

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

~~SECRET/SENSITIVE~~

August 23, 1969

FOR TONY LAKE

From: Roger Morris *Roger*

The attached package may be either irrelevant or overtaken, but I am sending it on in utter confusion over the intentions of Secretary Rogers in the Nigerian problem. In brief:

1. I thought the Sec. was seeing the President this weekend on the question of a peace initiative. This, I thought, grew out of the oral request from the President to consider an initiative.
2. In that vein, AF sent the Sec. the briefing and recommendation I sent with you in my latest memo to Henry on the subject. (in pouch of 21st)
3. The AF recommendation to Rogers was for immediate action.
4. Earlier last week, however, AF did send the Sec. a memo describing what they were planning to do before events in Nigeria overtook them. That memo, albeit superceded by the Bureau's later piece to Rogers, now shows up on my desk as a memo to Pres. from Sec.
5. Upshot: 7th floor and Af are on different tacks, but impossible to tell at this point which will stick in Rogers' discussions with the President on this.
6. So (you do follow this, don't you?) I am duly staffing the Rogers memo I have; that is, the earlier AF memo to the Sec., which AF now regards as obsolete.
7. I regard both installments of the State memos as deficient, and have so indicated in HAK's memos.

Please call me (in the interests of my sanity as well as policy) if and when you learn anything which straightens any of this out. (I think if you read the attached, then peruse my last memo to HAK with bootleg State attachment, you'll get the picture, Byzantine as it is!

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ACTION

~~SECRET~~

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger

SUBJECT: U. S. Peace Initiative in Nigeria/Biafra

At Tab A, Secretary Rogers reports on the actions planned by State to deal with the Nigeria/Biafra problem. The steps in summary:

-- Relief Coordinator Clyde Ferguson to continue his tentative and indirect exploration of both sides in the context of relief negotiations.

-- State to send an officer from the African Bureau to Europe and West Africa over the next 4-6 weeks to try to sound out negotiating possibilities without revealing U. S. intentions. We would only decide what action to take after this exploratory mission.

-- State to continue its emphasis on political support for Federal Nigeria.

My own view is that we should move ahead promptly with an initial probe of negotiating positions in both Nigeria and Biafra. I am concerned over the State proposal in two respects:

1. The gradual and indefinite probe they propose over the next several weeks will probably raise more doubt and suspicion than anything else. For Africans -- who chronically suspect the Western powers of devious schemes -- playing coy in probing this problem will only diminish the credibility of whatever follows. Further, even some leading questions will tend to tip our hand and surrender the initiative to others, such as the French, who will want to exploit to their advantage any U. S. involvement.

2. The success of any U. S. mediation effort, now or later, will depend on an even-handed approach which is fair to Biafra. Thus we can ill afford to put ourselves too close to the Nigerians. State should cool its ardor for Lagos, at least for the sake of credible negotiations.

You have my views in detail on this problem. (My latest memo on a U. S. peace initiative is at Tab B.)

To seize the initiative in dealing with all parties and to protect the credibility of our own mediation with Biafra, the U. S. should launch a full-fledged probe of both sides, and be ready to follow-up with sponsoring negotiations. We

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know where others stand on the conflict. The problem is to decide to move seriously ourselves -- and to avoid in the process any bias for one side that would destroy whatever chance we may have to help end this war.

Recommendation:

That you authorize me to instruct State to begin a prompt exploration of negotiating possibilities in both Nigeria and Biafra.

Approve _____

Disapprove _____

See Me _____

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