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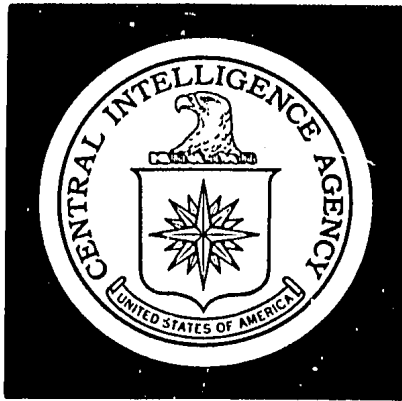
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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Memorandum

The Food Situation In East Pakistan

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ER IM 71-151
July 1971

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
July 1971

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

THE FOOD SITUATION IN EAST PAKISTAN

Introduction

1. The civil war that broke out in East Pakistan on 25 March is only the latest in a series of disasters that have rocked that province during the past year. Eye-witness observers who have recently toured the region have agreed unanimously that food shortages are virtually inevitable by late summer and that the possibility of famine cannot be ruled out.

2. This memorandum evaluates the civil war's impact on East Pakistan's food production and the disruptions that have occurred to normal food movements both within the province and from the outside world. It also appraises the likely food situation and consequent import requirements in East Pakistan during the next year.

Discussion

3. Even under normal conditions, East Pakistan has not been self-sufficient in foodgrains for more than a decade. Population growth has outpaced rice production -- the mainstay of the province's diet -- and imports averaging one million tons of foodgrains have been required annually (see Table 1). Most of the imports consisted of wheat provided by the United States under PL 480 auspices. Imports were sufficient to maintain per capita foodgrain consumption at approximately the 1960 level.

4. Severe flooding in August 1970 and the subsequent devastating cyclone in November reduced the province's rice prospects from an expected 12.3 million tons in fiscal year (FY) 1971 (1 July 1970-30 June 1971)

Note: This memorandum was prepared by the Office of Economic Research and coordinated within the Directorate of Intelligence.

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Table 1

East Pakistan: Foodgrain Production,
Imports, and Availability a/

Million Metric Tons			
<u>Year</u>	<u>Production</u>	<u>Imports</u> <u>b/</u>	<u>Availability</u>
1961	9.73	0.59	10.32
1962	9.68	0.69	10.37
1963	8.93	1.33	10.26
1964	10.67	0.93	11.60
1965	10.55	0.63	11.18
1966	10.56	0.79	11.35
1967	9.66	0.89	10.55
1968	11.25	1.01	12.26
1969	11.34	1.03	12.37
1970	12.01	1.51	13.52
1971 <u>c/</u>	11.10	1.20	12.30

a. Fiscal years ending 30 June.

b. Including shipments from West Pakistan.

c. Preliminary.

to 11.0 million tons. 1/ There were indications in early 1971, however, that more extensive use of high-yielding variety (HYV) seeds and increased acreage for the *boro* crop 2/ harvested in the spring would raise production to 11.5 million tons. This would still leave a larger shortfall than in the previous year, so that more imports would be needed.

5. In early 1971, Islamabad already had arranged to import 2.2 million tons of foodgrains to close the expected food gap and indicated that it would require 500,000 tons more. By late March and before the hostilities, about 1.1 million tons already had arrived, including most of the 400,000 tons expected from West Pakistan. The United States had arranged under PL 480 to ship almost 1 million tons, of which almost 400,000 tons had been delivered by late March.

2. Three rice crops are harvested annually in East Pakistan -- aus in the fall, aman in the winter, and boro in the spring. They represent about 25%, 60%, and 15%, respectively, of annual rice output.

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6. Storage facilities, docks, and the distribution system are adequate under normal conditions to handle large inflows from abroad as well as shipments from surplus to deficit districts within the province. Government-owned storage depots have a capacity of about 700,000 tons and service primarily the major urban areas. Much larger stocks are held by private traders and by farmers for their own use. Stocks are normally at their highest level in the spring, drawn down during the monsoon months, and replenished in the winter. East Pakistan's two major ports -- Chittagong and Chalna -- have a combined normal capacity for offloading foodgrains of more than 200,000 tons per month. The deltaic terrain favors water transport for internal shipments of foodgrains, although the railroads normally handle the distribution of more than half of the foodgrains received from abroad (see Figure 1).

7. On the eve of the civil war, Pakistani and international relief agencies were still rebuilding housing and dikes in the cyclone-devastated coastal area. In large areas, food stocks and crops had been completely destroyed and the population was subsisting on imported foodgrain distributed through a government system of ration shops. Government officials and local leaders, however, were quite apprehensive about the next eight months because it had not been possible to replace the cattle, which are used as draft animals, lost during the cyclone, with the result that substantial acreage would remain untilled. Furthermore, it had not been possible to stockpile sufficient quantities of foodgrains at strategic points in the area because warehouses were destroyed. Foodgrain distribution was hampered by a shortage of boats, a large number of which were destroyed in the cyclone.

Impact of the Civil War

8. The civil war has had a devastating effect on East Pakistan's food situation by reducing economic activity in the countryside and at the major ports and by disrupting the internal distribution system. As a result, crop prospects have deteriorated, purchasing power has declined, and food stocks are falling. Islamabad has taken only nominal action to avert a food crisis. The mass refugee exodus into India -- over 7 million in late July -- has further complicated the situation, reducing the number of mouths to feed while at the same time leaving land untilled. 3/

9. Western observers who toured East Pakistan's countryside in recent weeks found a pervasive atmosphere of fear, extensive burning of villages, and widespread neglect of rice cultivation. Planting of the *aus* and

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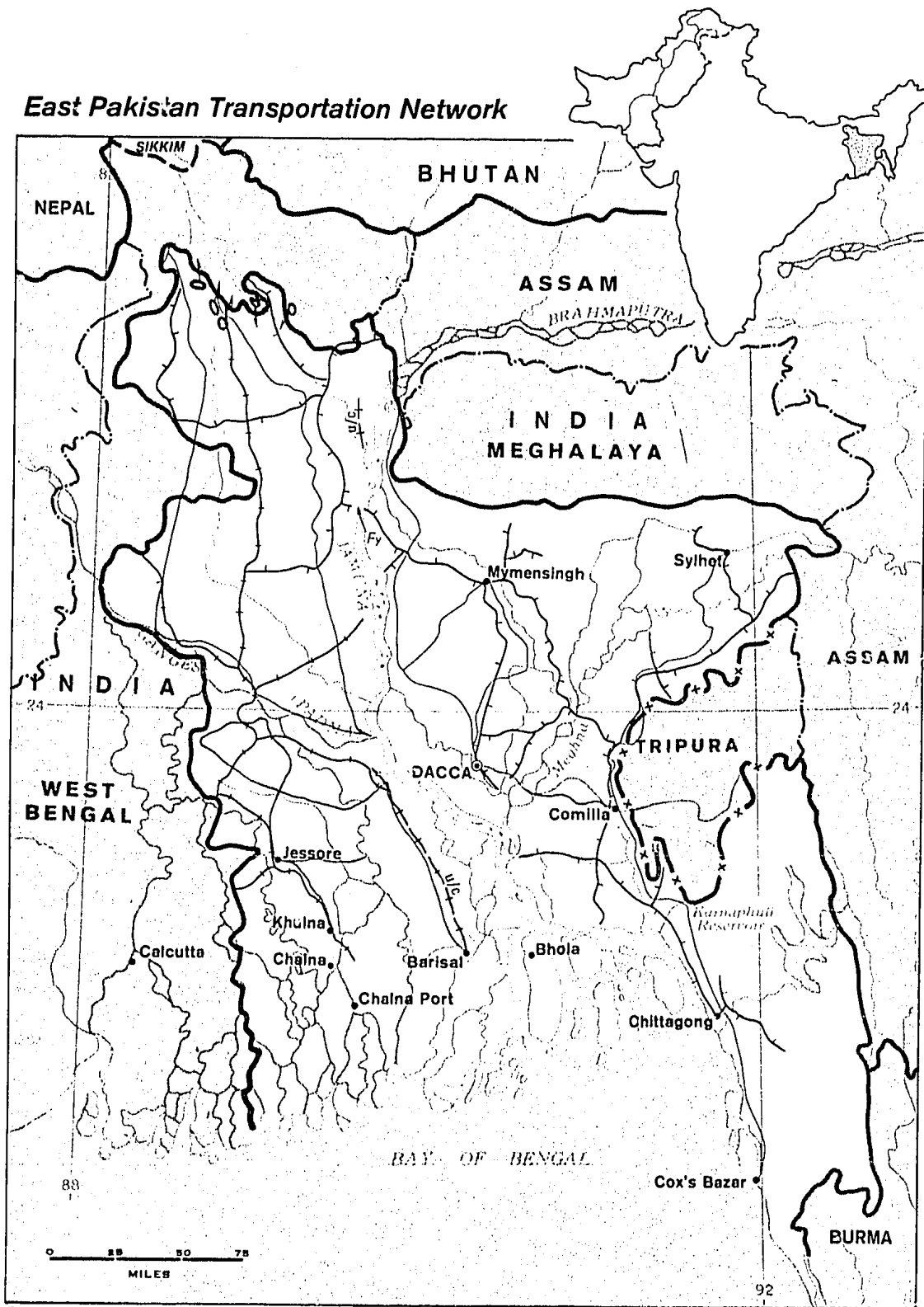


Figure 1

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aman crops – accounting for 85% of total annual production – was under way in the period April-July. The full impact of this neglect will not be known until the harvests in September and December. It seems almost certain, however, that the harvest will be abnormally low. Yields are likely to drop sharply because farmers have not had normal access to fertilizer and pesticides. Economic activity in the countryside has also been curtailed by the virtual halt in public works projects, which has deprived perhaps 2 million rural wage workers of their usual incomes.

10. Distribution, rather than production, is the more immediate problem insofar as food shortages and possible famine are concerned. Only 12 of East Pakistan's 19 districts are either self-sufficient in foodgrains or produce a surplus, and the remainder are dependent at least in part on outside supplies (see Figure 2). Normally the internal transport network, the public distribution network, and private traders assure that foodgrains move from the surplus districts and – in the case of imports – from the ports.

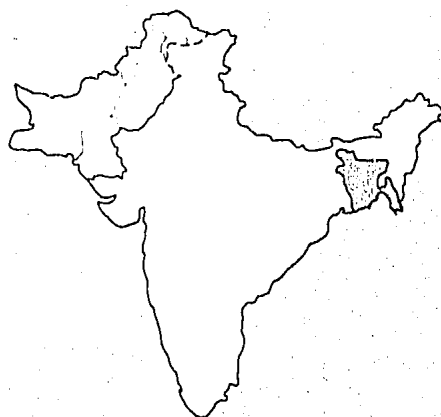
11. The World Bank representatives, who toured East Pakistan in June, characterized the foodgrain distribution system as "completely wrecked." Rail and motor traffic have been disrupted by the hostilities, and water traffic has been limited by a shortage of boats, which were destroyed or confiscated by the military in large numbers. Foodgrain movement from the ports to the interior has been reduced to a trickle as important rail links were destroyed in the fighting and many, including those from the ports, have not operated since early April. The army has given priority to repairing blown bridges and other damage, but rail lines are easily sabotaged by guerrilla bands, especially the vital link between Chittagong and Dacca which runs within one mile of the Indian border. While most damaged railroad bridges have undergone some makeshift repair, more adequate repairs cannot be made until after the monsoon ends in September. Furthermore, complete destruction of railroad signalling equipment has slowed daylight operations and totally eliminated night traffic, and restoration is many months off. Road traffic, even in relatively secure areas, is still constrained because a large number of bridges and culverts were destroyed and trucks are still largely in military hands.

12. The lack of adequate internal transport has delayed the normalization of foodgrain imports, as port storage facilities are not capable of handling the increased volume. Port operations at Chittagong and at Chalna were disrupted by heavy fighting in late March, and ships then en route to East Pakistan with foodgrains generally were diverted to Karachi in the West Wing. Subsequently, although port facilities were largely undamaged, labor shortages and the movement of army supplies held non-military dock activities well below capacity. Foodgrain imports were

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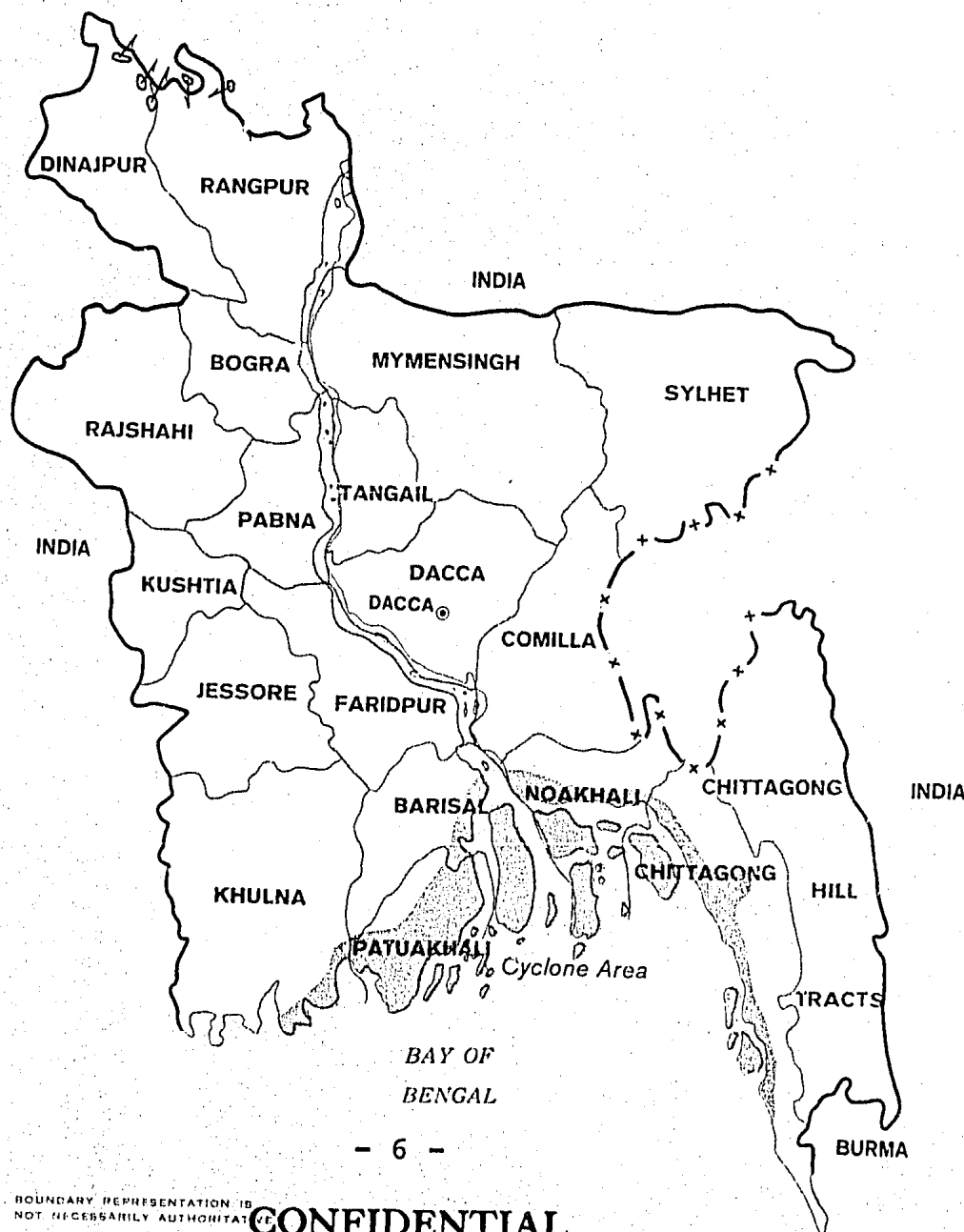
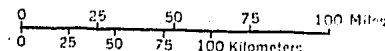
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Figure 2



East Pakistan Food Situation

- District boundary
- ▭ Surplus district
- ▭ Deficit district



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resumed in May, but offloading has been well below normal, as the following tabulation indicates:

Port	Metric Tons		
	May 1971	June 1971	Monthly Average (FY 1970)
Chittagong	45,000	37,000	90,000
Chalna	11,900	31,000	54,000

13. In mid-July, storage facilities at both ports were full, and there was little foodgrain movement to the interior to relieve the congestion. At Chittagong, a new bulk storage silo capable of holding 110,000 metric tons was being tested, but moisture seepage will limit its utilization to about one-half of capacity for several months. Warehouses in Chittagong are storing foodgrains up to 50% above capacity, which seriously increases risks of spoilage. Foodgrains are reportedly even being stored in vacant office buildings.

14. Although the drawdown of government foodgrain stocks nationwide since March was about normal for those months, the geographic distribution of the remaining stocks is extremely abnormal. By 1 June, total stocks had declined to 450,000 tons, compared with 780,000 tons on 1 March (see Table 2). However, most of the stocks were being held at their points of origin in normally surplus districts or at the ports because of the breakdown of the internal distribution system (see Table 3). On the basis of data from central storage depots, which account for most of the stocks, it is estimated that the decline in government stocks through June and early July further distorted the distribution picture as drawdowns continued in deficit districts while port supplies increased.

15. The current status of private foodgrain stocks is extremely difficult to determine. Private stocks were abnormally low in March because of the poor *aman* harvest the previous winter. The subsequent *boro* harvest in March did not add significantly to stocks because of its relatively small size. Therefore, with the normal drawdown from spring peaks augmented by that destroyed in widespread village burnings by the army, private stocks are probably also very low.

16. The food situation is most critical in the area hit by the cyclone. Bhola reported only a six-day foodgrain supply in mid-June. In the more

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Table 2

East Pakistan: Government
Stock Position in Foodgrains
1971

	Thousand Metric Tons
Stocks as of 1 March	
In depots	510
In ships, ports, or in transit	270
Total	<u>780</u>
Inflows, 1 March to 1 June	
Ship arrivals	85
Less ship diversions	-40
Net inflow	<u>45</u>
Outflows, 1 March to 1 June	
March offtake	150
April offtake	75
May offtake	100
Looted or destroyed	50
Total outflow	<u>375</u>
Stocks as of 1 June	
In depots	360
In ships, ports, or in transit	90
Total	<u>450</u>

remote areas, people were eating roots in mid-May. A late May sweet potato crop slightly alleviated the situation, but this was less than one-third of normal and relief was short-lived. The situation was made worse by the influx of refugees fleeing from the army, which has reportedly doubled the population in some parts of the cyclone region. However, earlier fears of mass starvation have been allayed so far. The lack of a large army presence

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Table 3

East Pakistan: Government
Foodgrain Stocks, by District
15 June 1971

District	Percent Stocks
<i>Total</i>	100
Normal food-deficit districts	<u>23</u>
Dacca	7
Faridpur	3
Mymensingh <u>a/</u>	6
Comilla	4
Noakhali	1
Pabna	2
Normal food-surplus districts	<u>77</u>
Kushtia	1
Barisal	8
Rajshahi	2
Bogra	4
Rangpur	2
Dinajpur	4
Jessore	2
Khulna <u>b/</u>	18
Sylhet	2
Chittagong	33
Chittagong Hill Tracts	1

a. Including Tangail.

b. Including Patuakhali.

has spared the area from much of the violence with the result that local government is still functioning and some relief distributions are being resumed, although often in reduced allotments because of very low stock levels. However, starvation has only barely been avoided and could result from a small additional disruption of the distribution system. Getting food into the cyclone area is a problem even in normal times because large areas are isolated by seas and flooded rivers, and the summer is a season of storms and rough waters.

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17. Islamabad belatedly alerted Western aid donors to the increase in its food import requirements but has done little to improve foodgrain movement within East Pakistan. For almost two months after the conflict started, the military barred foreigners from East Pakistan and accepted no outside relief offers because the situation had been "normalized." By May, however, all doubt about East Pakistan's plight had been removed by the vast refugee outflow to India. On 17 May, after many offers of assistance had been made by the world community, Pakistan informed the United Nations that international relief officials could resume their work in the cyclone area on 1 June. In addition, it requested 2.1 million tons of foodgrains for FY 1972 as well as 30 coastal ships to carry it to the interior. Most countries refused the request for ships because of the possibility of their use in military operations. In an effort to alleviate the transport bottleneck and yet discourage further boat confiscations by the military, the United States has granted \$3 million with the stipulation that it be used to charter foreign coastal vessels with foreign crews. In mid-July, President Yahya Khan appointed a Bengali with cabinet rank to oversee the relief and rehabilitation effort and replaced the ineffective food coordinator with a naval officer.

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18. The military government, preoccupied with establishing law and order, has insisted that present food stocks are sufficient. East Pakistan's military governor, Tikka Khan, assured the World Bank mission in June that he is giving top priority to moving foodgrains, but the Bank representatives believe that the problems are larger than Tikka Khan thinks and that he is not fully informed of the true situation. The military has been trying to restore the internal transportation network to facilitate the army's movements, but their efforts have been frustrated by guerrilla sabotage.

19. There has been no sense of urgency within the government with respect to the cyclone area. [redacted] the main bottleneck in implementing relief programs is the provincial government, which has been afraid to do anything without the military's permission and reluctant to even approach the governor with a request. However, both the military and provincial governments have pushed some relief programs in the area to cater to what they regard as a "strange foreign interest." Various Bengali officials have been appointed to relief committees, but so far their accomplishments have been small because no one wants to take responsibility for making decisions.

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20. The US Consulate in Dacca has estimated that 2.4 million tons of foodgrains will have to be imported during FY 1972 to maintain per capita consumption at even "normal" levels, which many experts consider inadequate. These requirements are based on a projected foodgrain production estimate of 9.7 million tons in FY 1972 as compared with 11.1 million tons in the previous year and imply a reduction of 400,000 tons in carry over stocks for FY 1973. Experts at the Consulate anticipate a decline in each of the three annual harvests, as the following tabulation indicates:

Fiscal Year	Million Metric Tons			
	<u>Aus</u>	<u>Aman</u>	<u>Boro</u>	<u>Total Production</u>
1970	3.0	7.1	1.9	12.0
1971	2.9	6.0	2.2 <u>a/</u>	11.1 <u>a/</u>
1972 <u>b/</u>	2.5	5.7	1.5	9.7

a. *Preliminary.*

b. *Projected.*

These production estimates assume favorable weather, and the decline could be greater if floods or drought occur. The projected declines reflect anticipated shortages of fertilizer and pesticides as well as shortfalls in irrigation projects, resulting from the government's inability to administer agricultural programs effectively while the military has priority over resources.

21. Under normal circumstances, humanitarian considerations most likely would assure that sufficient foodgrains arrived at East Pakistan's ports. Unless drastic measures are taken to restore the internal distribution systems, however, deliveries may be delayed. Experts from the US Department of Agriculture and USAID who investigated the province's transport problems for three weeks in June reported that widespread food shortages can be averted only if foodgrain distribution has top priority and the military diverts trucks, boats, and railcars to civilian use in order to meet the emergency.

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22. The unprecedented magnitude of the required imports -- over twice the normal level -- will exceed the ports' offloading capacity unless all present facilities are mobilized under ideal conditions to handle

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foodgrains. The largest amount handled previously was 1.5 million tons in FY 1970. But even if the needed grain could be offloaded, the US experts cited above maintain that only 1.6 million tons can be handled by the internal transport system over the next 12 months unless drastic improvements are made.

23. The cooperation and active participation of the army in distributing foodgrains to deficit areas will be essential. Not only does the army control most of the province's limited transport resources, but also its presence may be necessary to avoid sabotage by the *Mukti Fouj* (Liberation Army), which reportedly has threatened to disrupt foodgrain distribution efforts.

Conclusions

24. Widespread hunger is almost inevitable within the next month or two, especially in the food-deficit districts. Mass starvation, however, is unlikely in this time period because private emergency and seed stocks could be eaten and the flow of refugees to India could increase. Indeed, hunger has been a contributing factor in the current refugee flow to India. By mid-July, neither the central government in Islamabad nor the provincial government in Dacca had taken any serious steps to accelerate the movement of foodgrains. A food "czar" was appointed in July to oversee the problem, but the military retained ultimate control over the transport system, and there were no indications that the military governor intended to divert his resources to such civil activities as food shipments.

25. East Pakistan's foodgrain distribution system has virtually collapsed as a result of the civil war's disruption of the transport system. Although province-wide stocks may be adequate for about two months, the stocks are located principally in surplus areas and the normal flow of foodgrains from surplus to deficit areas has been interrupted.

26. In September the *aus* harvest should ease the food situation temporarily, but mostly in the surplus districts where the crop is concentrated, so that continuing transport disruptions will translate into shortages in deficit districts. Therefore, severe food shortage will probably recur in late 1971 before the *aman* crop is harvested in December.

27. Import requirements of 2.4 million tons are anticipated through June 1972, but imports of that magnitude actually exceed port capabilities unless emergency measures are taken. In any event, foodgrain imports will rot at the ports unless the transport system is restored to normal. If

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transport can be rehabilitated, rural violence reduced, and massive imports are forthcoming, the food situation could approach normal in early 1972. If, however, guerrilla activities and army retaliations continue to disrupt transport and rice production, famine will be a continuing threat in East Pakistan.

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