

THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

7107785

SECRET

May 26, 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Subject: Possible India-Pakistan War

The situation in East Pakistan is evolving to the point where we now believe it possible that it could touch off a war between India and Pakistan. In the event of such a conflict, the possibility of Chinese pressure on India along their border, followed by increased Soviet military assistance to India, cannot be excluded.

Three things have created the danger of war: continued military repression, economic dislocation and lack of political accommodation in East Pakistan; the very heavy flow of refugees to India (over three million, according to the Indians) which is imposing a very great burden on India; and Indian cross-border support to Bengali guerrillas.

The possibility of war introduces a new and greater threat to US interests in South Asia. The threat is likely to remain as long as the East Pakistan conflict remains unresolved. We agree that President Yahya is not likely to take steps to bring about a political accommodation until he realizes, himself, how essential it is. We cannot force him to this realization and therefore we are not imposing political conditions on our assistance. We believe, however, that we should avoid taking actions which might ease the internal pressures on him to take such steps on his own accord.

We are engaged in a series of actions in regard to both Pakistan and India, designed to reduce the danger of conflict between the two. A list of actions already taken is attached.

SECRET

SECRET

-2-

We have been emphasizing three key points to the Pakistanis, both here and in Islamabad. First, it is essential that they get international relief activities started up in East Pakistan. Pakistan seems to be on the point of agreeing to this. Second, it is equally vital that they restore peaceful conditions in East Pakistan and persuade the refugees in India to return. Pakistan has acknowledged the need to do so and President Yahya has issued a somewhat contentious public announcement welcoming "bona fide Pakistan citizens" back. Third, we have continued our emphasis on the need for political accommodation, but with little result so far.

We have pursued three courses with regard to the Indians. First, since the refugee burden seems to be India's major problem now, we have taken a number of steps to encourage India to manage this problem by getting international assistance rather than by taking direct action against East Pakistan as some Indians are urging. Partly because of our actions U Thant is getting an effective international assistance program underway. We are already helping and will be stepping up our assistance. Second, we have taken up with the Indians their cross-border support to guerrillas and have privately cautioned them against direct action. Third, in order to persuade the Indians that a solution to the East Pakistan problem can be achieved without their direct military intervention, we have confidentially briefed them on the positions we are taking privately with Pakistan.

We have prepared contingency plans in the event that there is an outbreak of hostilities between India and Pakistan.


William P. Rogers

Attachment:

List of Actions Taken.

SECRET

SECRET

ACTIONS TAKEN

India

- A. Allocated \$2.5 million to refugee relief. These funds used to feed 300,000 refugees and contribute \$500,000 to UNHCR.
- B. Encouraged and supported UNSYG and UNHCR in organizing international refugee relief program.
- C. Recommended approval of proposal to provide four C-130s for airlift of refugees from Tripura to Assam and of relief supplies from Assam to Tripura.
- D. Briefed the Indians on what we are doing to get relief operations started in East Pakistan and to encourage political accommodation.
- E. Urged Indians to use restraint in relations with Pakistan; warned them against direct action.

Pakistan

- A. Pressed GOP to request the UNSYG to coordinate large program of international relief assistance for people of East Pakistan; GOP has just sent such request to UNSYG.
- B. Initiated contingency planning under Inter-departmental Working Group for US contribution to relief program; we contemplate PL-480 food aid, financing of inland water transport charters and support for US voluntary agencies.
- C. Urged Yahya to restore peaceful conditions in East Pakistan, to stop repressive action against the Hindu minority and to encourage return of refugees.

SECRET

SECRET

-2-

- D. Urged Yahya to seek political accommodation with Bengalis, and to make comprehensive public statement of his plans for this and for restoration of economic normalcy.
- E. Arranged to send USDA port specialist to East Pakistan to help assess and recommend regarding alleviation of crucial port congestion, storage and internal distribution problems.
- F. Urged Yahya to improve port and inland distribution facilities to permit distribution of relief and other commodities to the populace.
- G. Emphasized to GOP need for maintaining restraint toward India in these tense circumstances.

SECRET