

TO: The Secretary

THROUGH: S/S

FROM: AF - David D. Newson

SUBJECT: Nigerian Relief: Talking Points for Your Meeting with the President at 12:00 Noon, January 20, 1970 - RAILING MEMORANDUM

Background

During your meeting with the President on how we are meeting the immediate post-war relief needs in Nigeria, you will be accompanied by myself and Ambassador Ferguson. He is just back from meetings with Prime Minister Wilson, with other governments and with relief agencies in Europe.

Our information is still spotty about the condition of those in the Biafran enclave. However, a number of observers including Hendrick Beer of LICROSS and Lord Hunt, Prime Minister Wilson's Relief Coordinator, have travelled through the area and at least we have their impressions. We do not yet have reports of nutritional experts who can determine accurately the actual degree of starvation. Appearances can be deceiving. USPHS experts formerly in the enclave believe a latent feeding problem of large proportions still exists.

What does seem clear is that, so far, the former Biafrans, both civilian and military, are being correctly and humanely treated by the Nigerians. We should have a much clearer picture of current conditions as soon as the U/CF team we have dispatched to the area files its report.

Suggested Talking Points

I suggest that in your discussion with the President you highlight the actions we have taken so far, and emphasize that we can only do what the Nigerians will permit us to do.

Our contingency planning at an early stage permitted us to preposition large quantities of food to meet the emergency. The figures provided to the White House Staff January 19, however, (by Dr. Western of USPHS who surveyed the enclave in October 1969) are four times as high as the original USPHS (Western) figures derived from the October survey and 50 percent above last week's USPHS projection of 6000 tons per week. Our planned food supply would meet the 6000 ton USPHS figure. The following decisions however, would be needed to insure meeting the new, 50 percent higher USPHS figures of 9000 tons:

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which was the original source of the H...

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- a) Immediate diversion to Nigeria of 10,000 tons of high protein food scheduled for other countries.
- b) Contingency planning for a very large (up to 50 large jet transports) airlift to Nigeria in the first half of February to prevent a temporary short fall of 5-10,000 tons if the diversion were postponed.

Whether to take these decisions, based on the new USPHS analysis, which is not supported by current field recommendations, depends on your concern to guard against any possible shortfall (see Tab D). It will require, in any event, obtaining agreement of the experts in the field, and the concurrence of the Nigerian Government which has asserted publicly that present and planned food supplies are fully adequate.

This discussion does not address itself to the question of internal distribution of such a greatly increased supply which, we are told, would perhaps require an internal airlift of a kind the Nigerians have so far rejected.

The visits of Ambassador Ferguson and Bill Brubeck to Europe and my own visit to Lagos helped us to stay on top of developments and to concert our actions, at the highest levels, with other governments and organizations. The activation of the Interagency Supervisory Group coordinated by the Under Secretary to provide guidance at the top level of government, and the establishment of the Nigeria Working Group enabled us to deal with the immediate and fast-moving post-war situation with a maximum of flexibility and speed. The immediate actions directed by these groups to meet the problem are listed at Tab E.

However, we must approach the question of how best to help meet the relief problem with full realization of Nigerian sensitivity to what it considers excessive outside interference. General Gowon and his Government are publicly committed to decent treatment and re-integration of the Ibos. However, he and his government are determined to be seen to be doing this themselves. They want to make it very clear to the Ibos that relief is coming to them from Nigerians, and not from outsiders. Consequently, as far as the FNG is concerned, the relief effort is a Nigerian one which will draw on outside offers of assistance only to the extent it feels this to be necessary. Gowon and his Government are resentful at outside pressures, particularly on the part of those they consider to have assisted the rebellion. Some of this feeling has spilled over onto us because of our help to relief agencies in Biafra. The Nigerians doubly resent what they consider to be the racist assumption on the part of the Western world that black men cannot run their own affairs and cannot solve their own problems. Our attitude toward the FNG in the next few weeks will be important to our longer term relations with Africa's most populous nation.

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**Attachments:**

- Tab A - Situation Report
- Tab B - Relief Organization and Actions
- Tab C - External Assistance (Excluding US)
- Tab D - Food Requirements and Availabilities
- Tab E - US Actions

Biafran.org

**Clearances:**  
U/CF-Amb. Ferguson  
AID/AFR/CWA-Mr. North

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TAB A

SITUATION REPORT

In the week since the collapse of resistance to the Federal military a series of observers have reported on the situation in the former enclave. Extensive trips were made on January 17-18 by Heinrich Beer of the League of Red Cross Societies (LICROSS) to -- Port Harcourt, Aba, Umudike, Umuahia, Ikot Expene, Owerri, Orlu, Awomama and Uli -- and Lord Hunt, British Prime Minister Wilson's special representative, to Owerri, Uli and Orlu with many stops enroute. Beer concluded that there were small pockets of need but no large scale major problem. He found reports of large numbers of refugees thought to have taken refuge in the bush to have been exaggerated. He also noted many instances of Biafran self-help and no sign of resistance or excesses by the victors.

Lord Hunt also found the overall picture encouraging, with the NRC active in alleviating bad conditions as soon as they were discovered. His general impression was that the refugees he encountered were in fair physical condition with only a small percentage suffering from serious malnutrition. The elderly and the wounded were in the greatest need of medical assistance. In side trips to the bush, he also noted, life was returning to normal. At a number of hospitals he visited, there were shortages of doctors and some patients had fled to the bush. Some expatriate doctors had remained, however, and the Nigerian Red Cross (NRC) was moving energetically to bring immediate assistance. According to Hunt, the Federal military was extending help to refugees and feeding them in ad hoc transit camps. However, there were allegations that third division troops had engaged in looting, rape and requisitioning of some Red Cross vehicles. Hunt could only verify the vehicle requisitioning. He commented that he was impressed by fraternization between federal troops and the civilian population and did not believe troop misbehavior was general. Finally, Hunt noted that the refugee camps were emptying rapidly as large numbers of Ibos were returning to their homes.

Reports earlier in the week by John Clare, a reporter for the Times of London, the military observer group, and Dr. George Hobbs, a British NRC area medical advisor, also corroborate the picture painted by Hunt and Beer. Clare noted Federal military efforts to help civilians. He believed the main needs were drugs, clothes and money, not staple foods which he found available locally. The observer group which visited the first and third division areas of Eastern Nigeria, ~~January~~ 10-14 reported that,

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with the exception of Owerri, the refugees they saw appeared to be in good physical shape. Federal troops were carrying food where it was most needed and roads in the area visited were in good condition. Neither the military observer group, Clare nor Hobbs had noted any excesses on the parts of Federal troops. Nor was any resistance by former Biafran soldiers discovered.

The reports of outside observers we have in hand now cover virtually all of the Ibo heartland and the southern portion of the Arochuku salient (the Eastern third of the former enclave). The area north of Arochuku is the only one which has clearly not been visited although we also lack specific data on the region between Umuahia and Owerri. Briefly conditions in major areas are as follows:

Uli-Orlu area:

- a. Food - staples on hand - earlier shortage in Orlu being relieved by arrivals of trucked supplies - NRC meeting to arrange an increase in food stocks - Hunt favors an airlift to Uli, though he recognizes FMG objections, but Siad Mohamed and Beer of NRC do not agree that such a move is necessary.
- b. Relief workers - Federal government is utilizing expatriate and Ibo relief workers - a relief team is located at Okigwi, teams are expected soon in Orlu Oguta and Ihiala and the NRC is organizing additional teams to work in the area.
- c. Roads - The Onitsha-Owerri road is reported open - roads to Orlu are open.
- d. Hospitals - Military hospitals in bad condition - civilian hospitals suffering a shortage doctors and personnel but have limited supplies, drugs and food - 1,000 kwashiokor cases found - 800 of 1150 children evacuated to Port Harcourt - Orlu hospital in good condition.
- e. General - Refugees returning to towns with food - refugee camps emptying and refugees heading south and west across Niger River to former homes.

Owerri-Aba

- a. Food - local supplies are satisfactory in both Aba and Owerri area - 105,000 refugees are being fed in Aba.

- b. Relief workers - an Australian relief team is present in Owerri.
- c. Roads - good condition - bridges had been repaired on Owerri-Aba road.
- d. Hospitals - a package hospital is expected to arrive soon in Port Harcourt for trans-shipment to Aba - 800 cases of kwashiorkor have been found; 2000 are expected - Santana hospital south of Owerri being operated by Nigerian army.
- e. General - most refugees are in good shape - some refugees in Owerri suffering from malnutrition - many on roads evidently returning home.

Umuahia - Umudike

- a. Food - adequate in one large refugee camp meager in another but refugees in both in good condition.
- b. Relief workers - relief teams present in Umuahia - refugee camps are well run.
- c. Roads - reported in extremely good condition.
- d. Hospitals - no new information - a pre-packaged hospital to arrive at Port Harcourt is destined for Umuahia.

Ikot Ekpene - Arochuku

The area was visited by the team of foreign military observers and by Beer of LICROSS who presumably took local conditions into account in making their overall assessment of the relief situation.

A Quaker relief team is located in Arochuku. Another NRC team is in Ikot Ekpene.