

# A military-style mobilization can deliver the emergency food to Africa

by J. Scott Morrison

*J. Scott Morrison presented this policy paper at the founding conference of the Schiller Institute, held in Arlington, Va. July 3-4. Morrison was the executive vice-president of Sea Land from 1964 to 1978, in international trade and containerization development.*

The starvation and economic collapse in Africa can and must be stopped. Yet there are literal lies in circulation about the impossibility of delivering enough food to relieve the crisis, and the impossibility of creating the physical conditions of infrastructure and economic development to prevent such a crisis from ever occurring again.

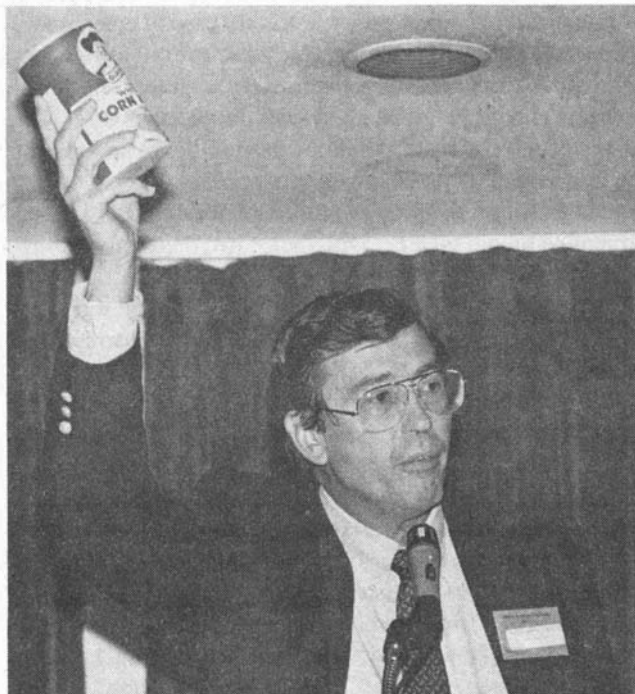
I want to focus attention on the exact means by which millions of tons of food can be shipped and distributed in the short-term emergency approach we must adopt. We must make a military-style mobilization effort, coordinated government to government, between Western Europe and the

United States, Canada and other food exporting nations on the one hand, and the receiving nations on the other.

This is necessary, first, to furnish the full amounts of food stocks required, which have been consistently understated by the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization, the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and State, prominent charities, and the international grain trade companies. Secondly, government to government cooperation is also necessary to requisition the ships and logistical back-up—floating piers, trucks, and other equipment, needed to do the job.

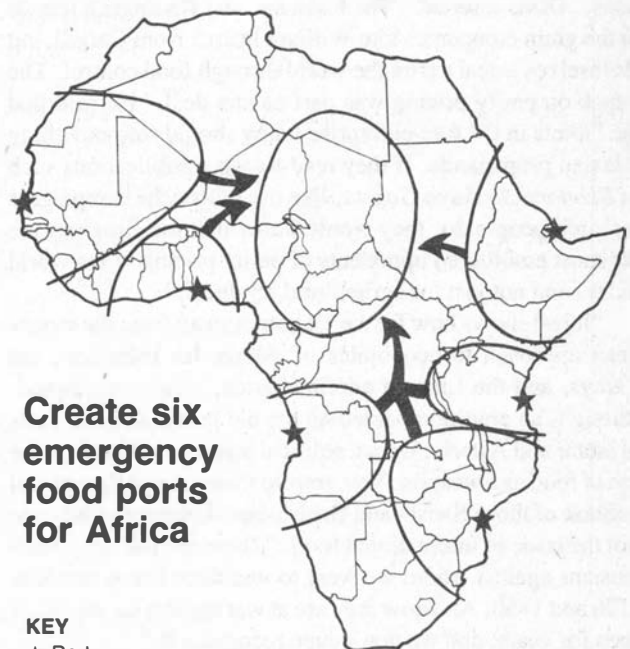
In the course of spanning the disaster regions of Africa with food-supply lines, routes will be opened up for initiating the water, health, and transportation infrastructure that goes along with creating large-scale development and power projects. We must use every lesson learned from the past, including wartime lessons, to accomplish our goals.

According to the estimates of the Fusion Energy Foun-



NSIPS/Stuart Lewis

*Morrison illustrates the cereal requirements that must be satisfied daily for each of 140 million Africans in need.*



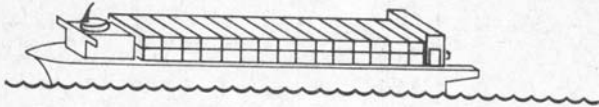
**Create six  
emergency  
food ports  
for Africa**

**KEY**  
★ Port

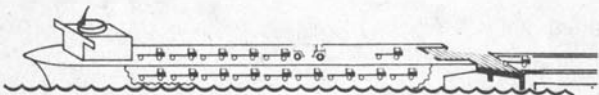
---

## Emergency equipment needed

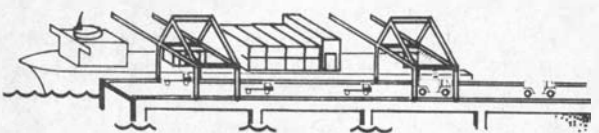
### LASH—6 needed



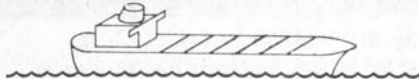
### Ro-Ro—6 needed



### DeLong Piers—6 needed



### Bulk carriers (40-60,000 tons)—25-30 needed



---

dation and the Club of Life, Africa requires, over and above existing food imports, an additional 17 million tons of grain a year as food aid or commercial sales beginning immediately, and for the next few years, to alleviate the disastrous conditions in the 22 worst affected nations. At the present time, less than 3 million tons of grain a year have been flowing into those same nations. Africa as a whole has been importing drastically less foodstuffs than required, despite the fact that the total amount of food produced per capita has declined for the last 10 years and food aid and commercial imports have not filled the shortfall.

It should be noted that the Soviet Union is currently importing about 33 million tons of grain every year. Diverting just half this amount to Africa for emergency food aid would turn around the current starvation conditions.

In addition to cereals imports, large tonnages of dried milk, soy and corn milk powder, and other protein food supplements are required to treat widespread protein deficiency diseases and upgrade the diet. These food shipments exceed any present storage or handling facility capacity in the African ports and hinterlands.

The existing ports and inland food shipment lines and depots are inadequate to handle the sizable food freight delivery required, so that military-style facilities (floating piers,

off road trucks, and so forth) must be brought into play for the first couple of years. These emergency systems can remain in place for a few years, during which time permanent advanced technology facilities can be built, creating growth spots around the African continent, and "boom towns" in the nations exporting the infrastructure capital goods.

In the earliest phase of food shipments, LASH (Lighter Aboard Ship) and SeaBee ships should be used, which are in the 30-40,000 ton range. These are self-contained, barge carrying ships, which would be good to equip with food already bagged—grain, rice, beans, for easier inland delivery. The ships could deliver to existing ports from which tugs would move the barges loaded with food cargo to water accessible locations. There are about 13 of these ships in the U.S. fleet. Hapag-Lloyd of West Germany has a couple. A number of these from several shipping lines should be requisitioned and chartered for the African food convoys.

Also in the first phase of shipments, about three to six roll on-roll off (Ro Ro) ships must be used to bring in the maximum tonnage of food on loaded trucks to deliver it inland to distribution points. These trucks would stay on site for handling future shipments brought in by the LASH and later bulk cargo ships. In addition, these Ro Ro vessels would deliver tankers for fuel distribution, electric generators, and other temporary infrastructure.

The Ro Ro ships are about 20,000 tons each, and equipped with self-contained ramps—like floating garages. There are 50 or more properly equipped vessels in the free world fleet.



*Sucker discharge grain equipment can be fitted on De Long floating piers for rapid bulk grain handling. Here grain is loaded onto barges in Kansas City.*

USDA/Murray Lemmon

Six to nine vessels would start the process and cover the early 6 to 12 month period.

The Ro Ro ships should be equipped with wheeled construction cranes on deck so they could also handle loading and unloading of non-wheeled supplies such as generators, water purification equipment, and other necessities.

Each ship should carry 150 off-road type trucks of between 15 and 20 ton capacity each, with heavy tires for difficult terrain. In addition, there should be 150 road type, heavy duty trucks.

While as many of these LASH and Ro Ro ships as possible are ferrying in food for truck distribution to the points of need, another effort would be initiated in tandem: the installation of military-style semi-permanent port facilities to handle the continuing flow of food from a fleet of 40 to 50 bulk carriers in the 60,000 ton range. The De Long floating pier technology can be installed within only months at key locations on the west and east African coasts.

From the pattern of the present emergency regions of Africa, it would be advisable to establish three emergency port facilities on the East Coast and three on the West Coast. These ports could *each* handle at least 50 to 60 arrivals per year of bulk carriers.

The De Long-type pier is a floating pier with hydraulic caissons which self-anchor. The piers are towed into place, then installed for use. The De Long pier is just a sophistication of the concrete piers which were towed into Normandy and installed after the beachhead was secured. The U.S. military has DeLong piers now, sitting in mothballs.

The piers should be pre-equipped with cranes, and with grain sucker discharge equipment. It would take around two to three months to prepare and equip the De Long piers, then another 45 to 60 days towing time, and one to two months to set up. Therefore, one or two of six emergency food ports could be in operation by December of this year, and the rest by early next year, if the

The De Long piers can remain in operation for years, handling construction equipment and other needs for development programs in the hinterlands. De Long piers were used by Sea Land during the Vietnam War to solve the port bottlenecks by containerizing the cargo and creating new ports; two or three De Longs were in Kham Ran Bay, Vietnam, and may have been abandoned. They are probably still in use today by the Vietnamese.

Both at dockside, and at inland-distribution points, air bag storage facilities can be erected in a very short time, to minimize the food destruction and pest damage now common in open-air storage. Grain shipments should be irradiated at the point of origin for optimum preservation. The practice of sending subgrade, moldy corn and grain must be stopped.

The costs of these emergency shipping methods, excluding grain, is at most 20 percent more than conventional transport in the first two years, and then equal to conventional transport thereafter.

In contrast to this practical approach to supplying emer-



*A U.S. Navy supply ship in World War II. A military-style mobilization can break the logjams that make a solution to the African food problem seem out of reach.*

gency food to Africa, the United Nations and the World Food Program are merely playing with food shipments while watching millions starve. The 1500-ton Danish coaster hired by the Program's Transport Branch last year is a joke. It will deliver 10,000 tons of grain to southern Mozambique in ten voyages over three months. Part of the grain will be unloaded on the former resort island of Santa Carolina—"Paradise Island"—then trans-shipped by a landing craft to villages on the mainland beach. There is no excuse for this immoral joke.

Look at the experience of the U.S. Navy in World War II. (See picture) Shown is a wartime supply ship, loaded with trucks, gasoline tanker trucks, cranes, and other emergency materiel, just the way in which we could be convoying supplies to Africa, and driving the cargo inland to every village in need.

All that is required to accomplish this is the moral commitment and political decisionmaking to do the job. We must create a new ad hoc international commission to locate the food, requisition the ships, and set in motion the logistics. There is today a "glut" of shipping tonnage; farmers and farms are being put out of existence. If American and European farmers were allowed to produce, and some excess vessel tonnage put to work solving this human need, the results would be immediate and measurable. These resources should be put to work now.