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N E W S   C O N F E R E N C E

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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 11:30 A.M. EDT

OCTOBER 8, 1974

TUESDAY

MR. NESSEN: I have a statement by the President.

Q Will it be distributed afterward?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, sir.

Q How soon?

MR. NESSEN: Momentarily.

"Yesterday the House of Representatives, once again acting against the almost unanimous advice of its leadership, amended the continuing resolution granting funds for our foreign aid programs. The amendment requires an immediate cessation of all U.S. military assistance to Turkey, and is, in my view a misguided and extremely harmful measure.

"Instead of encouraging the parties involved in the Cyprus dispute to return to the negotiating table, this amendment, if passed by the Senate, will mean the indefinite postponement of meaningful negotiations. Instead of strengthening America's ability to persuade the parties to resolve the dispute, it will lessen our influence on all the parties concerned. And it will imperil our relationships with our Turkish friends and weaken us in the crucial Eastern Mediterranean.

"But most tragic of all, a cut-off of arms to Turkey will not help Greece or the Greek Cypriot people who have suffered so much over the course of the last several months. We recognize that we are far from a settlement consistent with Greece's honor and dignity. We are prepared to exert our efforts in that direction. But reckless acts that prevent progress toward a Cyprus settlement harm Greeks, for it is the Greek government and the Greek Cypriots who have the most to gain from a compromise settlement. And it is they who have the most to lose from continued deadlock.

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"Thus I call upon the Senate to accept the original conference report language on Turkish arms aid and to return the bill to the House of Representatives once again. And I ask the House of Representatives to reconsider its hasty act and, working with the Senate, pass a bill that will best serve the interests of peace."

Q Does he say in there that he is going to veto it again? We see that threat. Will he --

Q We can't hear that.

MR. NESSEN: The question was, the President does not say anywhere in his statement that he would veto the bill. Well, there is nothing to veto at the moment. He was urging Congress to send him a bill which he could sign.

Q He still could not sign the House version of the bill?

MR. NESSEN: As passed last night?

Q Yes, sir.

MR. NESSEN: Right.

Q Was the President on the phone this morning with House leaders on this?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what his schedule of phone calls was for this morning.

We posted the schedule for today.

Q Can I go back? Are you saying in effect unless the bill is changed to comply with this request, he will veto the bill?

MR. NESSEN: I want to emphasize that the thrust of the statement is toward the end, urging Congress to send him a bill, and the House of Representatives to reconsider its action and to pass a bill that will best serve the interests of peace.

Q The question was, I think, could he sign the bill as passed last night, and I say --

MR. NESSEN: I said no.

Q So then you are saying he will veto the bill?

MR. NESSEN: If it were to come up here in this form, which he hopes it won't, he will veto it.

Q Ron, does the President have any reason to believe that the Senate will reverse the House action, in view that the Eagleton amendment started in the Senate?

MR. NESSEN: Well, he is urging them to send a bill that he can accept.

Q Ron, on the other side of that coin, doesn't the President think it is harmful and perhaps set a bad precedent for a country that abrogates, in effect, its U.S. military aid agreements, encouraging perhaps other countries to do the same thing whenever they feel like it, to use U.S. arms in furtherance of regional warfare?

MR. NESSEN: Jerry, I think the President, both in this statement and in several recent statements, and in Secretary Kissinger's news conference yesterday, have addressed the question of why they feel that this is not a proper bill.

I really do not think I could add anything to what the President said and Secretary Kissinger said along those lines you raised.

Q Ron, if I could go back to Peter's question for a moment, is there anything that has happened in any conversation or consultation that gives him, the President, reason to think that there could be a change in action?

MR. NESSEN: Well, at one point in this process it looked like an acceptable bill had been agreed to, if I remember the process correctly. This was a somewhat sudden and unexpected action by the House last night.

Q Has he had some new consultation --

MR. NESSEN: Today?

Q -- with Rhodes or Albert or anybody in the Senate that would make him think that they are going to change their action?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I don't know that he has had any conversations with Albert or Rhodes.

Q Ron, would the President like to see the Military Assistance Act changed in view of the fact that he had run into this difficulty in regard to the Cyprus situation?

MR. NESSEN: Changed in what sense?

Q To have this stipulation removed with regard to use of American military aid in these regional conflicts. I guess what I am getting at is why doesn't he address the subject head on and ask that the Military Assistance Act be changed?

MR. NESSEN: I think the problem at the moment is to get a continuing resolution that is acceptable.

Q Ron, if I remember correctly, that amendment did give the President some flexibility, provided substantial progress was made in these negotiations. Am I wrong on that?

MR. NESSEN: As I say, I have not kept track that closely on the entire legislative process, but I do remember at one point there was an amendment with roughly that language in it, about the good faith effort, I think.

Q No, that good faith effort was changed to substantial progress, and that was what, as I understand it, was passed last night. Is that what the President was referring to last night or is this something else that requires immediate cessation of aid in the absence of substantial progress?

MR. NESSEN: My understanding is that the version we are talking about here that he finds unacceptable was considerably more restrictive than anything that has been talked about before because it contained a combination of all the most restrictive amendments that had been talked of and voted on in various forms before.

Q Ron, he talks about immediate cessation of all military aid to Turkey. I thought that the House amendment said that you have to stop aid to Turkey unless there is substantial progress and left it to the President to decide whether substantial progress was made.

MR. NESSEN: Peter, why don't you check the language of the House bill. I am not totally -- what was done last night?

Q I want to know what the President is referring to.

MR. NESSEN: He is referring to the version that the --

Q That the House passed last night?

Q Even though this version is considered somewhat less restrictive than the Eagleton amendment?

MR. NESSEN: I am not sure it is, Jim. It is, as I say, a combination of several restrictive amendments. As I understand it, there were two Rosenthal amendments, both restrictive, and this version has both of them in there.

Q Ron, without pressing the point, I have to go back to my original question. If the President is truly concerned about what will best serve the interests of peace -- and maybe you can take this question if you can't answer it now -- is he not concerned that continued abrogation of agreements under the U.S. Military Assistance Act could serve as a very grave threat to the interest of peace as long as governments continue to misuse American arms?

MR. NESSEN: As I understand it, Dr. Kissinger has addressed the question several times of whether there was indeed abrogation and a misuse. As I understand it, that ruling has never been made by the State Department so your question is really based on a false premise, Jerry.

Q Congress does not think so.

MR. NESSEN: We posted the schedule for today.

Yesterday afternoon before departing for Burlington and his appearance at the dinner in honor of Senator Aiken, the President met with Don Rumsfeld, Jack Marsh, and Phil Buchen, in addition to his meeting with the National Security Council and his meeting with Archbishop Iakovos.

On the plane he had further meetings with Don Rumsfeld and myself.

This morning the President met with several staff members, including Marsh, Seidman, Scowcroft, Rumsfeld, Hartmann, Dr. Kissinger, and myself.

You had a chance to see the arrival ceremony and the exchange between the President and First Secretary Gierak, and then you had the pool report on the photo at the beginning of their meeting.

The President is meeting with First Secretary Gierak now. Secretary Kissinger and the Polish Foreign Minister, Mr. Olszowski, are also attending the meeting.

The President's remarks at the arrival ceremony set the tone for today's talks. They will focus on the developments in U.S.-Polish relations in recent years, their current status, and the prospects for further improvements and cooperation. This is the President's first meeting with the Polish First Secretary, and he values this opportunity to review bilateral relations.

As is often the case, there is no fixed or detailed agenda for today's talks. I believe it is the President's intention to have an exchange of views with the First Secretary on several international issues of mutual interest, such as the European Security Conference, negotiations in Geneva, and the force reduction talks in Vienna, in which both the United States and Poland are participants.

This afternoon the President will depart for the Capitol at 3:40 to address the Joint Session of Congress at 4:00. I expect the President's address to last about 45 minutes, and therefore he would be back here sometime around 5:00.

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Q When is he going to see his wife, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have the schedule of the hospital visit yet, Jerry. We will try and get it for you.

A little more detail on the briefing before the speech.

Secretary Simon will be the chief spokesman and the other economic advisers there to answer your questions will be Bill Seidman, Roy Ash, Alan Greenspan, and Secretary Lynn. We are going ahead with the plan generally as outlined yesterday, which is that the fact sheets from the Treasury Department and the speech text will be available at 1:30 in Room 450 of the EOB.

The briefing will start at 2:30 in Room 450. Once you get there and pick up your materials and speech copy, fact sheets, you will need to stay in the room and we have made arrangements for TV sets. We have also made arrangements for people to be free to go to their phones at about ten minutes of four, which should take care of the wire people. You are free to leave and go wherever you want about ten minutes of four.

Q Yes, but what time can we start filing?

MR. NESSEN: Four o'clock.

Q We can't file in the office until four o'clock?

MR. NESSEN: That is right.

Q You mean you can file into the office, but you have a transmission embargo at four o'clock?

MR. NESSEN: Nothing on the wire until four o'clock, but if you want to try and get your office on the phone -- it used to take me that long to get NBC just to answer the phone, so I guess you better start about --

Q It is not fair to the people who will be at the Capitol because the superintendent said they will not get the speeches until four o'clock, so the people who file from up there will be handicapped.

MR. NESSEN: Nobody will be able to file anything until four o'clock, so I don't see the handicap. The ones who are here are obviously going to stay here so they can get a one-hour briefing from Mr. Simon and the others. They have the speech early, so they can frame their questions to Mr. Simon and the others, but I don't see the handicap in that nobody can put this on the wires or use it in any way before four o'clock.

Q When will the President's remarks be made available to us here?

MR. NESSEN: You mean as delivered?

Q Not as delivered. I mean the text of the speech itself. When will we see it?

MR. NESSEN: You will never see it here, but you will see it at 1:30 in the EOB.

Q It will be available here at about four o'clock?

MR. NESSEN: Oh, sure, obviously.

Q I really think they are better off up on the Hill without the briefing, aren't they, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: You are not going to accomplish anything on that, Peter. (Laughter) There are 4000 words in the speech.

Q Will the text be available on the Hill anytime before the speech?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Will the fact sheets be available up there?

MR. NESSEN: Not until after four o'clock. Are we clear now on the briefing, do you think?

The President this evening will be the host at a dinner in honor of First Secretary and Mrs. Gierek at eight o'clock. We have posted the details on the coverage, so I won't go through that.

Q Ron, what entrance is the best entrance to use over there at the EOB?

MR. NESSEN: Seventeenth Street.

Tomorrow, the President is expected to spend the morning meeting with staff members.

We are happy to announce that at 2:30 tomorrow afternoon the President will hold a news conference. Weather permitting, it will be in the Rose Garden; otherwise, it will be in the East Room. I don't think I will have a briefing tomorrow since he is going to be available at 2:30, and I need a break anyhow.

Q Will it be televised tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: It is available if the networks care to televise it.

I would like to try something out tomorrow, and it needs a little bit of cooperation. What I would like to be able to do is to have everyone recognized for a question, or those who are recognized for a question be able to ask their question and then be able to ask a follow-up question on the same subject. The President is agreeable to this.

I do think that if it is going to work -- and I think we are trying to improve the news conferences and our operation -- I think if it is going to work, though, one thing we should try to avoid perhaps is someone asking a four-part question and then a four-part follow-up.

I really don't think, obviously, if everybody is going to ask a question and a follow-up, it is going to cut down the total number of questions, and it is not fair to your colleagues probably to ask a four-part question and a four-part follow-up, so he would like to try this on an experimental basis tomorrow at least, and we will see how it works.

I would think that it would work best that if you did ask a question, I think what we would like is to have a true follow-up question, not say, "Okay, now my second question is on another subject." I think it does take some cooperation among all of us to make these improvements that we are trying to make.

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Q I wonder if I could try to get a couple of small points clear.

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q First of all, is it our understanding then that if you are recognized for a question and you wish to ask a follow-up question, after you have asked your question and while the President is replying, you remain on your feet so he will understand you have a follow-up question. Is that right?

MR. NESSEN: That is right, and if you do not have a follow-up question, sit down and let your colleague --

Q Nobody knows whether he has a follow-up question until he hears the answer.

MR. NESSEN: That is my reaction, too. I think you probably want to stay on your feet until you have heard his answer and then if that satisfies you and you have no follow-up, you could sit down or say thank you, or whatever.

Q Do you want the follow-up on the same subject?

MR. NESSEN: I really think a follow-up means a follow-up, which is on the same subject.

Tomorrow evening the President will go to Philadelphia to attend a dinner in honor of Governor Scranton at the Philadelphia Sheraton Hotel. To plan your day, I think you should expect the President to leave the White House at 5:20, to leave Andrews at 5:40, and arrive in Philadelphia at 6:15.

There will be a reception which he will attend in the Pennsylvania Room of the Philadelphia Sheraton and the dinner will be from 7:30 until 9:30.

The President's speech is scheduled for 9:00. And then he is scheduled to be back here at about 11:00.

Either late today or first thing tomorrow, I hope to have a detailed press schedule for you.

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Q Andrews at 11:00?

MR. NESSEN: Back at the White House at 11:00.

Q When do you plan to have a text on his speech?

MR. NESSEN: I think we are going to hopefully be able to maintain the same timetable we did yesterday, or a little better, which is a text of these political speeches during the day before the speech -- during the day of the speech.

Q Will he be seeing Gierек again tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: I think it depends a little bit on today's meeting.

Q When will the press bus leave?

MR. NESSEN: Naomi, I think we will have the detailed press schedule later today or early tomorrow.

Q For planning purposes, do you have any general idea on press check-in at Andrews?

MR. NESSEN: Let's use yesterday probably as a model and adjust the times. He is leaving here 15 minutes or so later than he did yesterday, so leaving here -- let's say everything is just roughly pushed back -- it will be 20 minutes later than it was yesterday, roughly.

Q That allows 40 minutes --

MR. NESSEN: The press bus left the White House at 3:30 yesterday.

Q That allows only 40 minutes for some of us to file on the news conference, Ron.

MR. NESSEN: I don't have an answer to that problem. You might want to talk to Larry after this briefing and see if we could shove the time a little bit.

Q What about shoving the time of the press conference? Is that set in concrete?

MR. NESSEN: 3:30 bus, 4:30 check-in, 5:00 take-off. I am afraid the press conference is 2:30, and I understand fully the problem, and I frankly do not know what we can do about it.

Q 2:30 or 2:00?

MR. NESSEN: 2:30 news conference. It will be over at 3:00. That will truly give you a half hour to file unless you want to cut yourself a little thin and drive your own car out there.

Check-in at Andrews is 4:30. Press plane take-off at 5:00. So maybe you can squeeze some time on your own there. I see the problem and I am not sure we can do anything about it.

Q Why does it take one hour for the bus to get from here to Andrews?

Q Is tomorrow's dinner a fund-raising?

MR. NESSEN: This says "in honor of Scranton".

Q How much "in honor of"?

MR. NESSEN: What are the degrees I have to choose from?

Q 25, 50.

MR. NESSEN: We will get those details. I don't have them here.

That brings me to the end of my material.

Q Ron, is there any surprise on the President's part or reaction to the demonstrators he encountered in Burlington last night?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have any reaction to give you.

Q Ron, there is a published report today that Don Rumsfeld is only here for six months and then he will replace Mr. Schlesinger. What is your response to that?

MR. NESSEN: I talked to Don about that, and others. The President has asked Don to come to the White House as Assistant to the President to coordinate White House operations. No time limit was set on Don's services at the White House. Don will stay as long as the President wants him to stay.

Q So you are confirming the story?

MR. NESSEN: I don't get that out of what I just said, Jim. No time limit was set on his services and he will stay as long as the President wants him, and the President has full confidence in him on this job.

Q Are you ruling out that he might become the Secretary of Defense, replacing Schlesinger?

MR. NESSEN: I am saying he came here to do this job and there is no time limit set on how long he is going to stay in this job.

Q Does the President have the same full confidence in Secretary Schlesinger?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Does the President anticipate Secretary Schlesinger will be leaving within the next year?

MR. NESSEN: I have no reason to believe that.

Q Has the President received any request for pardons from any Watergate principals?

MR. NESSEN: Well, you know the one from Colson.

Q That was not a request for a pardon. That was a request for a shortened sentence addressed to the court. Has the President received a request for a pardon from anybody who was connected with Watergate?

MR. NESSEN: We will have to take that up, Jack, or do you know the answer?

Q What was the question?

MR. NESSEN: Has the President received any requests for pardons from anybody involved in the Watergate, and I will have to take the question -- maybe we can get it while we are right here.

Q Ron, can you expand on the President's idea of yesterday about the breadth of the two-party system, because he did not seem directly to propose any viable course or remedies. How does he think the erosion of party lists of registered voters could be checked and reversed?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I did not talk to him directly about that. I heard him for eight months or so when he was Vice President, and I was a reporter, talk on a similar theme, and I really should not expand or put words into his mouth, but I did hear him talk along the lines of an extremely lopsided majority by one party in Congress, or the other, he feels, does threaten the two-party system, and that for the Congress to be viable and to have a variety of ideas discussed and debated and voted on requires two strong parties in Congress.

That is my telling you what I heard him say when he was Vice President, but I think it is somewhat in elaboration of his remarks last night.

Q Ron, is there any further information on his appearance on the Hill this week? Is it going to be postponed?

MR. NESSEN: I think anything on that is going to come from the Hungate subcommittee, Bob.

Q Congress has sent the President a bill amending the Freedom of Information Act. Is he going to sign it?

MR. NESSEN: Is it here already? I don't think so. I don't think they have taken the final action on it. Have they taken final action?

Q Yes, both Houses. It is on its way --

MR. NESSEN: It is on its way down? Is this the one that the Senate and the House conferees agreed on?

I think what is going to have to happen is if it is on its way here, that it is going to have to be studied and find out exactly what the provisions are before we can give an answer on whether the President approves it or not.

Q What is the President's feeling about the violence in South Boston?

MR. NESSEN: I did not ask him, but I will try to get you an answer, if you would like.

Q Ron, on the two-party system, does the President have any feeling about how his economic package will affect the November elections?

Q What was the question?

MR. NESSEN: The question is, does the President have any feelings about how his economic proposals will affect the November election. He is aware that some of the things he is going to propose this afternoon are unpopular or will be unpopular among certain segments of the population and economy.

He is aware that some of the things he is going to propose are not extremely popular among some members of his own party. But he felt that regardless of that, that for the economic health of the country, he needed to propose these things and needed to propose them now.

Q Even so, Ron, if he does not feel there will be a negative impact on Republicans from his economic package, does he think it will have a positive impact for his party in the elections?

MR. NESSEN: I think I will just stick with what I said, John.

Q The tone is here that he kind of thinks there is going to be some type of backlash that would overcome any pro-Republican votes that might be picked up.

MR. NESSEN: I don't think you ought to look on the economic speech as -- I don't think you ought to look upon the purpose of the economic proposals, even a minor purpose of them. There is no connection between the proposals he settled on and any benefits or liabilities he hopes to see in the November elections. The issues are not connected.

Q Did the President or anybody in the White House respond to Governor Reagan's telegram which opposed the surcharge and called instead for a 5 percent across-the-board Federal budget cut?

MR. NESSEN: I assume all telegrams from somebody of Governor Reagan's standing are answered. I don't know what the answer was.

Q Could you get the answer?

MR. NESSEN: I will check for you.

Q Ron, I may have missed this, but did the President confer with the Democratic leadership on his economic policy?

MR. NESSEN: Somebody asked that the other day. I am told during the process of choosing the proposals to make, that there were phone calls back and forth between the President's economic advisers and many Members of Congress, including Democrats, and that -- I say immediately after the speech -- but soon after the speech today there will be a briefing for both Democratic and Republican leaders of Congress.

Q Where is that, Ron?

Q The President did not personally talk to them?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Where is that briefing?

MR. NESSEN: I do not have the details of it, Jerry.

Q Not by the President?

MR. NESSEN: Not by the President.

Q Will that be today?

MR. NESSEN: My understanding is it will be.

Q Ron, isn't this a departure from the usual Presidential practice of advising the Democratic leadership of what it is he is about to propose?

MR. NESSEN: You mean in a sort of formal way? I don't know what the past --

Q Here at the White House in a briefing before he goes to the Hill.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know if it is a departure, Peter. There is not that kind of formalized briefing, but the leaders of Congress, through these phone calls, I think are pretty much aware of what the proposals would be.

Q Has any consideration been given in planning the timing of this to having it a little later so you would not have this crunch on the stock market and you might have been able to tell the Democrats and Republicans completely in advance what was in the speech?

MR. NESSEN: I think the timing was primarily governed by the tradition that major speeches which are likely to have an effect on the economy are given after the stock market closes. You are talking about in the evening or something like that?

Q Right at --

MR. NESSEN: One of the problems is the President's schedule is very full this week. He has these evening trips three nights, and he has the dinner for First Secretary Gierek tonight, and he was a little bit hemmed in as to when he could have it.

The press bus departure can be delayed until 3:45, which will give you 45 minutes to file. And the only pardon request that has come to the White House has been the one you already know about from Mr. Colson.

Q Do you have a readout on the Gierek visit?

MR. NESSEN: I think there will be some information supplied after the Gierek visit.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END (AT 12:04 P.M. EDT)