

DECLASSIFIED
PA/HO Department of State
E.O. 12958, as amended
April 21, 2005

MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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INFORMATION *W*

April 7, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. KISSINGER

FROM:

Richard T. Kennedy *RTK*

Roger Morris *Roger*

SUBJECT:

Washington Star Article on Nigerian Relief

At Tab A is a front-page story from today's Star by James Doyle which clearly derives from a leak of a sensitive nutritional survey done by U.S. and Nigerian doctors in February.

This leak could have serious consequences for the relief effort and our continued role in it. The Nigerians have been very sensitive about data on conditions in the war-affected areas, and particularly so about implied U.S. criticism that not enough is being done. They were persuaded to undertake this survey only with great difficulty, and the whole process has required delicate diplomacy by our doctors. We agreed, for example, that any announcement of survey results would come only from the Nigerians themselves.

This leak is doubly unfortunate because, after further hard work by our doctors, the Nigerians had substantially agreed with the findings of the survey and were to publish it themselves in the next couple of days. Moreover, Dr. Lythcott had overcome resistance to the presence of U.S. doctors and persuaded the three states in the Eastern region to ask for U.S. doctors to advise their Ministries of Health. This important move may well be killed.

Letting the Nigerians take credit would have given maximum benefit by way of operational results of the survey. The situation in the former enclave remains very serious, and the Nigerians need to recognize and act on that. But now there is the great risk that they will recoil as usual from foreign criticism. Not only will they probably shrink from taking further measures they might have adopted, but they may also see the leak as bad faith on our part and seriously curtail, if not end, our role in relief -- which would be a serious blow to further progress which is certainly needed to save those who have survived thus far.

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The Doyle leak apparently comes from a draft report of the nutritional survey which has been circulated by the Public Health people in Atlanta to the doctors who participated, but not yet to anyone here in Washington. State is getting a report posthaste from Atlanta.

Other elements of the story indicate, however, that Doyle also got some inside information that would not have been available in the draft report.

As for press handling here, State is adopting a low key approach, avoiding a formal statement and backgrounding only those who ask about the story. We agree this makes sense. We have given Zeigler on an "if asked" basis a brief statement which (1) recognizes Nigerian efforts and progress to date, (2) points out there are factual errors in the report, and (3) refers the questioner to State for details.

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