

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Department of State

TELEGRAM

~~SECRET~~ 445

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ACTION SS 70

INFO OCT 01, SSO 00, CCO 00, USIE 00, CIE 00, NSCE 00, DODE 00, /071 W

065862

O P 111629Z JUN 69 ZFF-4
FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7137
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY COTONOU
AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMEMBASSY LONDON
USMISSION GENEVA
CINCSTRIKE

~~SECRET~~ LAGOS 5314

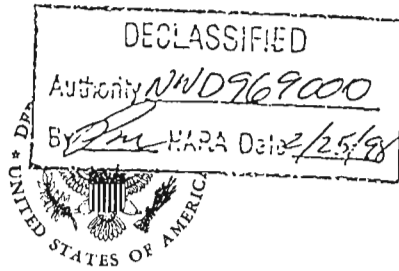
LIMDIS

SUBJ: FMG ATTITUDE TOWARD RELIEF FLIGHTS

REF: STATE 937591B

1. ARIKPO RECEIVED ME THIS AFTERNOON AT CONCLUSION
FEDERAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (FEC) MEETING. I SAID USG
DEEPLY CONCERNED AT SHOOTING DOWN OF ICRC AIRCRAFT
AND IMPLICATIONS THIS DEVELOPMENT FOR FUTURE OF RELIEF
AIRLIFT. I ASKED WHETHER FMG POLICY WAS STILL AS STATED
BY GOWON TO FERGUSON AND OLSON ON JUNE 3 (LAGOS 5026).
ARIKPO REPLIED THAT ISSUE HAD BEEN DISCUSSED AT LENGTH
IN FEC AND AGREEMENT REACHED THAT IN VIEW REBEL
ACQUISITION AIR CAPABILITY FMG COULD NO LONGER PASSIVELY
ACCEPT UNCONTROLLED FLIGHTS THROUGH ITS AIRSPACE. FEC
THINKING WAS THAT TIME AND FLIGHT PATTERN OF EACH
RELIEF FLIGHT WOULD HAVE TO BE NOTIFIED IN ADVANCE TO
FMG. ANY AIRCRAFT NOT SO NOTIFIED WOULD BE REGARDED
AS HOSTILE AND ATTEMPT MADE TO INTERCEPT. INTERCEPTOR
WOULD SIGNAL SUCH AIRCRAFT TO FOLLOW TO FMG AIRFIELD
AND WOULD ATTACK ONLY IF AIRCRAFT DISREGARDED SIGNAL.
ARIKPO ADDED THAT DETAILS THESE ARRANGEMENTS BEING
WORKED OUT AND THAT FMG HOPED MAKE ANNOUNCEMENT IN
FEW DAYS.

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2. I RESPONDED THAT THIS PROPOSED CHANGE FMG POLICY WOULD CREATE GREAT DIFFICULTIES FOR FMG AND FOR USG AND OTHER FRIENDS OF NIGERIA. I SAID I HAD ALREADY BEEN INSTRUCTED SEE GOWON ON THIS SUBJECT AND URGED ARIKPO TO ARRANGE APPOINTMENT BEFORE PROPOSED ANNOUNCEMENT MADE. ARIKPO REPLIED GOWON FULLY BOOKED JUNE 12 BUT WOULD SET UP MEETING JUNE 13. HE ASSURED ME ANNOUNCEMENT WOULD NOT BE ISSUED UNTIL AFTER MEETING.

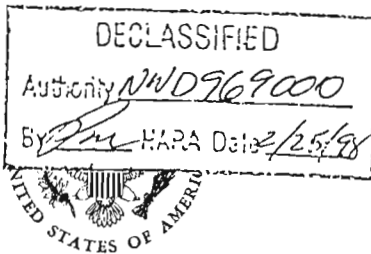
3. I TOLD ARIKPO USG HAD BEEN GREATLY DISTURBED BY FACT ICRC AIRCRAFT SHOT DOWN LESS THAN THREE DAYS AFTER GOWON HAD ASSURED FERGUSON THAT AIRCRAFT WOULD NOT BE ATTACKED IN AIR. ARIKPO RESPONDED THAT GOWON AND HE TROUBLED BY SAME ASPECT. GOWON HAD COMMENTED TO ARIKPO THAT AMERICANS WOULD WONDER WHETHER

HE CONTROLLED NAF. I INTIMATED THAT SUCH QUESTIONS HAD BEEN RAISED IN WASHINGTON. I ASKED ARIKPO WHETHER THERE WOULD BE NO FURTHER ATTACKS IN AIR UNLESS AND UNTIL FMG ANNOUNCED NEW POLICY. HE SAID THERE WOULD NOT BUT I SENSED LACK OF CONFIDENCE ON HIS PART (SEE LAGOS 5290).

4. WHEN I MENTIONED MININFO STATEMENT OF JUNE 7, ARIKPO INTERRUPTED ME TO SAY THAT GOWON AND HE HAD BEEN DISMAYED OUR STATEMENT. EXTAFF HAD LEARNED MININFO PREPARING STATEMENT AND HAD TRIED WITHOUT SUCCESS TO PREVENT ISSUE. IN RESPONSE MY QUERY, ARIKPO SAID I COULD ASSURE USG ON BEHALF GOWON AND HIMSELF THAT STATEMENT WAS NOT RPT NOT EXPRESSION OF FMG POLICY OR ATTITUDE. ONE CONSEQUENCE THIS UNHAPPY OCCURRENCE HAD BEEN FEC AGREEMENT TODAY THAT ALL FUTURE STATEMENTS RE RELIEF AIRLIFT AND RELATED PROBLEMS WOULD BE MADE BY DODAN BARRACKS OR EXTAFF.

5. I POINTED OUT THAT USG CONCERN OVER SHOOTING DOWN ICRC AIRCRAFT WAS HEIGHTENED WHEN IT LEARNED AMCIT KILLED AND URGED THAT FMG ISSUE COMPREHENSIVE STATEMENT SOONEST. ARIKPO RESPONDED FMG WANTED BE SURE OF FACTS BEFORE ISSUING ANY MORE STATEMENTS. INVESTIGATION WAS BEING PRESSED AND HE HOPED STATEMENT COULD BE MADE IN FEW DAYS. ARIKPO COMMENTED THAT NAF HAD REPORTED AIRCRAFT ATTACKED ONLY AFTER IT DISREGARDED SIGNAL BY INTERCEPTOR

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TO FOLLOW AND LAND.

6. I ASK THAT DEPARTMENT REVIEW INSTRUCTIONS CONTAINED REFTEL. GIVEN INFLAMED PUBLIC OPINION HERE AND STRONG CONVICTION WITHIN FMG THAT SOMETHING MUST BE DONE ABOUT NIGHT FLIGHTS, I DO NOT BELIEVE GOWON, EVEN IF HE WERE HIMSELF SO DISPOSED WHICH I DOUBT, COULD AGREE TO MAINTAIN STATUS QUO ON NIGHT FLIGHTS. WHILE DEPARTMENT WILL UNDOUBTEDLY SHARE EMBASSY DOUBT THAT FMG HAS TECHNICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE CAPABILITY TO CARRY OUT ARRANGEMENTS IT NOW CONTEMPLATING, THESE ARRANGEMENTS AIM AT CONTROL RATHER THAN PROHIBITION RELIEF FLIGHTS. IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES, I BELIEVE OUR MOST EFFECTIVE COURSE IS TO TRY TO GUIDE FMG IN DEVISING WORKABLE CONTROL PROCEDURES AND TO TRY TO CONVINCE ICRC AND JCA TO COOPERATE IN SUCH PROCEDURES.

GP-3. MATHEWS.

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