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NSC MEETING

14 February 1969

Issues for Decision

Policy Choice

Your basic decision is between two principal policy choices in expanding relief.

1. More relief by greater involvement in support of one side or the other. Support for Federal Nigeria is the essence of Options 2 and 3. Support for Biafra is Options 4, 5 and 6.
2. Make an active and visible effort to get more relief, but without greater political involvement with either side. This involves a course of action somewhere between Option 1 and Option 2. For example: you might appoint a U. S. relief coordinator. We would then seek to negotiate with the two sides a relief arrangement strictly on its humanitarian merits. This policy would improve our public posture, but the odds of success in actually expanding relief are probably less than even. I recommend this course, however, on the grounds that the alternatives of an active policy involve undesirable political involvement with not much better chances for expanding relief.

In addition, you might decide the following tactical-operational questions.

Reply to General Gowon. The Head of the Federal Military Government has written you (copy underlying) inviting a U. S. emissary to exchange views and make a fact-finding tour.

1. You could reply by a simple acknowledgement and decline the invitation pending further policy study; or
2. you could use the invitation to approach the Federals on negotiating a relief arrangement. I recommend this choice in the spirit of an active relief policy without political involvement.

Your conversation with de Gaulle. The French have told us that Biafra will be one of the subjects the General may raise with you in Paris.

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1. You might simply hear de Gaulle out but withhold specific comment; or
2. you can tell the French we are actively pursuing relief expansion without political involvement. We want their cooperation in bringing along Biafra. I recommend this approach with de Gaulle. French influence with Biafra might be decisive.

U. S. relief coordinator.

I recommend you authorize Secretary Rogers to appoint a coordinator working out of State. He should have a broad mandate to oversee our relief effort and negotiate with the two sides on a relief arrangement along the lines of the policy course I recommend above. This should substantially improve our public posture and help emphasize the relief focus of negotiations.

Public Stance.

1. We could withhold any public announcement of the NSC consideration of relief; or
2. the White House could announce that the NSC had given the matter urgent review in the context of non-political humanitarian concern. We could say we are considering new steps to encourage and expand relief, but cannot be specific. I recommend this public stance.