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AUSTRALIA NWD969000  
By [Signature] DAPRA Date 2/25/98

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PA/HO Department of State

E.O. 12958, as amended

April 21, 2005

Department of State

TELEGRAM

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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ACTION SS 70

INFO OCT 01, SSO 00, CCO 00, USIE 00, CI-E 00, NSCE 00, DODE 00, 1071 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

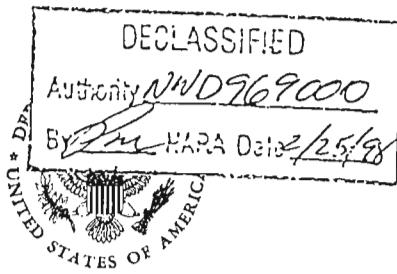
REF: STATE 937591B

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.

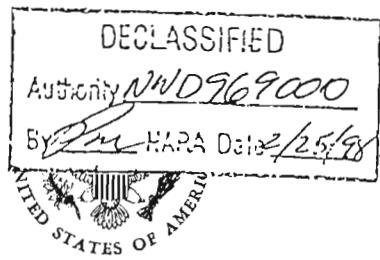
3. I TOLD ARIKPO USG HAD BEEN GREATLY DISTURBED BY FACT ICRC AIRCRAFT SHOT DOWN LESS THAN THREE DAYS AFTER GOWON HAD ASSURED FERGUSON THAT AIRCRAFT WOULD NOT BE ATTACKED IN AIR. ARIKPO RESPONDED THAT GOWON AND HE TROUBLED BY SAME ASPECT. GOWON HAD COMMENTED TO ARIKPO THAT AMERICANS WOULD WONDER WHETHER

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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