

# OUTGOING TELEGRAM Department of State

INDICATE:  COLLECT  
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Origin

ACTION: Amembassy KINSHASA IMMEDIATE

Info

INFO: Amembassy LAGOS IMMEDIATE  
STATE 024460

DECLASSIFIED  
E.O. 12958, Sect. 3.6

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By JM/KW NARA, Date 11/29/97

FOR SECRETARY FROM RICHARDSON

1. I understand that General Gowon may raise with you what he considers unfair Western criticism and unwarranted interference in Nigerian relief. In the event Gowon should do so contrary to your desire to avoid the relief question, ~~(which I frankly share)~~ I thought it might be useful for me to report to you on how the problem looks from here.

2. In both political and human terms, General Gowon's sense of personal grievance over recent developments is quite understandable. Having launched a magnanimous policy of national reconciliation, the wave of critical press reports on conditions in Eastern Nigeria (which seemed to receive confirmation by official pressure on the FMG to accept more relief) must have come, as Ambassador Trueheart reports, as a rude shock. And in considering our motives and those of

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April 21, 2005

FORM DS-322  
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By TDM/KW NARA, Date 11/29/99

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others, Gowon and his colleagues must surely have recalled with mixed feelings our de facto neutrality and substantial support of international relief operations within the secessionist area during the civil war.

3. If Gowon chooses to raise this matter, I believe that we can and should affirm our admiration for the vigor and seriousness with which the FMG has begun to tackle the relief problem, emphasizing that our own sole purpose has been to be of assistance in a situation essentially caused by the secessionist leadership's determination to prolong a futile war. On the other hand, in light of the advice provided by our experts, I do not believe that we are as yet in a position to leave the impression, privately or publicly, of being fully reassured on conditions in the former rebel territory.

4. In this connection, I have just met with Dr. Jean Mayer and Dr. Lythcott to review the results of the new nutritional survey conducted for the Nigerian Red Cross. While there

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By TDM/KW NARA, Date 11/29/77

are differences in emphasis between the experts, there was agreement that the new survey largely corroborates earlier findings of a very serious situation in the area of the former Biafran enclave (Deptel 23814). Similarly, as regards food, while shipments have been increasing, they remain far short of the targets set by the Nigerians themselves (4,500 tons a week or 20,000 tons a month). Our logistics experts here, familiar with the local situation, still question just how quickly we can hope the Nigerians will achieve their own targets -- although there is no doubt that the situation is progressively getting better.

5. I fully agree with Ambassador Trueheart's assessment that given the Nigerians' extreme defensiveness and sensitivity the only way of dealing with the FMG on this problem is in an entirely non-political manner, through technical channels, especially those between the AID Mission and the various Nigerian ministries and organizations concerned with relief

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By TJM/KW NARA, Date 11/29/97

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and rehabilitation. Furthermore, without touching on this problem, your visit will be indirectly of considerable benefit to the U.S. Nigerian dialogue on relief by establishing a more cordial tone in U.S. Nigerian relations - following a period when even diplomatic amenities were held to a bare minimum.

6. Within the very real limitations noted above, I believe that in view of the seriousness of the situation in Eastern Nigeria our mission should continue, in a low key manner, to make available all possible assistance to the Nigerians in their efforts to achieve a more adequate relief program.

7. As regards the public treatment of the relief situation, your intention to avoid, if possible, public comment on this problem also seems to me the best course under the circumstances. Press coverage on Nigerian relief here has been declining-- although editorial interest can still be sparked quickly as by a recent UPI/~~xxxxxx~~ <sup>item</sup> on US relief supplies accumulating

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Furthermore,  
in Lagos./ ~~However~~ strongly favorable official comment on  
the progress of the Nigerian program, implying that the  
problem has now been brought fully under control, would  
quite possibly still invite substantial adverse comment  
here from those concerned over the adequacy of the Nigerian  
effort.

~~GP-3~~

~~END~~

8. You know that Marvin Kalb travelling with you has been  
concerned  
the American newsman perhaps most/~~concerned~~ with the moral  
dilemmas of this situation. He will be extremely sensitive  
to the tone and posture of our mission in Lagos.

GP-3

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By TJM/KW NARA, Date 11/29/97