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Authority NWD969000

By *PA* HARA Date 2/25/98

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

FOL 27-9 BIAFRA-NIGERIA



Department of State

TELEGRAM

~~SECRET~~ 843

PAGE 01 LAGOS 05401 131830Z

44

ACTION AF 18

INFO OCT 01, EUR 17, IO 13, UCF 05, UPW 01, SR 01, ORM 03, SCS 04, SCÅ 01,

AID 28, SSO 00, CCO 00, NSCE 00, USIE 00, CIAE 00, DODE 00, JPM 04, H 02,

INR 07, L 03, NSAE 00, NSC 10, P 04, RSC 01, SP 02, SS 20, E 15, RSR 01,

/161 W

083902

O P 131653Z JUN 69

FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7292

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

~~SECRET~~ LAGOS 5401

SUBJ: FMG ATTITUDE TOWARD RELIEF FLIGHTS

REF STCIE 93759, 95450, 95798

1. OUTCOME OF MEETING WITH GOWON AND ARIKPO THIS NOON WAS THAT GOWON REITERATED HIS VERSION OF ASSURANCES TO FERGUSON ON JUNE 3 I.E. DESPITE FACT ALL NIGHT FLIGHTS QTE ILLEGAL UNQTE FMG WOULD CONTINUE QTE DO EVERYTHING HUMANLY POSSIBLE UNQTE TO PREVENT SHOOTING DOWN RELIEF FLIGHTS. GOWON SAID HE WOULD NOW MAKE ONE AMENDMENT WHICH WAS THAT ASSURANCES APPLIED TO QTE GENUINE UNQTE RELIEF FLIGHTS. FURTHER DISCUSSION REVEALED THAT WHAT HE HAD IN MIND WAS THAT ANY AIRCRAFT WHICH WAS INTERCEPTED BY NAF AND DID NOT COMPLY WITH INSTRUCTIONS TO FOLLOW AND LAND (AS IN CASE OF ICRC AIRCRAFT SHOT DOWN JUNE 5) WAS IPSO FACTO NOT QTE GENUINE UNQTE RELIEF FLIGHT AND THEREFORE SUBJECT TO ATTACK. THIS WOULD REMAIN FMG POSITION UNTIL FMG HAD DECIDED ON AND ANNOUNCED NEW PROCEDURES WHICH ALL RELIEF FLIGHTS MUST FOLLOW.

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PAGE 02 LAGOS 05401 131830Z

2. RE URGENT QTE ONE SHOT UNQTE CROSS RIVER OPERATION GOWON SAID HE HAD NO OBJECTION TO PROPOSAL INCLUDING FMG PLEDGE OF SAFE CONDUCT BUT FMG MUST FIRST ENSURE THAT LSM WOULD NOT BE ATTACHED ON STRETCH OF RIVER UNDER FMG CONTROL. HE OBVIOUSLY CONCERNED THAT EITHER BUSH PATROL OF FMG TROOPS OR REBEL INFILTRATORS MIGHT FIRE UPON LSM AND REMARKED BITTERLY THAT IF THIS HAPPENED WORLD PUBLIC OPINION WOULD ACCUSE FMG OF BAD FAITH.

3. I OPENED DISCUSSION WITH PRESENTATION USG POSITION AS INSTRUCTED REFTELS. RE RELIEF FLIGHTS I EMPHASIZED ADVERSE CONSEQUENCES IF FMG SHOT DOWN OTHER RELIEF AIRCRAFT. RE CROSS RIVER OPERATION I STRESSED PRACTICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ADVANTAGE OF DEMONSTRATING SOONEST ALTERNATIVE TO RELIEF AIRLIFT AND WILLINGNESS USG PUBLICLY TO PLACE BLAME IF REBELS BLOCKED OPERATION.

4. GOWON HAD SPENT MOST OF HIS PASSION IN TALK WITH UK HICOMER YESTERDAY (LAGOS 5351) AND WAS MUCH CALMER WITH ME. HE WAS HOWEVER EQUALLY TOUGH. HE SAID THAT HIS PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY WAS SECURITY AND SURVIVAL OF NIGERIA AND THAT HE WAS CONVINCED NIGHT FLIGHTS AND SOME OTHER ACTIVITIES OF RELIEF ORGANIZATIONS WERE DANGER TO NIGERIA. HE MUST DEAL WITH THIS DANGER. UK HICOMER HOWEVER HAD SHAKEN GOWON'S DISPOSITION OF YESTERDAY TO DISREGARD WORLD PUBLIC OPINION, AND I WAS ABLE TO BRING HIM TO AGREE TODAY THAT WORLD OPINION WAS FACTOR WITH IMPORTANT BEARING ON SECURITY AND SURVIVAL OF NIGERIA. HE REMAINED SKEPTICAL THAT WORLD OPINION COULD BE BROUGHT TO FAVOR FMG CITING FACT THAT OJUKWU REJECTION OF DAYLIGHT RELIEF FLIGHTS DID NOT SEEM TO AROUSE WORLD WHEREAS FMG OBJECTION TO NIGHT FLIGHTS CAUSED STORM OF PROTEST.

5. I TOOK OCCASION TO STRESS LONG STANDING ICRC REPUTATION FOR NEUTRALITY AND PROPER CONDUCT DEFENDED ITS ROLE IN NIGERIAN CIVIL WAR AND URGED GOWON AND ARIKPO TO RECEIVE HOFFMAN. GOWON SPOKE WELL OF HOFFMAN BUT I DOUBT THAT HE WILL RECEIVE HIM. GOWON'S DEMEANOR AND GENERAL TENOR OF HIS COMMENTS WHEN DISCUSSING ICRC TAKEN TOGETHER WITH OTHER

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PAGE 03 LAGOS 05401 131830Z

INDICATIONS BY RESPONSIBLE FMG OFFICIALS LEAD ME TO BELIEVE THAT FMG IS GIVING SERIOUS CONSIDERATION TO TERMINATING OR DRASTICALLY REDUCING IRC ROLE IN NIGERIA.

6. OLSON RECALLS THAT IN JUNE 3 CONVERSATION WITH FERGUSON (LAGOS 5026) GOWON EMPHASIZED ILLEGALITY OF NIGHT FLIGHTS AND SAID ALL WERE QTE AT RISK UNQTE BUT IS QUITE SURE GOWON DID NOT SAY FMG WOULD DO EVERYTHING HUMANLY POSSIBLE TO PREVENT SHOOTING DOWN RELIEF AIRCRAFT. GOWON THEREFORE TODAY PUT GLOSS ON HIS JUNE 3 COMMENTS WHICH CONSIDERABLY MODIFIES ASSURANCES GIVEN FERGUSON. I AM CONVINCED NOTHING MORE CAN BE GOT FROM GOWON AT THIS STAGE. BEST WE CAN HOPE FOR NOW IS THAT UK HICOMER AND MY DEMARCHES AND OTHER EXPRESSIONS OF CONCERN WILL INDUCE MEASURE OF CAUTION WITHIN FMG. IF HOWEVER NAF AIRCRAFT DOES INTERCEPT RELIEF AIRCRAFT WHICH REFUSED TO OBEY SIGNAL TO LAND LATTER WILL BE ATTACHED.

7. WHILE I JUDGE FMG CONTINUING REVIEW OF RELIEF FLIGHTS WILL NOT LEAD TO PROHIBITION IT ALMOST CERTAINLY WILL PRODUCE RIGOROUS CONTROL PROCEDURES. GOWON SAID TO ME AS HE DID TO UK HICOMER THAT HE THOUGH ALL RELIEF SUPPLIES SHOULD PASS THROUGH FEDERAL CHECKPOINT SUCH AS LAGOS OR OBILAGO.

GP-3.

MATHEWS

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