell the NSC the political implications as well as the methods of feeding people in the civil war. I understand there will be a Background Paper coming shortly.

2. We might begin by asking, in a technical vein, if the first paper clearly sets out what the NSC should know about the alternative relief systems.

A. I wonder about the omission of an airlift system which, by itself, could meet the maximum estimated need of 30,000 tons per month. If this is technically feasible -- and it would theoretically allow us under one or two of the policy options to meet the need -- it should be included.

B. It might also be very useful to indicate, under each Relief Course, the degree of U.S. involvement practically necessary to implement that course given the capability or policy of others. This should include involvement of U.S. military personnel and equipment. The NSC ought to be able to run through these courses and put their fingers on a definite threshold at which our direct participation would be quite visible and might amount to a U.S. takeover of the relief operation.

C. Given Presidential and Congressional concern, the NSC may also be interested in a brief discussion, pro and con, of the alternative means of coordination of the U.S. relief efforts. I have in mind specifically the proposals for a Presidential czar or Citizens' Committee which have been discussed in Congress and elsewhere. Could these be considered without lengthening the paper too much?

Could the IG revise the first paper in this manner and have it back by noon on Saturday?

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3. Beyond these technical points in the first paper, I wonder if the second paper makes clear the broader policy questions the options imply. The burden of the paper seems to be that any real expansion of present relief involves -- willy nilly or consciously -- important political choices. I see two basic choices.

(i) We can stay with the relief prospects (not very good) of present policy, which amounts to de jure support of Federal Nigeria and de facto support of Biafra through relief (Option 1). Or we can choose more relief, which involves greater support for one side or the other.

(ii) If we decide to expand relief beyond the prospects of present policy, we can give more support to Nigeria to offset the greater de facto help expanded relief gives Biafra (Options 2 and 3). Or we can shift away from Nigeria toward Biafra. (Options 4, 5, 6)

As I read the options paper, it tells the President he cannot reasonably expect to expand relief beyond the potential of present operations without encountering this choice. Do we agree on this understanding?

4. I do not think it necessary to revise the options paper to get at this conceptual clarity. As it stands, it does treat some specific policies -- "neutrality", arms supply to Nigeria -- which the NSC probably ought to see argued separately pro and con.

I would propose, however, to do a concise summary paper here. It would introduce the two papers by listing very briefly the relief prospects and political costs connected with:

- continuing present policy as against changing to a more active approach;
- the choice between changing by a move more strongly on the Federal side or a shift to Biafra.

I should think that kind of summary would be useful to give a general thrust to discussion of specific options.

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