

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
WASHINGTON

OCT 24 1968

OFFICE OF
THE ADMINISTRATOR

Rabbi Marc Tannenbaum
American Jewish Committee
165 E. 56th Street
New York, New York 10022

Dear Rabbi Tannenbaum:

This is in reply to telegrams to the President, Secretary Rusk and me which you, Bishop Swanstrom and Mr. McCracken sent asking that the U. S. Government make available two Hercules aircraft for the Sao Tome/Biafra airlift. I'm replying directly also to Bishop Swanstrom and Mr. McCracken.

The Nigerian situation is tragic, and we're doing our best to work with others in providing humanitarian assistance to the victims of that civil war. In doing this, we're convinced that the cooperation of the Federal Military Government (FMG) is essential to making relief efforts a success. Serious Federal effort toward effective coordination among itself, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and other organizations and voluntary agencies becomes even more important as the area under Biafran control is reduced and larger numbers of people can be reached for relief and rehabilitation. The FMG has shown an increasingly cooperative attitude toward the various relief agencies. We've got to build on this support by the FMG if the relief operation throughout the country is to move beyond the present effort. The FMG has made it clear that international relief efforts should be channeled through the ICRC. Since the ICRC alone has the support of both parties in the civil war, it has been our policy, as well as that of most other governments and the UN, to coordinate relief aid through the ICRC. Along with other forms of assistance, the U. S. Government has made cash contributions to the ICRC which the latter at its discretion has been using in part to charter aircraft for relief flights.

We understand there are very serious limitations on airlifts from off-shore islands. The recent step-up in the volume of arms supplies being flown into secessionist Biafran territory causes the FMG to view even relief flights with increasing apprehension. We also understand that the Biafran authorities seem to be giving higher priority to arms flights than to food flights. As a result, the main limitation on relief flights into Biafra is not too few relief planes, but air traffic congestion at the single major airstrip still operating in Biafran territory.

For these reasons, I very much regret that the U. S. Government is not now in a position to comply with your request for Hercules aircraft to assist in the Sao Tome/Biafra airlift. We will continue to try to help where we can, however. Assistant Secretary Palmer and an A.I.D. relief team have just completed a visit to Nigeria where they discussed with the Federal Government, local relief agencies, and ICRC officials additional ways in which the U. S. Government can help in bringing increased relief to the needy on both sides of the fighting lines. We're hopeful this will bring some positive results.

We continue to believe that United States Government assistance of all types should be coordinated through the ICRC Biafra airlift. We've been told that the ICRC may soon be making a new appeal for substantially more assistance for the relief operation on both sides of the conflict. Major support for this appeal should provide the best means of getting greater relief to the war victims.

I'm sorry we can't provide the aircraft. We deeply appreciate the help you and other private groups are giving.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "William S. Gaud". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "William" and last name "Gaud" clearly distinguishable.

William S. Gaud