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November 1, 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. HENRY A. KISSINGER
THE WHITE HOUSE

Subject: Proposed Presidential Statement
On Biafran Relief

On instruction from Under Secretary Richardson I am enclosing a proposed Presidential Statement on the impasse of Red Cross relief to Biafra. This draft is the result of extensive discussions with the NSC staff.

The Under Secretary recommends that the statement be released early next week.

for *Robert L. Eliot, Jr.*
Theodore L. Eliot, Jr.
Executive Secretary

Enclosure:

Proposed Presidential Statement
On Relief In Nigerian Civil War

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

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*POL 27-9 BIAFRA-NIGERIA
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By [Signature] WAPA Date 3/19/98

PROPOSED PRESIDENTIAL STATEMENT

ON RELIEF IN NIGERIAN CIVIL WAR

I must report with deepest regret a serious setback to a vigorous and concerted international effort to expand the flow of relief to the suffering civilian victims of the Nigerian Civil War.

As I pledged shortly after taking office, this Government has dedicated both generous contributions and extraordinary diplomatic activity to relieve the human anguish and suffering in this tragic conflict.

It was in this spirit that we supported the recent proposal of the International Committee of the Red Cross for a program of daylight relief flights into Biafran-held territory. Such flights would have allowed the resumption of Red Cross relief which had been suspended since June 30 when the Federal Military Government of Nigeria, because of the scrambling at night of arms flights and relief flights, declared that it would no longer permit night flights across its territory.

On September 13 the ICRC concluded an agreement with the Government of Nigeria allowing an internationally-inspected and militarily-inviolable relief airlift during

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...burs for an experimental period with the daylight hours prospect of renewal. The Biafran authorities refused, however, to accept such flights--principally on the grounds that they could not rely on either the Red Cross or the Federal Government to assure that the daylight airlift would not be violated by a surprise attack on the Biafran airfield, the vital terminus for their arms supply. They asked instead that they be given third-party assurances as to the good faith of the Federal Government of Nigeria.

To meet this concern, the Government of the United States at my direction took the following steps:

- (1) We sought and received the solemn assurance of the Federal Government of Nigeria that it would see to it that no hostile military action would be taken against the ICRC relief airlift.
- (2) After consultation with us, the Government of Canada agreed to offer Canadian soldiers as impartial observers to accompany ICRC aircraft on their relief flights.

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(3) Our relief coordinator, Ambassador C. Clyde Ferguson, went personally to West Africa to give the Biafrans the specific assurance of the United States that we accepted as made in good faith the solemn pledge of the Government of Nigeria as to the inviolability of the ICRC daylight relief flights.

On October 24, 1969, the Biafran authorities formally rejected this assurance.

The result is tragic. We firmly believe that the ICRC proposal is realistic and reasonable. We consider that the Federal Military Government of Nigeria, in agreeing to the ICRC proposal, acted in full accord with its humanitarian responsibilities. We believe that the integrity of the ICRC, the safeguards incorporated in the ICRC relief program, and the assurances of the United States Government should adequately satisfy the legitimate security concerns of the Biafran authorities.

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