

*Visit could not be
scheduled — CBE
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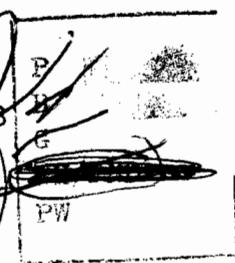
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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D. C. 20520

September 11, 1973

9/11/73



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(With EXDIS Attachment)

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MEMORANDUM FOR BRIG. GENERAL BRENT SCOWCROFT
THE WHITE HOUSE

Subject: President Nixon's Meeting with
General Gowon

The Acting Secretary's memorandum of August 29 (attached) stated that General Gowon, Nigeria's Head of State and current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity, was committed to address the United Nations General Assembly on the morning of October 5, and was prepared to come to Washington following his speech. He hoped to remain here through Saturday, October 6, to meet with the President. This was in accordance with President Nixon's interest as expressed in his letter of July 31 to General Gowon (also attached). We proposed that the President invite General Gowon to meet with him Friday afternoon, October 5, stay at Blair House and attend a working dinner at the White House.

Our Ambassador has now informed us of Nigeria's preference that the proposed meeting with the President take place on Saturday, October 6. This would permit General Gowon to be honored at the traditional luncheon given the OAU Chairman by the United Nations Secretary-General and to address the Council on Foreign Relations shortly thereafter.

The choice by Nigeria of October 6 is not wholly consonant with the effort to agree on a "mutually convenient time" stated in the President's letter, especially since that date is a Saturday. However, we believe that the limited flexibility afforded us may have been deliberately contrived by high officials in the Nigerian Government who wish the meeting aborted for their own purposes.

*POL 7 Nigeria
XR POL 3 OAU
XR POL Nigeria - US*

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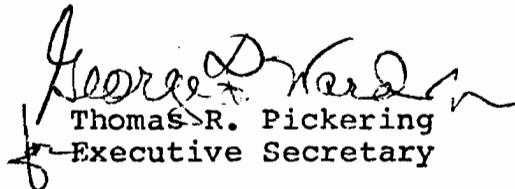
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We consider it vital that we avoid playing into the hands of those who would exploit General Gowon's inability to carry out the desired meeting with the President. A repetition of a misunderstanding which occurred in 1970 when President Kaunda of Zambia visited the U.S. on a Non-Aligned Conference mission could have a distinctly adverse impact on our relations with the 41 African nations comprising the OAU. With the exception of Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, Africa's unchallenged patriarch, General Gowon is the continent's preeminent leader.

We thus recommend that every possible consideration be given to the President's receiving General Gowon on Saturday morning, October 6, in Washington or at any other convenient site. We further propose that an invitation to a working brunch or luncheon be extended. If the meeting is planned for Washington, we recommend that an invitation to stay in Blair House on the nights of October 5 and 6 also be made. In the event that the President's schedule for October 6 does not permit such an offer, we recommend that General Gowon be invited to a meeting late Friday afternoon, to a working dinner that evening, and to stay at Blair House. This alternative invitation would be extended largely as a courtesy, however, because General Gowon will very likely be unable to accept.


Thomas R. Pickering
Executive Secretary

Attachments:

1. Memorandum for the President, August 29
2. President's Letter to General Gowon, July 31
3. Lagos Telegram 7346

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Drafted: AF/W:ARMcKee/JLLoughran:js
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Concurrences: AF/W:ORAggrey AF:CGross

Redrafted and retyped in S/S-S:GFward 9/11/73