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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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January 23, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger

SUBJECT: Nigerian Relief

The following are U. S. actions taken so far in Nigerian relief.

-- Eight C-130s and 4 helicopters are on alert.

-- \$10 million has been pledged to relief agencies, of which \$2 million has gone indirectly to the Nigerian Red Cross, and the remainder yet to be dispensed.

-- \$2 million has been promised to UNICEF, conditional on the role UNICEF can work out with the Federal Government.

-- The Nigerians asked us last weekend for 50 jeeps, 50 trucks and 3 pre-packaged hospitals. The jeeps and hospitals are on the way -- arriving between now and January 28 by commercial charter flight (as the Nigerians requested). The trucks will be flown out in a few days.

-- The Nigerians today asked us to coordinate and finance the chartering of 4 Red Cross cargo planes and 2 commercial charter planes from Europe for an airlift within Nigeria. This is being arranged and the chartered planes should be available over the next 3-4 days.

-- They also asked today for urgent airlift from the U.S. of 10,000 blankets, 10,000 lamps and 50 generators. Plans are to fly these to Nigeria in the next 2-3 days, probably by military aircraft.

-- Charter ships are moving 6,000 tons of food from nearby Dahomey and Sao Tome. Plans now call for food stockpiles of 40,000 tons for the next 30 days. Added purchases and shipment are being planned to make available another 40,000 tons for the following 30 days.

-- In sum, as of tomorrow our contributions will actually begin to arrive in Nigeria.

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The Situation

-- The "Western Report," named for the leader of a scientific survey done in Biafra by U.S. Public Health Doctors last fall, documented widespread starvation edema. The Report concluded that 1 to 1-1/2 million would need daily feeding with high protein food to survive.

-- Before the collapse of Biafra and the interruption of the relief airlift, 2,000 tons of food was going in weekly and the population was still deteriorating rapidly. The Western Report concluded that, considering all factors, 10,000 tons a week would be needed to prevent mass deaths from starvation in the event of the collapse of Biafra.

-- Dr. Western and his survey team also concluded that the Nigerian Red Cross, even with the best motivation, would not be able alone to forestall mass deaths.

-- A U.S. survey team just back from affected areas confirms both the need and Nigerian inability which Dr. Western et. al. predicted. For example, only 300 tons at most got into the needy area last week, and Nigerian relief operations are in disarray.

-- The survey team also reports acts of looting and other indiscipline by Federal troops, which further obstruct relief.

-- Yesterday [REDACTED] indicated Nigerian awareness in the field of a serious situation. Reports today from Lagos, however, indicate there is still no clear recognition of the magnitude or urgency of the problem. Though they have asked for aircraft from an internal airlift, they still do not plan to fly food directly into the needy area.

-- In sum, the Nigerians are prepared to allow an airlift to the fringes of the needy area, but this will not attack the real problem -- the inability to distribute food rapidly inside the former enclave of Biafra.

-- Without an airlift directly into the needy area, and without an urgent reorganization of Nigerian relief operations, the evidence is strong that many if not all of 1 to 1-1/2 million people will die in the next 15-20 days.

-- The changes necessary to allow distribution of the necessary weekly tonnage (10,000) to save the 1 to 1-1/2 million depend upon Nigerian recognition of (a) the seriousness of the problem and (b) their inability to cope within their present plans.

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U.S. Domestic Situation

-- Senators Kennedy and Goodell have held hearings yesterday and today. They have pressed Newsom and Ferguson on the Western Report as well as on current eyewitness accounts, including the official U.S. survey team and the press.

-- Senator Goodell has requested the publication of the Western Report and that the Congress be fully informed of current accounts from the field.

-- Press and TV accounts have been largely very critical of Nigerian relief operations and point to mass suffering and death.

-- This press reaction may grow when the large number of reporters (about 80), recently in the needy area, return over the next 2-3 days.

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