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

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January 10, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR HENRY KISSINGER

FROM: Roger Morris

SUBJECT: Points on Biafran Crisis

1. Geographically, there is no real escape for the Biafrans. Their major population centers -- between the Imo and Niger Rivers -- are completely surrounded by Federal forces and hundreds of miles from international boundaries across largely impassable country. Thus, the French proposal to open the Cameroonian border is not a meaningful gesture.
2. Logistically, we can provide emergency food and medical supplies by air drops. Current relief operations can be quickly diverted to an air drop scheme with our help. But the fact remains this would have to have Federal acquiescence. And the Feds have been adamantly opposed to air drops.
3. Moreover, food and medicine is only part of the problem. The Biafrans are threatened more immediately by an undisciplined and vindictive Federal army. The unspoken Federal war aim, in this collapse as in the starvationblockade, remains the elimination of the Ibos as a tribe.
4. We must recognize, therefore, that our problem is as much political as logistical. And the key is not so much the French as the British, who have the ultimate leverage with the Federals. Even the most urgent and dramatic measures to fly in relief will be only a palliative unless we accompany them by an equally firm approach to the British and the Federals to address the political question of Biafra's survival.

-- This means some kind of armistice agreement in which the French cease their arms supply, the Biafrans in effect surrender, international observers are posted, and the war is ended

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by an orderly occupation of Biafra with international guarantees for Ibo security.

Morris Recommendation:

This is the tack you should take with the President and with Richardson. State's first inclination will be to tread softly with the Federals on the grounds that they are the winning side. Anything short of a strong approach to Lagos will be de facto acquiescence in some degree of genocide. We should cooperate fully with the French, but the key is in London.

RM;ms:1/10/70

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