

D-13 Voluntary Agencies
JCA

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Special Products (Ferguson) Relief Nigerian
Civil War 7/24/69 -
June 170

Joint Church Aid-U.S.A., Inc.

350 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10001 • (212) 594-9300

February 26, 1969

The Hon. Clarence C. Ferguson, Jr., Coordinator
Nigeria/Biafra Civilian Relief
Department of State
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Ferguson:

Congratulations on your appointment to a post which bears with it the responsibility for the solution of numerous urgent and complex problems. We trust that whatever is done will be done in light of the fact that thousands of our fellow human beings are needlessly dying every day as a result of an impasse which only the major powers can solve.

We are earnestly hoping that one of your first acts will be to request the Nigerian Government to cease its inhuman harassment of relief planes through the nightly bombings of Uli airstrip which, according to our pilots, are aimed primarily at disrupting the movement of foods and medicines in to the hapless civilians of the blockaded secessionist area of Biafra.

We are aware of the fact that the FMG considers the Uli airstrip a military target. However, its nightly bombings have had little or no effect on the delivery of munitions. Instead, our pilots tell us (Senator Goodell can add to this personally) that the bombs carried by the Nigerian "Intruder" are deliberately directed toward the destruction of the relief aircraft. Within the past fortnight five of the church planes have been damaged by anti-personnel bombs dropped by the Nigerian bomber while they were being unloaded at Uli. Moreover, as I am sure you know or will be informed, the harassment is particularly directed toward the American crews and has been the principal reason for the resignation of three American pilots who considered the risks too great in terms of their family responsibilities at home.

We believe, too, that your request to the Nigerian Government should be backed by the pledge that if the bombing is not halted, the United States will provide armed escorts for the defenseless relief planes.

It is difficult for the average American to understand why his government cannot exercise its considerable political and moral authority to bring this senseless situation to a halt.

The staff of the Agency for International Development both in Washington and in Lagos, the ICRC, which has been directly involved in assisting the

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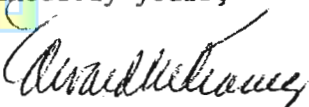
Clarence C. Ferguson, Jr.
February 26, 1969

Page 2

the victims of the Nigerian civil war on both sides of the front, and the staff of UNICEF, which has been doing as much as it can within its limited mandate, have already researched the areas of what foods and other supplies will be needed and presumably when. The problem requiring action now is how to keep the existing lifeline open so that tens of thousands of additional civilians in the blockaded area do not die. It is to this particular task we trust you will give your earliest attention. Bishop Edward E. Swanstrom, President of Joint Church Aid-U.S.A., and Mr. James MacCracken and Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum, Vice-Presidents, on February 12th dispatched an urgent message to the President of the United States and to the Secretary of State calling this situation to their attention, and followed same with a second wire the next day stemming from the reports of damage suffered by the church planes.

As the facts indicate, your help is sorely needed. We trust you will do your best to provide it now.

Sincerely yours,


Edward M. Kinney
Secretary-Treasurer

EMK:ch

cc: Bishop Edward E. Swanstrom
Mr. James MacCracken
Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum

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