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Information Division
Department of External Affairs
Ottawa Canada

Canadian Weekly

Bulletin

Vol. 24, No. 1

January 1, 1969

WITHDRAWAL OF RELIEF AIRLIFT FROM NIGERIA

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. Mitchell Sharp, has announced the decision of the Canadian Government to withdraw the *Hercules* aircraft that had been placed at the disposal of the Canadian Red Cross to participate in its relief airlift from Fernando Po into the secessionist area of Nigeria. This decision was taken following the failure of the regime of Lieutenant-Colonel Ojukwu to respond to the appeal made by Prime Minister Trudeau to permit the Red Cross to operate a relief airlift by daylight into the rebel area. During the assignment to the airlift, the Canadian plane moved some 220 tons of relief into the secessionist area. Following the Nigerian ban on night flights, the Red Cross used the aircraft to move relief supplies from Europe and evacuees to Dahomey.

On November 4, the Prime Minister announced in the House of Commons that the Nigerian Government had agreed to permit a relief airlift by day, subject only to the condition that aircraft carrying arms would not be introduced into rebel-held territory during daylight. Such an arrangement would have increased greatly the quantity of airlift relief to the affected area. The proposal was communicated to the Biafran authorities by the International Committee of the Red Cross. It was discussed with them by Ambassador Lindt during two visits he made to the rebel area, during which he urged them to accept the proposal for daylight flights.

DAYLIGHT FLIGHTS URGED

Despite these repeated efforts, the ICRC have been unable to hold out any hope that the proposal will be accepted by the Biafran authorities in the foreseeable future. Under these circumstances, the Canadian Government has no alternative but to withdraw its aircraft until such time as the Biafran authorities

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agree to daylight flights. The Government could not agree to have its plane participate in night flights since these have been banned by the Nigerian Government and the ban was recently reaffirmed. The Canadian Government wishes it to be clearly understood, however, that, if the Biafran authorities agree to daylight flights for ICRC planes, it would be prepared to send an aircraft back immediately to Fernando Po to participate in daylight relief flights.

In making this announcement, the Canadian Government appeals once again to the Biafran authorities to agree not only to daylight flights but also to land corridors in order to allow relief supplies to enter the area in the substantial quantities required to alleviate the suffering of the civilian population.

Apart from its participation in the airlift, the Canadian Government has allocated \$2,660,000 to the ICRC relief effort in Nigeria, including the rebel-held territory. Part of this amount has been spent on about 2,800 tons of food aid which has been delivered to both areas of need and is being utilized by the ICRC in its programme of relief. The remainder of the food aid, totalling \$1.6 million, the allocation of which was announced by the Secretary of State for External Affairs on November 26, is being accumulated. It will be shipped early in the new year at the request of the ICRC, which, in the next two months, will be receiving thousands of tons of supplies provided by other governments and relief agencies.