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DEPARTMENT OF STATE**Memorandum of Conversation**

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DATE: May 5, 1969

SUBJECT: Nigerian Relief - Visit by Amb. Iyalla

PARTICIPANTS: Ambassador Joe Iyalla, Embassy of Nigeria
Dr. C. Clyde Ferguson, Special Coordinator on
Nigerian Relief
Mr. Stephen C. Schott, U/CF

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Ambassador Iyalla stated that he had come in to continue the discussion started by Mr. Ferguson with Dr. Arikpo in London on April 22nd. He stated that the question of a surface corridor had been studied by Government officials in Lagos and it had been decided in the highest councils that the FMG should cooperate as fully as possible with Mr. Ferguson. Therefore, after study it had been decided that the Cross River surface corridor was all right in principle. In particular, the Government could approve the use of LSM's carrying goods up the Cross River to Ikot Okporo. The question of a road route to the ferry crossing at Ikot Okporo presented some problems, since the road and its feeder lines might not be able to carry the full relief effort and still be used as a communications link by the Nigerian Army. This could possibly affect the security of the Southeast State.

Ambassador Iyalla further stated that with regard to the use of LSM's on the Cross River route, the Nigerian admiralty would have no problem about inspection at Lagos. Arrangements could be worked out for inspection somewhere other than the port at

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Lagos-Apapa. He mentioned that, in fact, it might be good for the Nigerian Navy to observe the use of LSM's in action. And he indicated that they had to look forward to the day when there would be no Biafran enclave, and the Federal Government would itself be interested in using LSM's to bring relief and rehabilitation into the area. He also indicated that there might be other surface corridors which would be feasible, provided that the hostility of the local population to the movement of goods along such waterways into Biafra would not prevent their use.

In reply, Mr. Ferguson welcomed this information and stated that we would be in a position to utilize the Cross River route by June 1st; that the equipment would be in place by that time. With regard to a truck route to Ikot Okporo, he said that his staff had carefully examined this road and felt that a truck route would not interfere with existing military communications and that the road could be maintained to bear such heavy traffic. He felt that the question of inspection could be worked out for example by allowing a naval-boarding at sea before the goods entered the Cross River. The need for the LSM's to move relief goods, no matter how the military situation developed, was expressed.

Ambassador Iyalla then stated that he had heard that the church groups were pressing for two more C-97's. Mr. Ferguson confirmed that whereas previously he had heard rumors that they wished to obtain two more C-97's, he had now received a firm request. Ambassador Iyalla said that Lagos would have "a sharp reaction" to any further contribution of planes to the relief effort. He pointed out that the church groups (not the ICRC) were operating illegally over Nigerian territory. He further stated that his Government was not interested in whether or not the planes were an actual addition to the original four or whether they would replace one or more cannibalized planes. Further, his Government would not be interested in

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a trade-off in which the Nigerian Relief and Rehabilitation Commission would receive a like donation of planes. He protested that Omo-Bare had no need for planes.

The Ambassador pointed out that Uli Airfield is a military target and he claimed that the Federal Army would soon take it. At that point, presumably it would not be possible to fly relief goods into Biafra and we would have to rely on a surface corridor. He made it increasingly clear throughout the conversation that favorable progress on the Cross River route would depend on how we handled the C-97's.

Mr. Ferguson raised the question of airdrops as one which had been given increasing publicity. Ambassador Iyalla responded immediately that the Federal Government would never accept airdrops because they could not assure that weapons would not be airdropped, too. He conceded readily, however, that airdrops from planes flying from Lagos was a different matter.

The Ambassador asked when Mr. Ferguson would be able to travel to Lagos and indicated that the FMG was anxious that he return to discuss relief routes. Mr. Ferguson said that Congressional relations had kept him in Washington, but that he expected to return to Lagos during the last two weeks in May and would remain for extensive discussions with Government officials.

The conversation ended with some discussion of the hearings before the Diggs' Subcommittee. The Ambassador stated that he had two of his staff members present at the hearings, and had been very pleased at the way the hearings went. He was interested in getting a large number of copies of the hearings as soon as they were published and we promised to take care of his needs.

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