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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 12:14 P.M. EDT

JUNE 16, 1975

MONDAY

MR. NESSEN: Good afternoon.

I think you know about the arrival ceremony for President Sheel and the remarks there, which you covered.

The two Presidents are meeting in the Oval Office now, and there will be another ceremony. If the weather permits, it will be in the Rose Garden at 12:45, so we ought to try and finish by then.

In this ceremony, President Scheel will officially announce the establishment of the John J. McCloy Funds For American-German Exchanges. The fund will have a \$1 million capital and is a gift of the Federal Republic of Germany as part of its contribution to the American Bicentennial. It is also intended as a tribute to John J. McCloy in recognition of long work for the cause of German-American relations.

You will probably recall that Mr. McCloy was the U.S. Military Governor and High Commissioner for Germany after World War II.

The fund will be administered by the American Council on Germany, a private, non-profit corporation of which Mr. McCloy is Chairman of the Board. The purpose is to provide exchanges between the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany in areas not covered by existing programs.

The primary emphasis will be to exchange the young people of the two countries, including politicians, representatives of the professions, trade unionists, journalists and other young potential leaders.

There will be remarks by the two Presidents at this ceremony. That is for open coverage, and recording and filming. As I say, if the weather holds up, it will be in the Rose Garden.

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You know that tonight at 8:00 the President and Mrs. Ford are having a State Dinner in honor of the President and Mrs. Scheel. There will be open coverage of the arrival at the North Portico and the staircase photo, and then the toasts and entertainment will be covered by a pool. Those of you in the pool for the toasts and entertainment will need to wear a black tie.

We have two bill-signing ceremonies here today.

Q Ron, a question about the entertainment here tonight. Could you give us some idea as to who it is that decides and how they decide who the entertainment will be, like Ann-Margaret for the Shah, and Tennessee Ernie Ford for the President of West Germany? Could you give us something about this?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know if you are aware of President Scheel's interest in American folk music, but he has that interest.

Q I see.

MR. NESSEN: So the entertainment is picked partly according to the taste of the visitors and partly according to the tastes of the President and Mrs. Ford.

Q Does the Shah have a taste for Ann-Margaret?  
(Laughter.) All right, I withdraw the question.

MR. NESSEN: Two signing ceremonies today, one at 3:00. It is the Emergency Livestock Credit Act. This will be signed in the Cabinet Room with coverage. We will have some fact sheets before that time.

At 3:30 there will be another ceremony in the Cabinet Room at which the President will sign the appropriation for the Summer Youth Employment Act, and there should also be a fact sheet on that.

Q Is this the first non-veto submitted?

MR. NESSEN: No, I think he signed a few other bills, Helen.

Tomorrow morning, so you can plan your day, the President will be going to the Washington Hilton to make a speech to the Washington Conference of the National Federation of Independent Business. The President will be speaking at 10:00 in the Ballroom of the Washington Hilton.

Q Will there be a text?

MR. NESSEN: That is open for coverage. I hope we will get a text this afternoon and put it out for flat p.m.'s.

The travel pool should be here in the morning at about 9:30 for a 9:45 departure.

This organization, the National Federation of Independent Business, has a membership of 420,000. About 2,000 of those members are here in Washington to participate in the Washington Conference, which runs from today through Wednesday.

I want to announce with considerable regret that the President is accepting the resignation of Gerald L. Warren as Deputy Press Secretary to the President. I announce this with regret because Jerry has been a very valuable counselor and advisor to me and to the President in the nine or ten months of this Administration.

My regret is tempered somewhat by pleasure for Jerry because he is, as you probably know, going to become editor of the San Diego Union beginning about September 1st, and he certainly deserves the excellent job that he is getting.

As I say, the President and I have both been recipients of Jerry's work and advice since this Administration took over. I have a great deal of personal admiration for Jerry for an extremely difficult period that he lived through and I think he came through it with his integrity intact, and I have great admiration for that.

I think you know that he has been responsible for many of the contacts between this Administration and the press through out-of-town news conferences and receptions with various executives and reporters, newspapers, magazines and television. He has put a lot of people into the White House to improve the contact between the Administration and the press.

I know I will miss him, the President will miss him. I think the senior staff indicated this morning at the staff meeting that they would miss him. I think many of you will. And we wish him well in his new endeavors.

Q When will he leave and who is his successor?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have anything to announce on the replacement. Jerry will be taking his new job somewhere between the middle of August and the first of September, and I think he will take a little time off before he begins it.

Q Will there definitely be a replacement in that job?

MR. NESSEN: I just haven't worked out all of the organization for that office yet.

A couple of other matters. The President has signed an Executive Order, and I think you probably have it by now, expanding the membership of the Executive Committee of the Economic Policy Board. He is adding to the committee the Secretaries of State, Commerce and Labor.

The President also is sending to Congress the annual report of the Civil Service Commission. We have already given out the letter of transmittal and the full report is available, for those who are interested, here in the press office.

The President is also accepting the resignation of Thomas R. Bomar, as chairman and member of the Federal Home Loan Bank Board, taking effect on the 20th of June. Mr. Bomar had been a member of the Board and its chairman since June 7, 1973. He plans to go back to private life, and I don't have a successor to announce at this time.

Q Do we have these handouts?

MR. NESSEN: They are in the bins, I am told -- they will be, after the briefing.

Finally, I think we ought to say a word of congratulations for two of your colleagues who have Neiman fellowships -- Peter Behr, of the Gannett Papers, and Gene Carlson, of United Press International -- who will be going to Harvard for a year of study on a Neiman. We congratulate them for that.

Other than that, I think that is my announcements for today.

Q Ron, did the President, as Commander-in-Chief, give the go-ahead for the start of preparation for possible small nuclear war, preparing our military forces?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what you mean by the start of a small nuclear war, Helen.

Q Just in case there is one, they will be prepared to fight a small nuclear war? Of course, I am talking about the Schlesinger statements since the end of Vietnam, and the Saturday story in the Post.

MR. NESSEN: Are you talking about an exercise ---

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: --- that is being conducted by the Pentagon?

Q Yes. I want to know if the President ---

MR. NESSEN: Is there some problem about it?

Q Yes, I think it is a new dimension of what the United States seems to have ever been aiming for in war.

MR. NESSEN: Well, I don't know whether the President specifically gave his approval for this exercise. It is an exercise and American forces conduct exercises all the time for any possible contingency, all possible contingencies that may come up in an uncertain world.

The fact that the forces exist does not in any way indicate that the United States intends to use them. In fact, quite the opposite.

The purpose of those forces is to deter a situation where they might have to be used. So the fact that these forces are taking part in an exercise is really a very normal part of preparation, and also it is a normal part of the preparation so that they are prepared, but it more importantly adds credibility to the deterrent feature of having these forces.

Q Do you think that all over the world countries should proceed in the same manner? I mean, for their own protection and so forth? I mean, doesn't it really proliferate the whole aspect?

MR. NESSEN: I think this answer probably takes care of it, Helen.

Q I don't think it does.

Q Ron, you referred to these new instructions ---

MR. NESSEN: What instructions?

Q That have been given to these -- booklets of instructions and regulations that have been given to the Air Force as an exercise. As I read the Post story, this seems to be not an exercise but a new set of tactics, something that is not going to be just a one-shot exercise like war games or something, but a new set of tactics that have been put into the hands of the United States Air Force that are to be mastered and perfected within a relatively short period of time and then added to our arsenal or to our strategy.

Why are you calling this an exercise and implying this is just a one-shot kind of thing?

MR. NESSEN: My understanding -- I didn't have time to thoroughly look into this today, but my understanding was it was in the nature of an exercise or practice.

Q You mean this is not going to be something that is going to be added or made a regular part of the American strategy?

MR. NESSEN: My understanding is that, since I don't know very much about it, other than that it is a normal preparation, that the more detailed answers, I think, can be given to you at the Pentagon.

Q How do you know it is normal preparations if you don't know anything else about it?

MR. NESSEN: This was the extent of my research this morning.

Q Ron, has the President, as Commander-in-Chief, accepted the theory that there can be in the world a limited tactical nuclear war?

MR. NESSEN: I haven't asked him that, Tom. I hesitate to wing an answer to that question.

Q He was asked that in Europe and he finessed it and did not answer it. Do you suppose on something of that importance he might through you or through himself go on the public record?

MR. NESSEN: I will certainly ask.

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Q For that matter, at the same time, Schlesinger has defended the concept of limited strategic nuclear war whereby the possibility is raised that we might have to use a very accurate, very powerful strategic warhead to hit warheads on the other side, raising the possibility of limited nuclear wars.

Has the President approved that kind of doctrine, too?

MR. NESSEN: I just don't have enough to go wading into this subject. I really don't.

Q Can you tell us whether the leak of this story, or the publication of this story, however it came about, was intended in an effort to deter North Korea from launching an invasion?

MR. NESSEN: Jim, I just don't have enough on this to talk about it.

Q Could you get some more, because it is of vital importance to the American people. We are now tuning our sights in a different direction on how we wage wars.

MR. NESSEN: I will look into it further, and I suggest that the Pentagon can help you at this stage a great deal more than I can.

Q Do you know, Ron, if there has been any change in the past two years? This doctrine was enunciated by Schlesinger two years ago during the Nixon Administration, of limited strategic nuclear war. We always had the option of limited tactical nuclear war.

It seems to me that the Post story was merely saying the Pentagon was going ahead and carrying out the strategy that had been adopted two years earlier under President Nixon. It seems to me the basic question is, is President Ford simply continuing that basic strategy?

MR. NESSEN: I do need to look into it. I just don't have the answers to your questions today.

Q Is the Brezhnev visit postponed? Is there thought of postponing it beyond the early fall?

MR. NESSEN: I think everything that everyone has said on the record remains just as it was, and I don't see where there has been any change.

The President said in his last news conference that he hoped that the remaining issues in the European security treaty could be resolved in a way that would permit a summit in the near future. He said that at his last news conference, and that is precisely the position today.

As for the meeting with General Secretary Brezhnev, we have said again and again no date has been set, but again, the President said in his news conference, "I would hope if negotiations" -- meaning the SALT negotiations -- "go the way they, sometime in 1975."

So, none of that has been changed.

Q Ron, do you have anything to say about the implication by Rockefeller on Meet the Press that John Kennedy and Robert Kennedy knew something about assassinations?

MR. NESSEN: I think probably the best thing to do would be to address your questions on that subject to the Vice President's office.

Q Ron, do you expect the President to formally announce his candidacy this week, and has he settled upon a name for someone to run the campaign?

MR. NESSEN: I just don't have anything to give you either on the timing or on the composition of his campaign committee. He said it is getting closer, though.

Q What does that mean?

MR. NESSEN: It means it is getting closer.

Q How do you expect the announcement to be handled? I ask that because of occurring reports that it is going to be handled in a fairly low-key way, and it might just consist of you coming out here and making the announcement at one of your regular briefings, or do you anticipate the President making the announcement?

MR. NESSEN: It just hasn't been decided yet, either the date or the method.

Q It will not be this week?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have an indication now that it will be.



Q On the Rockefeller television broadcast, the President said that matters relating to assassination should be handled with utmost prudence. Does the President regard the Vice President's remarks as being in line with that advice?

MR. NESSEN: I think what I would like to say, Mort, is that for specific questions on what the Vice President said, you ought to address them to the Vice President's office. The President made his views known at his news conference.

Q That isn't what Mort asked. He didn't ask about the Vice President. He asked what the President's view is.

MR. NESSEN: As I say, the President made his views known at his last news conference.

Q Since that time, we have had a new development, which had not occurred at the time of the news conference, which is that the Vice President dropped a rather broad hint. So, Mort is asking you, in light of this development, what the President's reaction to it is.

MR. NESSEN: The President's views are still the same as those expressed at his news conference.

Q Ron, has the President talked at all to the Vice President about what he should or should not say on that subject?

MR. NESSEN: I am not aware that they have had such a conversation.

Q Does the President have any guidelines in mind for himself and others in the Administration since he made a rather decisive decision on not releasing it?

MR. NESSEN: He does, and he gave them at his news conference, Steve.

Q Do you accept the suggestion that the President decided not to release the assassination material?

MR. NESSEN: I think I accepted that last week, and I think the President accepted that. The decision that it was not possible to finish in time was made by the Rockefeller Commission. The decision not to release the incomplete and unclear material they had was the President's decision.

Q Ron, where do we stand on that material? You remember last week we were asking whether it was physically moved over. You said you had to get the safes. Have you got the safes now?

MR. NESSEN: The position on that, Jim, is that the assassination material has been moved over here. The other 11 or 12 file cabinets, they are still at Jackson Place, and the material is being duplicated with one copy for the Church Committee and one copy for the Justice Department.

Q Nothing for the House committee? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: I guess if they get organized, there would be another copy made for them. They had originally one duplicating machine up there, and they have now moved two other duplicating machines in, so they have three duplicating machines.

Q That doesn't sound like the Government we have come to know and love that they have only one duplicating machine. (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: They have gotten all the people who need to do the duplicating, you know they had to get together a crew of people who had the proper clearances and so forth. Anyhow, there are three duplicating machines in place and running now at the Jackson Place office.

Q You said you were unaware of any meetings between the President and Vice President. Are any instructions --

MR. NESSEN: No, I said I wasn't aware of a meeting at which that was discussed.

Q Are any instructions being given to the Vice President or the staff of the Commission on what they should and should not talk about in view of the President's orders?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I am aware of. The President's views are on the record.

Q The President's statement, as I recall, included a specific line, kind of warning Members of Congress who were going to get this material that they should be very careful, circumspect, and that sort of thing, and now we have the Vice President on national television seeming to go beyond anything we had before in giving out this material.

I am interested, and I think all of us are, in how the President's admonitions to Congress apply to the Vice President and members of his staff. The obvious political implications are going to be with us for a while.

He is the Vice President's boss. The Vice President makes that very clear all the time. My question stands. Does what he said in reference to Congress apply to the Vice President and, if so, does the Vice President's comments of Sunday fall into that line?

MR. NESSEN: The President's views were made known at his news conference, and we talked about utmost prudence. While that was directed specifically at Congress in that particular answer, he feels that everyone should handle these materials with utmost prudence.

The fact of the matter is that insofar as we know, this aspect of the investigation remains incomplete and unclear. The information that is available is still being read and examined.

Q Ron, has the President received the answers to the questions he had about the MAYAGUEZ incident?

MR. NESSEN: They are coming in, and they are being put together now. I would think that they will be in his hands shortly, probably in a matter of days.

Q Ron, while we are on the Vice President, does the President share Senator Goldwater's view that Rockefeller would make a good Secretary of State? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: The President would like it known that he has great admiration for Nelson Rockefeller.

Q As Secretary of State?

MR. NESSEN: No, just as Nelson Rockefeller, that he selected the Vice President because the President respected his judgment, experience and ability. The President wanted a good partner for Vice President and Nelson Rockefeller has exceeded his expectations in that line. He believes that Nelson Rockefeller has done a fine job in every way.

Q Therefore, he intends to make Rockefeller his Vice Presidential candidate in 1976? Is that what you are saying? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: In the coming months, both the President and Vice President will be submitting themselves to the will of the delegates to the Republican Convention of 1976.

Q As a ticket?

MR. NESSEN: The President is confident that both of them can convince the delegates that individually and as a team they should be renominated.

Q Is the President leaving the job up to Rockefeller to do his own convincing or is he going to request?

MR. NESSEN: The President will be for Nelson Rockefeller for nomination as Vice President and the delegates will make the decision.

Q Will he be for Rockefeller the way Roosevelt was for Henry Wallace in 1944?

MR. NESSEN: I don't recall that incident.

Q You said the delegates will make the decision. That doesn't sound very good for Nelson Rockefeller. If the President doesn't choose his own running mate, in this case if the delegates are going to choose it, if I were Rockefeller's people, I would be kind of worried.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know, Walt. I suppose you could pick out a phrase here and there.

The President says he will be for the Vice President for nomination. He says, "I am confident both of us can convince the delegates that individually and as a team we should be nominated."

Q That doesn't sound very ironclad to me.

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Q Along that line, do you know of any convention that rejected the President's choice of Vice President?

MR. NESSEN: My political experience does not go back as far as yours, Peter.

Q Mine only goes back to Rutherford B. Hayes. (Laughter.)

MR. NESSEN: How did that one go? Who was his Vice President?

Q I don't know. I never paid much attention to Vice Presidents in those days. (Laughter.)

Q Ron, every week there are these stories about Rockefeller and his role in '76.

MR. NESSEN: And I expect we will have them for every week from now until November, too.

Q Does the President feel this is unfair criticism of the Vice President by Senator Goldwater and others?

MR. NESSEN: Oh, no, I haven't heard anything about unfair criticism. I think the President agrees with your first part, though, that we will have these stories every week from now until November of 1976.

Q Does he know why?

MR. NESSEN: Because it is just the way Washington works and always has worked.

Q Ron, when the President makes his announcement of his candidacy, will it be an individual announcement or an announcement the same team will be running?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. That all has not been worked out yet.

Q Does he favor an open convention so far as the choice of Vice President is concerned? I think that is what we are getting at.

MR. NESSEN: I think the President feels every convention is open until one candidate has the delegates he needs to win the nomination, whether for Vice President or President. So it is open until both the President and Vice President get enough delegates and then the matter is decided. That is the way all conventions work.

Q Ron, are you seriously suggesting that Mr. Ford thought that the 1972 scripted coronation was an open convention? Are you seriously suggesting this, when the British Broadcasting Company discovered the script?

MR. NESSEN: The cameramen, photographers and reporters who want to go to the Rose Garden should now assemble at the side door here. They will not be feeding this into the press room, incidentally. So if you want to hear it, you ought to go.

Q Ron, when did the President make these comments that you have just given us?

MR. NESSEN: We have talked about it, I guess, back as far as early or middle of last week.

Q Would you mind reading that Presidential statement again?

MR. NESSEN: All right.

Q Ron, so there is no misunderstanding, you said there would be an open convention until the President and Vice President had enough delegates.

MR. NESSEN: That is the way all conventions work, Steve.

Q As I recall, in the convention proceeding the President is in or out first, and in the past it has not always been a tradition of an open convention once the President was in in that he made known his choice and that was not so open to dispute.

If Ford is selected by the delegates, will he then tell the convention he wants Rockefeller or will he say this is an open convention, I personally prefer him but you all choose who you want?

MR. NESSEN: He says, "I will be for the Vice President for nomination. The delegates will make the decision."

Q That is what I am trying to get. There is a certain irreconcilable position between the two points. Given the tradition of conventions, is he going to leave it an open convention for the Vice Presidential selection, or is he going to ---

MR. NESSEN: He says I will be for the Vice President for nomination.

Q That is not open if he goes to a convention ---

MR. NESSEN: "The delegates will make the decision," is the second sentence.

Q Would you read the whole thing again?

MR. NESSEN: Why don't we get it run off?

Q Why don't you read it?

Q Some of us have to go file.

MR. NESSEN: "My great admiration for Nelson Rockefeller" -- I am going to put this in the first person and you can use it that way, if you wish -- "My great admiration for Nelson Rockefeller is very well known. I selected him for Vice President because I respected his judgment, experience and ability. I wanted a good partner for a Vice President and he exceeded my expectations. He has done a fine job in every way.

"Both of us in these coming months will be submitting ourselves to the will of the delegates to the Republican National Convention in 1976. I am confident both of us can convince the delegates that individually and as a team we should be nominated."

And then, I think, somebody asked me a question and I said, "The President will be for Nelson Rockefeller for nomination. The delegates will make the decision."

Q That was not the President's statement?

MR. NESSEN: No, this was my answer.

Q Has the President given any thought to the possibility that maybe a revolutionary trend might take place where the delegates remembering Mr. Rockefeller's failure to endorse the 1964 candidate, might decide to elect another Vice President? Has the President given any thought to that at all, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: I think this is about as far as we can go now, and, as Phil suggested, I think this will come back again and again and again, but it is in the nature of the White House for that to happen, but this is the way the President feels.

Q As long as you say the delegates will decide, then you are saying he will not ---

MR. NESSEN: The President will be for Nelson Rockefeller for nomination.

Q --- he will not impose his own selection. If the delegates decide, you are saying Rockefeller will not be a shoo-in even though Ford is for him for Vice President.

MR. NESSEN: I will let you analyze, Steve.

Q Do you consider this a strong endorsement and a total commitment through the convention?

MR. NESSEN: This is what the President wants to say.

Q Ron, the President's position, this statement you just read, is not a declaration of candidacy?

MR. NESSEN: For himself?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: In the legal sense? No, he does not consider it such, no. John, no more so than his repeated public statements at news conferences and otherwise, that he intends to run.

Q Ron, could you explain to us why you were prepared with this statement today?

MR. NESSEN: I was prepared with this statement last Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, something like that, early, middle to early last week.

Q You were waiting for a question about Rockefeller in order to use it; is that right?

MR. NESSEN: Right.

Q Would you characterize the President's reaction to this Goldwater statement? Does he find it humorous? Is he upset by it? What is his reaction?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't get any reaction along those lines, Phil.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

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(AT 12:47 P.M. EDT)  
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