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NSC MEETING

14 February 1969

Issues for Decision

You may wish to make decisions on the following:

1. What is our interest in the Biafran relief problem, and does it justify a more active U. S. role to expand relief?

Broad Alternatives:

- Stay with present policy since alternatives carry great involvement.
- Problem justifies more action despite risks.

2. What political price are we willing to pay for expanded relief?

Broad Alternatives:

- Seek more relief without political involvement, and be prepared to accept failure.
- Be prepared to go up the political scale, including arms aid, to insure some expansion of relief.

3. Does one of the options in the paper -- or a modification of it -- offer a practical course of action?

Broad alternatives:

- A policy of relief diplomacy without political endorsements. (between Options 1 and 2)
- Support for one side or another. (Options 2 through 6)

Tactical-Operational

4. Reply to General Gowon. The Head of the Federal Military Government has written you (copy underlying) inviting a U. S. emissary to exchange views and make a fact-finding tour. Broad alternatives:

- A simple acknowledgement to decline the invitation pending further policy study; or
- use the invitation for an active approach on relief.

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5. Your conversation with de Gaulle. The French have told us that Biafra will be one of the subjects the General may raise with you in Paris. Broad alternatives:

- Hear de Gaulle out but withhold specific comment; or
- tell the French we are actively pursuing new relief proposals, and want their cooperation in bringing along Biafra.

6. U.S. relief coordinator. Should we have one? If so, appointed at what level and with what mandate?

7. Public and Congressional Stance.

Broad alternatives:

- General consultations and public announcement on the main lines of the NSC decision on relief; or
- selective consultations on the Hill with a vague public announcement suggesting high priority, further study, and perhaps quiet action.

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10th January, 1969.

Dear Mr. President,

I have great pleasure in conveying to you, Mr. President, my sincere congratulations and those of the Government and people of my country on your inauguration as President of the United States of America.

Relations between our two countries have traditionally been characterised by a frank and cordial exchange of views at all times. I intend, for my part, to continue this policy during your tenure of office and trust that you will find it possible to reciprocate.

I am anxious to establish happy and even informal working relationships with your Administration in order to assure a continuation of the felicitous relations between our Governments and peoples. I know that one of the problems that will engage your attention is the civil war in my country. I fully understand the reasons for the inability of the previous Administration to be more forthcoming in support of my Government and appreciate the genuine desire to alleviate distress in the affected areas. I expect therefore that you will, Mr. President, wish to study all the aspects of the unfortunate war. My Government holds itself ready to co-operate in supplying any further information that may be required. I would, in fact, welcome a personal envoy from you and will grant him full facilities to visit the war-affected areas and stay as long as he likes in order to be able to report to you factually. Such an envoy need not, of course, be a member of the Administration, as long as he is someone who enjoys your full confidence and no publicity would be given unless you so desired.

We have noted with great pleasure your determination to work for the unification of your country irrespective of colour, creed or religion, an objective which likewise inspires my Government in its present course of action. We therefore look forward to a greater understanding of our situation and a consequent consolidation of the bonds of friendship which unite our two countries.

I am confident that, under your able leadership, parliamentary democracy, civil liberty and human dignity will continue to prosper and flourish in the United States of America and that your great country will retain its time-honoured place in the forefront of the struggle for the universal brotherhood of man.

May God grant you the wisdom, strength and health to discharge the onerous responsibilities of your high office.

May I also wish you and Mrs. Nixon a happy tenancy of the White House.

Yours most sincerely,

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

(Sgd.) YAKUBU GOWON  
MAJOR-GENERAL YAKUBU GOWON  
Head of the Federal Military Government,  
Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces  
of the Federal Republic of Nigeria