

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

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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Monday - January 12, 1970

~~SECRET~~

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

ACTION

FROM: Henry Kissinger

SUBJECT: Further actions on Biafran relief

Following up your second telephone conversation with Prime Minister Wilson yesterday, I find that there is about \$20 million -- evenly divided between operating funds and PL 480 food -- available for Biafran relief for the balance of the fiscal year.

I suggest that we announce your authorization of a \$10 million emergency contribution this morning. The sum would represent both operating costs and PL 480 food to be given among the International Red Cross, the religious relief agencies, and the Nigerian Red Cross.

At the same time, I think we should announce that you are sending a message to General Gowon referring to this contribution and offering both (a) aircraft and other assistance for emergency relief, and (b) logistical help for an augmented international observer force (proposed message at Tab A). The situation in Biafra remains very fluid, with organized Biafran forces still putting up stiff resistance. So far, there are no reports of Federal atrocities. But the magnitude of the relief problem will be highlighted as outside observers follow the Federals into Biafra, and the risk of military excesses is still very much with us. Thus, I think it makes sense to keep going on the record with urgent and generous action.

Recommendation

That you authorize announcement of a \$10 million emergency donation to Biafra relief, and approve the message to General Gowon at Tab A.

Approve

Disapprove

✓ *HAH*
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Attachment

Tab A - Proposed message to General Gowon.

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Tab A

Dear General Gowon:

As the advance of Federal troops makes possible substantial relief to long-suffering victims of the civil war, I want to reaffirm my government's readiness to provide any further assistance you need in meeting the urgent problems arising from the present military situation.

Naturally, developments in the war zone are first and foremost a matter of Nigerian internal concern, and I know how dedicated you are to ending this ordeal for all your countrymen. This message is to pledge to you our fullest support for the relief and rehabilitation programs under the auspices of the Federal Military Government.

Accordingly, I have directed that \$10 million be provided immediately for emergency relief needs. I have already taken steps to alert U.S. cargo aircraft and helicopters to make them available

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promptly to assist you should you desire them. I have also asked Ambassador Ferguson and Ambassador Trueheart in Lagos to continue their close cooperation with your authorities and other governments and agencies in support of Nigerian relief programs. In particular, I have instructed Ambassador Ferguson to give you all the information he has on relief needs in eastern Nigeria, which may be helpful as your own relief workers move into newly-occupied territory.

Just as we share your concern to avert starvation, we have also shared a concern that the reconciliation of your country be rapid and lasting. In that connection, I have much admired your statements and actions on behalf of the safety of the Ibo people. I understand that Prime Minister Wilson and Secretary General U Thant are in touch with you with regard to the augmentation of the International Observ

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Group, which was formed in 1968 at your own initiative. I too believe that these observer teams can be of great value to both Nigeria and providing her friends in/international recognition of your conciliatory policy.

~~and maintaining our presence from this region.~~

For our part, the United States will provide whatever logistical support in vehicles and other material which would be helpful to the effective functioning of an augmented observer force. Assistant Secretary Newsom will, of course, be talking with you personally about both relief matters and how we might help facilitate the work of the international observers.

I know there are still difficult days ahead. You have America's firm support and understanding as you face these challenges, and I know we can continue to work together until Nigeria is once again a leader in the peaceful development of Africa.

Sincerely,