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ABSTRACTED

BY DP NARA Date 2/17/08

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

1964-1970 BIAFRA-NIGERIA



Department of State

TELEGRAM

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ACTION AF 18

INFO IO 13, UCF 03, UPW 01, EUR 15, SR 01, ORM 03, SCS 04, SCA 01, AID 28,

CIAE 00, DODE 00, NSAE 00, NSCE 00, SSO 00, USIE 00, JPM 04, H 02,

INR 07, L 03, NSC 10, P 04, RSC 01, SP 02, SS 20, RSR 01, 141 W

T08614

O 261150Z MAR 69 ZFF-4

FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5671

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA IMMEDIATE

USMISSION GENEVA

USMISSION USUN

CONFIDENTIAL LAGOS 2674

SUBJ: FERGUSON MISSION

REF: LAGOS 2524, 2454 AND 2419

A. BIAFRAN VISIT

1. DURING MARCH 21-23 STAY IN BIAFRA ALL OFFICIAL
CONTACTS TRIED TO ENGAGE FERGUSON IN POLITICAL ASPECTS
CIVIL WAR BUT HE REJECTED ALL EFFORTS ON GROUNDS HIS
ROLE PURELY HUMANITARIAN. FERGUSON IMPRESSED WITH
DETERMINATION BIAFRANS ALL LEVELS TO CONTINUE FIGHT
AGAINST FMG BUT ALSO SENSED THAT AT SAME TIME MANY
BELIEVE FIGHT HOPELESS AND BIAFRA DOOMED SOONER OR
LATER. FERGUSON TOLD BY MANY BIAFRANS AND HIMSELF
BELIEVES FMG BOMBING OF CIVILIANS HAS BEEN GREATEST
UNIFYING FACTOR IN BIAFRA DURING PAST SIX MONTHS.

2. ON RELIEF ROUTES OJUKWU TOOK FOLLOWING POSITIONS
IN LONG TALK AFTERNOON MARCH 23:

A. FOR SECURITY REASONS BIAFRA COULD NOT AGREE
TO USE OF ULI AIRSTRIP FOR DAYLIGHT RELIEF FLIGHTS.
B. AS OBILAGO AREA NOW CONTESTED AND FOR OTHER
REASONS BIAFRA COULD NOT AGREE TO ANY USE OF OBILAGO
AIRSTRIP FOR RELIEF FLIGHTS DAY OR NIGHT.
C. ONLY REAL SOLUTION FOR RELIEF FLIGHTS WAS NEW

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E.O. 12958, as amended

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AIRSTRIPE AS PROPOSED BY CANADIAN AND OTHER CHURCH GROUPS. FERGUSON MADE CLEAR HE COULD NOT SUPPORT NEW AIRSTRIPE FOR REASONS SET FORTH LAST PARAGRAPH LAGOS 2419.
D. OF SURFACE ROUTES BIAFRA PREFERRED NIGER RIVER TO OGUTA BUT OJUKWU CONCEDED THAT THIS ROUTE PRESENTED SERIOUS LOGISTICAL AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS.
E. AFTER BEING ASSURED CALABAR IKOT OKPоро ROUTE WAS US AND NOT FMG IDEA OJUKWU DISCUSSED IT OBJECTIVELY AND SAID IT OFFERED POSSIBILITIES WHICH HE AND HIS ASSOCIATES WOULD EXPLORE. HE STATED HOWEVER THAT LAGOS COULD NOT RPT NOT BE USED AS STAGING AREA FOR RELIEF SUPPLIES DESTINED FOR BIAFRA. OF THREE ALTERNATIVE OPERATIONS OJUKWU GREATLY PREFERRED USE OF HELICOPTERS. NEXT CHOICE WAS BARGING UP CROSS RIVER. TRUCK ROUTE THROUGH FEDERAL TERRITORY WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE ONLY WITH US GUARANTEE OR OTHER GUARANTEE QTE OF SIMILAR QUALITY UNQTE AGAINST TAMPERING WITH RELIEF SHIPMENTS WHILE ON ROAD.
D. AFTER INITIAL RESISTANCE OJUKWU SAID HE WOULD BE WILLING TO SEND REPRESENTATIVE TO MEET FMG REPRESENTATIVE TO DISCUSS CALABAR IKOT OKPоро ROUTE. HIS CONDITIONS WERE THAT IT BE PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED THAT MEETING WOULD TAKE PLACE FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSE OF DISCUSSING RELIEF ROUTES BUT THAT NEGOTIATIONS SHOULD BE STRICTLY SECRET. ANY LEAKS OR BREACHES OF CONFIDENCE WOULD KILL WHOLE PROJECT. OJUKWU THOUGHT BEST VENUE FOR MEETING WOULD BE WASHINGTON WHICH FERGUSON SAID UNLIKELY APPEAL TO USG. OJUKWU RULED OUT ANY EUROPEAN SITE BUT SAID WOULD ACCEPT MOST PLACES IN AFRICA EXCEPT LAGOS AND ADDIS. HE THOUGHT DAKAR MIGHT BE GOOD VENUE.

3. FERGUSON GIVEN AIDE-MEMOIRE SETTING FORTH BIAFRAN POSITION ON RELIEF WHICH IN SEPTEL. THIS PAPER DATED MARCH 20 AND ACCORDINGLY DOES NOT ADDRESS ITSELF TO CALABAR IKOT OKPоро ROUTE.

B. RETURN VISIT TO LAGOS

4. FERGUSON REPORTED RESULTS HIS TALKS WITH OJUKWU TO GOWON AND ARIKPO MARCH 25. THEY NOT SURPRISED AT OJUKWU REJECTION USE ULI OR OBILAGO AND MADE POINT THIS PROVED ONCE AGAIN IT REBEL REGIME AND NOT FMG WHICH BLOCKING ADEQUATE RELIEF TO BIAFRA.

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

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REF ID: A4C441
NND 96900.

REF ID: A4C441
BY GP NARA Date 3/17/07

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5. GOWON AND ARIKPO CAUTIOUSLY ENCOURAGED BY OJUKWU VIEW CALABAR IKOT OKPORD ROUTE HAD POSSIBILITIES. GOWON BRISTLED WHEN FERGUSON REPORTED OJUKWU STATEMENT LAGOS COULD NOT BE USED AS STAGING AREA BUT DID NOT COMMENT. GOWON SAID HE WOULD BE WILLING SEND FMG REPRESENTATIVE TO MEET REBEL REPRESENTATIVE SOMEWHERE IN AFRICA (HE THOUGHT NIAMEY WOULD BE GOOD SITE) AND APPARENTLY CONCURRED IN PROPOSAL THAT NEGOTIATIONS SHOULD BE STRICTLY SECRET. HE ASKED FOR INFORMATION IN WRITING ON BIAFRAN POSITION AND ON CALABAR IKOT OKPORD ROUTE WHICH COULD BE STUDIED BY HIS ADVISERS. FERGUSON AGREED PROVIDE MEMO WITH TWO ATTACHMENTS: BIAFRAN AID-F-MEMOIRE AND LOGISTICAL DESCRIPTION (WHICH WILL BE DRAWN FROM STATE 44790(NOTAL)). MEMO AND LOGISTICAL DESCRIPTION FORTHCOMING IN SEPTEL.

6. FERGUSON TOLD GOWON THAT HE WAS CONVINCED SOME NAF ATTACKS ON CIVILIANS IN REBEL TERRITORY HAD BEEN DELIBERATE, AND HE HAD SEEN PIECE OF BOMB WHICH WAS OF FRAGMENTATION RATHER THAN CONCUSSION TYPE, THUS INDICATING PEOPLE RATHER THAN STRUCTURES WERE TARGET. HE STRESSED THAT HIS IMPRESSION WAS THAT BOMBING HAD SERVED AS MAJOR UNIFYING FORCE AMONG REBELS. GOWON LISTENED SADLY MADE NO ATTEMPT TO REFUTE FERGUSONS STATEMENTS, COMMENTED THAT HIS OWN INTELLIGENCE CONFIRMED THAT BOMBING HAD STIFFENED REBELS' WILL TO RESIST BUT SAID FMG WOULD HAVE TO CONTINUE AIR STRIKES AGAINST MILITARY TARGETS IN EFFORT BRING WAR TO END.

7. FERGUSON ON MARCH 24 GAVE UK HICOM FULL BRIEFING ON TALK WITH OJUKWU. LATE AFTERNOON MARCH 25 FERGUSON MET WITH CHIEFS OF MISSION OF DONOR GOVERNMENTS AND GAVE THEM MORE GENERAL BRIEFING ON HIS ACTIVITIES TO DATE. HE GAVE NO DETAILS RE SURFACE ROUTES. SCANDINAVIAN CANADIAN AND DUTCH CHIEFS OF MISSION AS WELL AS UK HAVE HOWEVER SOME KNOWLEDGE OF CALABAR IKOT OKPORD ROUTE.

8. DANISH AMBASSADOR ON BEHALF ALL NORDICS SUBSEQUENTLY SUGGESTED TO FERGUSON THAT IT WOULD BE VERY HELPFUL IF FERGUSON COULD BE PRESENT AT NEXT MEETING NORDIC FOREIGN MINISTERS IN COPENHAGEN ON APRIL 23. FERGUSON SAID HE WOULD BE GLAD CONSIDER THIS.

GP-3.
MATHEWS

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