

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

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AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

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AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

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INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

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AFDROUGHT

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAID, SWEL, XY

SUBJ: CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT REPORT ON SAHELIAN RELIEF

REF: STATE 043618

PARIS FOR HELMAN, BRUSSELS FOR USEC MARTIN, ROME FOR FODAG,
LONDON FOR BAAS

1. AID COMMENTS ON CARNEGIE SAHEL REPORT.

2. QUOTE THE AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT HAS NOT HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO REVIEW IN DETAIL THE REPORT ON THE SAHEL DROUGHT IN AFRICA, "DISASTER IN THE DESERT," ISSUED BY THE CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE, AND IS NOT PREPARED AT THIS TIME TO RESPOND TO ALL THE POINTS RAISED IN THE PUBLICATION. WE FIND THE REPORT MAKES CLEAR THE TERRIFYING AND EXTENSIVE IMPACT THAT THIS DROUGHT HAS HAD UPON THE PEOPLE OF THE SAHEL AND EMPHASIZES THE COMPLEXITY OF DEALING WITH THE DISASTER. IT DOCUMENTS THE RANGE OF CONCERNS THAT THE WORLD DONOR COMMUNITY HAS HAD TO FACE IN RESPONDING TO THE CONDITIONS OF THE SAHEL - NOT ONLY FOOD BUT THE RIGHT KIND OF FOOD IN THE RIGHT PLACE; PROBLEMS OF TRANSPORT OF THAT FOOD; ASSURING EQUITY AND EFFICIENCY IN DISTRIBUTION; AND DEALING WITH THE MEDICAL PROBLEMS AFFLICTING A DROUGHT-STRICKEN POPULACE.

3. QUOTE IT IS TRUE, AS THE REPORT POINTS OUT, THAT THE UNITED STATES HAS NOT BEEN A MAJOR FINANCIER OF DEVELOPMENT

PROGRAMS IN THE SAHEL OVER THE PAST DECADE. THIS HAS NOT BEEN A REGION OF CLOSE HISTORICAL, ECONOMIC OR POLITICAL TIES WITH THE UNITED STATES. OTHER DONORS, WITH CLOSER TIES, HAVE PLAYED A LEADING ROLE IN FINANCING DEVELOPING PROGRAMS. BUT IN ITS RELATIVELY MODEST PRE-DROUGHT PROGRAMS, AID HAD RECOGNIZED THAT THE PROBLEMS OF IMPROVING CEREALS PRODUCTION AND IMPROVING LIVESTOCK MUST BE OVERCOME IF THE REGION WERE TO BE ABLE TO WITHSTAND THE PERIODIC DROUGHTS FROM WHICH IT HAS ALWAYS SUFFERED. THUS, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IMPORTANT PROGRAMS AIMED AT IMPROVING PRODUCTION AND MARKETING OF CEREALS AND LIVESTOCK WERE UNDERTAKEN IN THE RAIN-SHORT - BUT NOT DROUGHT - YEARS OF 1969-1971. THESE PROGRAMS INCLUDED PROVISION OF MODEST AMOUNTS OF US CEREALS TO MEET RECURRING DEFICITS DURING THAT PERIOD.

4. QUOTE IT WAS FROM INVOLVEMENT IN THESE PROGRAMS THAT AID RECOGNIZED THAT 1972 WAS BECOMING NOT JUST A YEAR OF

LOWER THAN DESIRED RAINFALL BUT A DROUGHT SITUATION OF SIGNIFICANT PROPORTIONS. AS SOON AS THE 1972 HARVEST FAILURE WAS FULLY RECOGNIZED, AID STEPPED UP DELIVERY OF THE 48,000 TONS OF GRAINS ALREADY PROGRAMMED FOR THE REGION AND OBTAINED AGREEMENT TO PROVIDE AN ADDITIONAL 108,000 TONS.

5. QUOTE THUS, WHILE THERE MAY NOT HAVE BEEN A CONTINGENCY PLAN OF THE SORT ENVISAGED BY "DISASTER IN THE DESERT", THERE WAS ALWAYS CLEAR RECOGNITION THAT THE FRAGILE ECOLOGY OF THE REGION--THE WEAKNESS OF WHICH CAN ONLY BE OVERCOME BY LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT PLANS--COULD BE DEEPLY HURT BY RENEWED DROUGHT. AND WHEN THAT OCCURRED THERE WAS A PROMPT RESPONSE.

6. QUOTE IN ANY EFFORT AS COMPLEX AND IMMENSE AS THE SAHEL DROUGHT RELIEF OPERATION, THERE ARE INEVITABLY DIFFERENCES OF VIEW ON HOW BEST TO REACT, AND HOW WELL THE JOB IS PROGRESSING. BUT THAT DOES NOT MEAN THAT THE US GOVERNMENTS RESPONSE TO THE DROUGHT HAS BEEN MARKED BY A PATTERN OF NEGLECT AND INERTIA, OR THAT THERE IS A LACK OF HUMANITARIAN CONCERN AMONG THE OFFICIALS CONCERNED WITH THE PROBLEM.

7. QUOTE ON THE CONTRARY, IT IS OUR BELIEF THAT THE RESPONSE OF THE DONORS, IN MOVING HUGE QUANTITIES OF FOOD, MEDICINES AND OTHER SUPPLIES TO SOME OF THE MOST INACCESSIBLE DESTINATIONS IN THE WORLD HAS BEEN A REMARKABLE EFFORT. ONLY THOSE WHO KNOW THE SAHEL FROM PERSONAL EXPERIENCE CAN UNDERSTAND THE INCREDIBLE DIFFICULTIES OF THE TERRAIN; THE ALMOST COMPLETE LACK OF COMMUNICATIONS AND TRANSPORTATION IN THE AREAS MOST SEVERELY AFFECTED;

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THE VAST SOCIOLOGICAL, ENVIRONMENTAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL FACTORS INVOLVED. THESE, PLUS THE NORMALLY DIFFICULT AND TIME-CONSUMING DETAILS OF ADMINISTERING ANY RELIEF EFFORT, WHETHER AN EARTHQUAKE OR A FLOOD OR A DROUGHT, HAVE MADE THE PERSISTANT SAHEL DISASTER ONE OF THE MOST UNUSUAL AND COMPLICATED IN THE HISTORY OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE.

8. QUOTE CONSIDERING THE NATURE OF THE DROUGHT AND THE PROBLEMS INVOLVED, THE WONDER IS NOT THE EXTENT OF THE TRAGEDY, BUT THAT IT WAS NOT GREATER. THE FACTS ARE THAT THE UNITED STATES AND OTHER DONORS DID RESPOND; THEY DID MOVE THE FOOD AND
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