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E.O. 12958, Sect. 3.6

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By TDM/KW NARA, Date 11/29/99

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FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1253
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
USUN NEW YORK 1433

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ SECTION 1 OF 2 LAGOS 1005/1

SUBJ: REPORT OF TRIP THROUGH EASTERN SECTOR OF "BIAFRAN" ENCLAVE",
25-28 JANUARY 1970

REF: LAGOS 990

1. THIS MESSAGE CONTAINS FIRST OF THREE EYEWITNESS REPORTS (FARRELL'S) MENTIONED REFTEL. OTHERS FOLLOW. EMBASSY COMMENTING IN SEPARATE MESSAGE ON ALL THREE REPORTS.
2. ROUTE TRAVELLED: ENUGU, ULI, ONITSHA, NNEWI, OZUBULU, IHIALA, ULI, ORLU (INIOMA), ISLEKE, USULA-ILHASIAFOR, ORLU, OWERRI, EMEKUKU, OWERRI, ABA, PORT HARCOURT.
3. DURING THE TRIP OUTLINED ABOVE, THE REPORTING OFFICER SEPARATED FROM ANOTHER EMBASSY OFFICER AND A USAID OFFICIAL, AND TRAVELLED ALONE THROUGH THE ROUTE OUTLINED ABOVE, BY HITCH-HIKING WITH RELIEF TRUCKS, RED CROSS VEHICLES, POLICE VANS AND LOCAL "BIAFRAN" VEHICLES.
4. IN GENERAL, I WAS EXTREMELY SURPRISED THAT THE PORTION OF THE ENCLAVE VISITED WAS IN SUCH GOOD SHAPE, SINCE I HAD EXPECTED TO SEE MUCH MORE DEVASTATION THROUGHOUT THE

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SECTOR WHICH WAS THE LAST AREA TO FALL TO FEDERAL FORCES. KEY POINTS THAT WERE NOTED BY PERSONAL OBSERVATION AND IN CONVERSATIONS WITH AT LEAST 75 PEOPLE WHO INCLUDED IBOS FROM VARIOUS WALKS OF LIFE, FEDERAL TROOPS AND OFFICERS, AND NIGERIAN POLICE OFFICERS OF ALL RANKS, AS WELL AS EXPATRIATE RELIEF WORKERS WERE:

A. THERE IS NO STATE OF VIOLENCE, GREAT TENSION, OR FEAR IN THE AREA. THE IBO CIVILIANS AND EX-MILITARY PERSONNEL ARE MIXING FREELY AND PEACEFULLY WITH THE TROOPS AND FEDERAL POLICE IN THE ENCLAVE.

B. THE POLICE HAVE TAKEN OVER THE PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF LAS AND ORDER. ONLY A FEW TROOPS WERE SEEN ARMED IN THE ENCLAVE, AND MOST TROOPS SEEN WERE STROLLING ALONG THE ROADS OR IN LOOSELY GROUPED STAGING AREAS. ROAD BLOCKS AND CHECKPOINTS, WHICH WERE ENCOUNTERED FREQUENTLY THROUGHOUT THE ARE, WERE MANNED MAINLY BY BOTH ARMED POLICE AND TROOPS.

C. THE RELIEF TEAMS ARE JUST BEGINNING TO BECOME FULLY ORGANIZED AND FOOD SUPPLIES ARE BEING BROUGHT INTO THE MORE CRITICAL AREAS IN QUANTITIES SUFFICIENT TO PRECLUDE MASS STARVATION. ROAD TRANSPORT APPEARS TO BE ONE OF THE MAJOR PROBLEMS FACING THE RELIEF TEMS AND DURING THE TRIP THE AVAILABILITY OF VEHICLES VARIED GREATLY FROM ONE RELIEF CENTER TO ANOTHER. THE NUMBER OF EX-BIAFRAN TRUCKS BEING USED IN RELIEF WORK WAS SURPRISING AND LOCAL IBOS ARE BEING EMPLOYED BY THE NRC IN LOADING AND DISTRIBUTING FOOD FROM THE NRC CENTERS. THESE IBOS ARE PRESENTLY BEING PAID IN FOOD.

D. THERE IS A DEFINITE NEED FOR MORE PUBLIC TRNSPORT, I.E. TRUCKS TO MOVE THE REFUGEES BACK TO THEIR HOME TOWNS. THOUSANDS OF REFUGEES WERE OBSERVED WALKING ALONG THE ROADS, WHILE MANY WERE BEING TRANSPORTED ON RELIEF TRUCKS RETURNING TO THEIR FOOD WAREHOUSING AREAS. THE POPULATION MOVING ALONG THE ROADS APPEARED TO BE IN FAIRLY GOOD CONDITION AND WERE GENERALLY CARRYING THEIR PERSONAL POSSESSIONS. NRC REFUGEE FEEDING POINTS WERE SET UP IN MOST OF THE MAJOR TOWNS AND VILLAGES VISITED.

E. THE IBO POPULATION DOES NOT FEAR EXTERMINATION, AND

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ALL THE IBOS INTERVIEWED ALONG THE WAY STATED THAT ALMOST EVERYONE HAS COME OUT OF THE "BUSH". THE TROOPS OF THE 1ST DIVISION WERE OBSERVED SHARING THEIR RATIONS WITH THE PEOPLE IN THEIR AREA AND THEY WERE WELL DISCIPLINED.

F. THERE WERE, IN THE FIRST SEVERAL DAYS AFTER THE COLLAPSE OF THE BIAFRAN FORCES, MANY CASES OF RAPE AND LOOTING CARRIED OUT BY THE TROOPS OF THE 3RD MARINE COMMANDO DIVISION IN THE AREA AS FAR NORTH AS IHIALA. ACCORDING TO SEVERAL SOURCES (IBOS INCLUDED), LOOTING BY THE TROOPS WAS FOLLOWED UP BY LOOTING BY THE IBOS THEMSELVES. AT THIS POINT, THE 1ST DIVISION TROOPS HAVE BEEN MOVED FARTHER SOUTH TO BELOW ORLU AND THE 3RD MARINE COMMANDO DIVISION HAS BEEN MOVED BACK TO OWERRI. ONE GETS THE DISTINCT IMPRESSION THAT THE 3RD MARINE COMMANDO DIVISION IS A LESS DISCIPLINED UNIT THAN THE 1ST DIVISION. THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PEOPLE IN THE AREA UNDER THEIR CONTROL, ALTHOUGH CORRECT, IS NOT AS CLOSE AS THAT OF THE 1ST DIVISION TROOPS.

G. THE IBOS WHO WERE IN THE CIVIL SERVICE AND WITH PRIVATE COMPANIES ARE REGISTERING IN WHEREEVER POSSIBLE AND ARE ANXIOUS TO GET BACK TO "NORMAL" AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. THE COMMISSIONER OF POLICE FOR THE EAST CENTRAL STATE ESTIMATES THAT ABOUT 4,000 IBO POLICE HAVE REPORTED BACK FOR DUTY. MANY OF THESE IBO POLICE WERE OBSERVED WORKING WITH THE 12 FEDERAL POLICE UNITS WHICH WERE MOVED INTO THE ENCLAVE AFTER THE SUDDEN COLLAPSE OF THE BIAFRAN FORCES. VARIOUS ESTIMATES WERE GIVEN BY DIFFERENT SOURCES ON THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN THE "ENCLAVE" AND IN AVERAGING THE FIGURES, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT ABOUT ONE MILLION IBOS HAVE
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SUBJ: REPORT OF TRIP THROUGH EASTERN SECTOR OF "BIAFRAN" ENCLAVE",
25-28 JANUARY 1970

REF: LAGOS 990

MOVED OUT OF THE ENCLAVE, WHILE SOMEWHAT OVER TWO MILLION
STILL REMAIN THERE.

H. THE PHYSICAL DAMAGE IN THE AREA TRAVELLED
VARIED GREATLY FROM ONE MAJOR TOWN TO ANOTHER.
HOWEVER, APART FROM ONITSHA MARKET WHICH WAS HIT VERY HARD,
MOST OF THE PHYSICAL STRUCTURES IN THE LARGER TOWNS AND
VILLAGES WERE RELATIVELY UNTOUCHED, EXCEPT FOR BROKEN
WINDOWS AND BULLET SCARS. IF ONE COULD VENTURE A GENERAL
AVERAGE, COMPLETE PHYSICAL DESTRUCTION IN THE AREA WAS ONLY
ABOUT 10 PERCENT. THE ROADS ARE IN GOOD SHAPE AND THE
SECTIONS WHICH WERE DUG OUT OR BLOWN UP, MAINLY EAST AND
SOUTH OF ONITSHA, HAVE BEEN FILLED IN AND ARE PASSABLE.
THERE WAS NO STRUCTURAL DAMAGE TO "BIAFRAN" HOSPITALS SEEN
AT OZUBULU, IHIALA AND EMEKUKU; ALTHOUGH THESE HOSPITALS
NEED ADDITIONAL BEDS, MEDICINES AND EQUIPMENT. ALMOST ALL
THE BRIDGES IN THE AREA WERE DESTROYED AND HAVE BEEN
REPLACED BY TEMPORARY BRIDGES CONSTRUCTED BY THE ARMY

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ENGINEERS, AND THESE BRIDGES WERE ABLE TO SUPPORT THE FULLY LOADED RED CROSS TRUCKS. ULI AIRSTRIP WAS IN EXCELLENT SHAPE APART FROM A FEW SHELL HOLES OR BOMB CRATERS WHICH COULD BE EASILY REPAIRED. THE SURFACE OF THIS AIRSTRIP WAS ACTUALLY IN BETTER SHAPE THAN THE STRIPS IN ENUGU AND PORT HARCOURT. THERE WAS A SURPRISING NUMBER OF BIAFRAN-REGISTERED VEHICLES IN OPERATION, ESPECIALLY IN THE AREA CLOSE TO ENUGU. THE CONDITION OF THESE VEHICLES WAS GENERALLY GOOD, IN FACT MOST LOOKED LIKE THEY WERE IN BETTER SHAPE THAN THE AVERAGE NIGERIAN-OWNED VEHICLES IN LAGOS. (#) MILDREN WERE PART OF A GROUP OF APPROXIMATELY 500 THAT WERE BROUGHT IN AFTER THE ENCLAVE WAS OVERRUN. THESE WERE THE MOST EXTREME CASES OF MALNUTRITION OBSERVED, AND IT WAS CLEAR THAT THEY HAD BEEN ON A STARVATION DIET FOR SOME MONTHS. CONTRARY TO PRESS REPORTS, THESE CHILDREN WERE CARED FOR IMMEDIATELY UPON THEIR ARRIVAL AT PORT HARCOURT AND THEY ARE GETTING THE BEST POSSIBLE CARE UNDER THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES. UNFORTUNATELY, THESE CHILDREN WERE TRAPPED IN A SMALL POCKET AND WERE UNABLE TO GET FOOD AND MEDICAL AID UNTIL THE AREA THEY WERE IN WAS OPENED UP. DR SPIFF, WHO IS IN CHARGE OF THE CLINIC, HAS AN ADEQUATE STAFF TO HANDLE THE IMMEDIATE SITUATION WHICH IS IMPROVING EACH DAY. HOWEVER, A HIGH PROPORTION OF THESE CHILDREN WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE AFFECTED FOR LIFE. THIS WAS THE ONE STRIKINGLY TRAGIC REALITY OBSERVED OF A TRAGIC WAR.

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5. CONSULAR MATTERS REGARDING AMERICAN PERSONNEL WILL BE THE SUBJECT OF A SEPARATE REPORT. INCLUDED IN THIS REPORT WILL BE A LISTING OF NAMES RECORDED AT THE GRAVEYARD WHERE THE JCA CREWS, WHO LOST THEIR LIVES DURING THE AIRLIFT, WERE BURIED. SEVERAL OF THESE DECEASED WERE AMERICAN NATIONALS. GP-4
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NOTE: (#) APPARENT OMISSION.
CORRECTION TO FOLLOW.

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