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Authority NND 969000.

By SP NARA Date 3/17/98

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NIGERIA
036410

OUTGOING TELEGRAM Department of State

INDICATE: ☐ COLLECT
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Classification

Origin

ACTION: Amembassy LAGOS

Info:

INFO: Amembassy LONDON
Amembassy GENEVA
Amembassy PARIS
Amembassy COTONOU

STATE

SUBJECT: ENAHORO VISIT

1. Nigerian Information Commissioner Anthony Enahoro called on Assistant Secretary Palmer March 5 to discuss FMG "image" and Nigerian-U.S. relations. Following points were discussed:

2. FMG re-assured by President's letter to General Gowon. US intention to continue to separate political from humanitarian aspect of situation was again emphasized by Palmer. Later in conversation Enahoro expressed some disappointment US not taking stronger stand in favor of Nigeria and asked whether USG refusal get involved in political aspects did not quote smack of indifference end quote. Palmer replied that US decision not involve itself in mediation and cease fire effort strongly pushed by Biafrans and opposed by FMG could hardly be characterized as indifference by either party.

Drafted by:

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Telegraphic transmission and

classification approved by:

AF/W - RMelbourne

Clearances:

AF - Mr. Palmer (draft)

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E.O. 12958, as amended

April 21, 2005

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3. Enahoro said FMG committed to prediction of victory "this year" but expected to QUOTE reduce war to guerrilla proportions UNQUOTE by middle of year. Major towns will be captured by end of rainy season, he thought.

4. Re bombing of civilians, Enahoro questioned accuracy of reporting and said FMG has code of conduct which heretofore enforced and presumably would also be invoked against pilots who were indiscriminate. Palmer strongly urged correction of situation and said bombings of civilians hurt FMG and helped Biafra. Enahoro wondered why rebel marketplaces so crowded if food scarce. Speaking as friend, Palmer stressed these explanations and doubts not credible in light accumulating evidence. Bombing of civilians had to be stopped. Palmer also warned that attacks on relief aircraft, no matter how justified by intermix of arms flights at Uli, would hurt FMG.

5. Palmer stressed importance Special Coordinator Ferguson receiving full cooperation from FMG. Enahoro re-assured that Ferguson will avoid politics and be imaginative in approach to relief proposals.

We still hope Obilagu plan can be worked out. In response to

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question from Enahoro, Palmer said Ferguson will not establish

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office in secessionist territory, although he expected to visit there

Enahoro did not react and seemed resigned.

6. On negotiations, Enahoro said only unity of Nigeria was not negotiable. Issues of twelve states, status of Ibos were negotiable after acceptance of one Nigeria, which is sole war aim. Enahoro and Iyalla failed see value of including all rebels in amnesty offer although Deptoffs pointed out exclusion of Ojukwu made amnesty lack credibility to mass of Ibos. Enahoro likewise held that foreign observers were concession to be offered if rebels negotiate but in event of total military victory foreign observers would not necessarily be invited. Palmer urged Enahoro to improve FMG position by developing details regarding measures it prepared to take to protect Ibos once hostilities stop and to make such precisions public. Enahoro seemed impressed and promised to consider.

7. Enahoro asked about improvement in Nigerian image in America.

Palmer reverted to bombing and also stressed that FMG ought to convey impression that it genuinely seeking to feed citizens wherever they are, in secessionist or FMG held territory. Greater publicity

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on FMG relief efforts is needed.

FMG disapproval of ICRC

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night flights ought to be muted as it appeared FMG not willing take care of needy people. In general, FMG should take positive approach to problem and stress worthwhile policies rather than merely react defensively against Biafran propaganda.

8. Dahomey border restrictions were justified by Enahoro and Iyalla by reports of smuggling ring in Porto Novo and Badagri. Palmer pointed out that timing of border restrictions certain to be interpreted as reaction to ICRC operations from Cotonou. International status of FMG further damaged by this development and USG strongly hoped matter can be quickly resolved.

9. Enahoro raised question of USG concern over Soviet influence in Nigeria. Palmer stated that we do not doubt FMG intentions re Soviets but do have doubts about USSR intentions ~~in~~ re Nigeria. We know Nigeria not about to compromise its independence but Soviet presence there bears careful watching.

10. Palmer and deptoffs also hit Enahoro and Iyalla hard on visa question, which is frustrating travel of persons useful to Nigeria

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and causing needless irritant in US-Nigeria relations. Dr. Paul Spray recently gave up and withdrew application for lack of reply from Lagos, thus costing Nigeria service of orthopedist who friend of FMG. Iyalla strongly defended need to screen visa applications from relief workers in order eliminate people who sympathetic to secessionists. Both officials left impression matter bureaucratically out of their control but in any case Iyal not prepared to recommend relaxation of new regulations.

11. Overall atmosphere of meeting was friendly and frank. Enahoro requested copy of memorandum of conversation and being sent in brief, sanitized version. Enahoro stated he plans travel to New York March 6 and then to Algiers for week, following which he expects spend fortnight in US visiting San Francisco, Los Angeles Detroit, Chicago and other places in ~~which~~ what he described as low-visibility effort to promote FMG cause.

END

ROGERS

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