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Authority ~~AMEMBASSY LAGOS~~
By ~~AMEMBASSY LAGOS~~ NARA Date 4-26-02



SOC 10 NIGERIA
TR POL 23 NIGERIA
Department of State **TELEGRAM**

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-20 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00
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AID-28 SCS-04 SCA-01 E-15 DOT-12 PM-05 H-02 INR-07
L-03 NSC-10 P-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-20 ACDA-18 RSR-0

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1026
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
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SUBJECT: NIGERIAN RELIEF: REPORT FROM ENCLAVE AREA.

1. FOLLOWING ARE DEWEY'S OVERALL OBSERVATIONS OF JUST COMPLETED VISIT TO ENCLAVE:

2. DISASTER OF MAJOR PROPORTIONS APPEARS TO BE DEVELOPING HERE. REPORTS EMANATING TO DATE FROM ENCLAVE AREA HAVE GENERALLY SERIOUSLY MISREPRESENTED DIMENSIONS OF PROBLEM. DOCTORS AND RELIEF WORKERS I TALKED TO WERE SURPRISED TO HEAR OF THESE REPORTS AND I SAID THAT WAS NOT THE WAY THEY WERE FILED. AT LEAST ONE MILLION PEOPLE ARE IN ACUTE NEED NOW AND SITUATION GROWS WORSE DAILY. PRESENT RELIEF DELIVERY CAPACITIES NOT NEARLY ENOUGH TO COPE. RELIEF EFFORT IS ESSENTIALLY PARALYZED DUE BEHAVIOR OF 3RD DIVISION IN OCCUPIED AREAS. THESE ACTIONS, LOOTING, RAPING, COMANDEERING, ARE COMMON TO WAR BUT CONSEQUENCES HERE ARE BLOCKAGE OF RELIEF EFFORT. AFTER BRILLIANT TACTICAL EFFORTS, OBASANJO HAS NOW LOST CONTROL OF HIS TROOPS. THERE IS STILL, HOWEVER, NO EVIDENCE OR CHARGES OF KILLING OF CIVILIANS OR OTHER ATROCITIES.

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E.O. 12958, as amended

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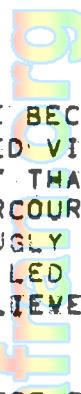


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3. PROBLEM PARTICULARLY EXPLOSIVE BECAUSE PRESS HAVE SEEN JUST ENOUGH DURING RECENT ESCORTED VISIT TO REALIZE HOW INADEQUATE RELIEF EFFORT IS. FACT THAT OBASANJO NOW NOT PERMITTING THEM TO LEAVE PORT HARCOURT MEANS, AT LEAST, THEY WILL EVENTUALLY VENT THEIR UGLY MOOD AGAINST FMG AND OTHER GOVERNMENTS WHICH HAD BEEN LED BY SUCH REPORTS AS HAVE EMANATED FROM ENCLAVE TO BELIEVE SOMETHING SUBSTANTIAL WAS BEING DONE ABOUT RELIEF.

4. NEED CENTERS AROUND OWERRI WHERE FOUR-MAN AUSTRIAN TEAM AND ONE LORRY TRYING TO CORE WITH ABOUT 1 MILLION PEOPLE. SINCE MARKET FOOD COSTLY AND LIMITED, ONE LED TO CONCLUSION THAT MOST NEED FULL FEEDING NOW. ALL WILL NEED IT WITHIN A WEEK. ORLU AREA IS NEXT PRIORITY. EXACT NUMBERS ACCESSIBLE FROM ORLU CENTER NOT KNOWN, BUT DR. HOBBS (NRC AREA MEDICAL ADVISOR, ENUGU) ESTIMATES APPROXIMATELY SAME NUMBER LORRIES REQUIRED THERE AS FOR OWERRI. OHAFIA AREA NOT VISITED AND STILL PRETTY MUCH A BLANK. MEMBERS OF SCF TEAM 6 RECENTLY ARRIVED AT ORLU FROM AFIKPO DESCRIBED CONDITIONS AS VERY GRAVE, INCLUDING MANY WOUNDED SOLDIERS. APPROXIMATE DISTRIBUTION NEEDS RIGHT NOW ARE 200 TONS. AVERAGE DAILY DISTRIBUTION THIS WEEK HAS BEEN 40-50 TONS.

5. SUFFICIENCY OF LORRIES AT THIS POINT IS ALMOST ACADEMIC. BEHAVIOR OF 3RD DIVISION TROOPS PLACES RED CROSS RELIEF LORRIES IN CONSTANT JEOPARDY AND ELIMINATES, FOR THE MOMENT, USE OF CONSIDERABLE NUMBER OF COMMERCIAL VEHICLES HIDDEN IN ENCLAVE BUSH. COMMERCIAL OPERATORS ARE INSISTING ON ASSURANCES AGAINST LOSING THEIR VEHICLES, WHICH WOULD PROBABLY NEED TO INCLUDE A MILITARY POLICE ESCORT.

6. SPECIFIC PROBLEMS WITH THE 3RD DIVISION INCLUDE:
A. OBASANJO'S "RETURN TO BARRACKS" ORDER APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN IGNORED. UNSUPERVISED BANDS OF STRAGGLERS AND MARAUDERS ARE EVERYWHERE.
B. STRAGGLERS SET UP THEIR OWN INFORMAL CHECK POINTS ALONG ROADS, PRINCIPALLY TO GET RIDES. THEIR MANNER IS TYPICALLY ARGUMENTATIVE AND THREATENING, FAR MORE UNDISCIPLINED CHECKPOINT BEHAVIOR THAN I HAVE SEEN

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BEFORE ON EITHER SIDE. (MY ONLY CONTACT WITH 1ST DIVISION WAS AT SEVERAL OF ITS CHECKPOINTS BETWEEN ORLU AND ULI THIS A.M. 1ST DIV. SOLDIERS WERE VERY CORRECT AND COURTEOUS AND TRIED TO GET RIDES FOR NEEDY CIVILIANS RATHER THAN THEMSELVES.)

C. SOLDIERS ARE COMMANDERING RED CROSS LORRIES TO HAUL BOTH MILITARY CARGO AND LOOT. ANY COMMERCIAL OR PRIVATE VEHICLE ON ROAD ALMOST CERTAIN TO BE CONFISCATED. EVERYONE DOING HIS BEST TO HIDE TRANSPORT IN BUSH. AUSTRIAN TEAM TRIED UNSUCCESSFULLY TODAY TO GET MILITARY LORRIES BADLY NEEDED FOR RELIEF DISTRIBUTION FROM 14 BRIGADE CO AND OWERRI. CO DID PROVIDE TWO DRUMS PETROL. D. WIDESPREAD MOLESTING OF YOUNG WOMEN, PARTICULARLY NURSES. THIS IS PARALYZING HOSPITAL WORK AND WILL HINDER OPENING OF SICK BAYS EVEN WHEN FOOD IS AVAILABLE TO SERVICE THEM. RELIEF TEAMS TRYING TO FIND MALE NURSES AND OLD WOMEN TO SUPPLEMENT. FEW YOUNG NURSES WHO DO WORK ARRIVE LATE, LEAVE EARLY TO MINIMIZE RISK OF BEING MOLESTED.

E. SOLDIERS WERE OBSERVED AT EMEKUKU TEACHING HOSPITAL LOOTING ITEMS CRITICALLY NEEDED TO RESTORE SUCH FACILITIES TO NORMALCY. BROUGHT TO ATTENTION OF LT. IN CHARGE, WITHOUT RESULTS. LORRY LOADS OF HOUSEHOLD GOODS MOVING ALONG ROADS. MUCH INDISCRIMINATE DAMAGE NOTED IN AREAS LOOTED. (NOT ALL LOOTING DONE BY MILITARY, HOWEVER, MUCH ALSO DONE BY CIVILIANS IN AREA.) GPF-2.
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