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NEWS CONFERENCE

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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH JOHN G. CARLSON

AT 11:32 A.M. EST

JANUARY 16, 1975

FRIDAY

MR. CARLSON: Good morning.

I would like to start off by trying to bring you up to date on what has happened since we last convened, since last night.

The President, last evening around 5 o'clock, called Mrs. Martin Luther King and talked to her for about 15 minutes. They discussed the Martin Luther King complex in Atlanta. She described to him the progress that has been made down there.

The President extended best wishes from he and Mrs. Ford to Martin Luther King, Sr., and Mrs. King and her family.

Around 6:15 last night, the President went for a short swim.

Q Do you want to take a question on Mrs. King?

MR. CARLSON: Okay.

Q Did they talk about unemployment and things like that, which is Mrs. King's number one issue these days?

MR. CARLSON: I don't know. I don't believe they did. The President said they had about a 15 minute discussion, mainly on her updating him on the Martin Luther King complex.

Q You said he went swimming. Is the pool heated? Does it have a bubble?

MR. CARLSON: It doesn't have a bubble, but it is heated.

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Q In this frigid air he plunges into this?

MR. CARLSON: I think the President finds it very stimulating, invigorating. In fact, it was so stimulating that the President returned to the office about 8:15 and worked until 11 o'clock last night.

Q That was this morning?

MR. CARLSON: No, last night.

I think you are all up to date on our meeting with Mr. Curtis. As mentioned yesterday, the meeting was planned sometime following the completion of the regular session. That regular session didn't end until very late. Mr. Curtis had to catch a plane for an appointment this morning in St. Louis, and so the meeting has been postponed until hopefully the first part of next week. Of course, Mr. Buchen is available at the earliest convenience to meet with Mr. Curtis.

Q A question on that. In the meantime, has Mr. Morton gone on the White House staff payroll, or what is his status?

MR. CARLSON: Mr. Morton will be working as Secretary of Commerce through the end of the month, and then it is proposed that February 1 it will be Mr. Richardson coming aboard.

The President has been invited and will attend the Quadrennial Commemorative Session of the Virginia Assembly. This will take place at Colonial Williamsburg on January 31 at 4 p.m. The final details have not all been worked out, but this is just to keep you up to date.

Q Will he address that?

MR. CARLSON: Yes, he will.

On weekend plans, there has been some interest. The President will be in the White House over the weekend, and he will be devoting a substantial amount of time each day to the State of the Union Message and also reviewing the final budget document.

Q Has he set a record for working on the State of the Union Message?

MR. CARLSON: I don't know.

Q John, on the State of the Union Message, do you have any long-range idea as to when it will be available here?

MR. CARLSON: Trying to be logical and not overly optimistic --

Q That means a half hour before it is delivered. (Laughter)

MR. CARLSON: -- a couple of hours, at least. If it is available sooner, we will make it available to you.

Q On the budget review, hasn't the budget gone to the printer?

MR. CARLSON: Sure, the final document.

Q What is he doing?

MR. CARLSON: Just reviewing the final document.

Q Are these figures subject to change?

MR. CARLSON: They are not. The budget is an extremely complex document, and I think you will find the President is probably the most informed person in the United States at this point on the budget.

Q More so than James Lynn?

MR. CARLSON: Equally informed.

Q Can I ask a question about the advances? We are getting them at 7 o'clock on Tuesday morning, which is an hour or two before the main Treasury-OMB briefing. Why was that changed from 4 o'clock on Monday evening? It just doesn't give us time to get our teeth into it before the briefing.

MR. CARLSON: I think it is a good question, and a lot of people expressed interest and concern, just as you have. Ron will be back this afternoon, and I will bring it up with him.

Q The reason I questioned it is I was told it was Ron's decision to hold it until 7 o'clock on Tuesday morning.

MR. CARLSON: I will discuss it with Ron this afternoon and find where the decision came from and what we can do about it.

Q The Williamsburg trip, is that a down and back?

MR. CARLSON: I believe so.

Q What is wrong with the State of the Union that the President needs to spend so much time? Presumably, he keeps current on issues and he has a staff to prepare reports for him, yet he is spending many, many hours on this thing. Is there a problem?

MR. CARLSON: There certainly isn't any problem. I think the initial drafts were very voluminous, and I think the question is just what will be in the State of the Union and what will be taken out. Obviously, the President can't discuss every major issue or every major program in the State of the Union. He just has to touch some of the highlights.

Q John, does he have a stone mason working with him on the State of the Union? (Laughter)

MR. CARLSON: Not that I know of. (Laughter)

Q Is the amount of time he is spending on it a reflection of the importance he attaches to it?

MR. CARLSON: I think I will answer by saying the State of the Union will speak for itself.

Q Is the budget pagewise longer than previous years?

MR. CARLSON: I really don't know.

Q Are there any more documents than we have been given in previous years?

MR. CARLSON: If it is as long as previous budgets, it is still quite lengthy.

Q John, can you fill us in on the organization of the Forty Committee, whether the Secretary is still the chairman?

MR. CARLSON: The chairmanship of the National Security Council subcommittees has traditionally been held by the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, and that is the post that Secretary Kissinger relinquished last November.

So, the subcommittee structures and positions are currently being reviewed and, while it would not normally be expected that the Secretary would retain the chairmanships, he may in fact retain one or two of them.

Right now, we do not have the reorganization finalized.

Q How many subcommittees are there?

MR. CARLSON: I think six.

Q John, I was wondering, how does the White House reconcile what Ron defined as Mr. Morton's incidental duties with the Ford campaign agreement in writing with Common Cause not to use taxpayer-supported services of any public office except for security purposes?

MR. CARLSON: Les, I think I should just not comment on the whole Morton issue until after they have a chance to meet, probably Monday.

Q You think that is when Buchen and Morton's counsel -- will he meet with Morton or the counsel --

MR. CARLSON: He will meet with the FEC counsel and the chairman.

Q Can you say anything about the deteriorating situation in Angola?

MR. CARLSON: We have seen the reports that you are probably referring to, and without getting into military movements, we are concerned about the current situation in which Cuban troops are fighting in an area where they have no legitimate interest.

The President will continue to work through diplomatic channels, and to use whatever means are available to him --

Q What does that mean?

MR. CARLSON: -- to see that this conflict can be resolved without foreign intervention.

Q That is kind of a joke to say it can be resolved without foreign interference. It is being resolved quite decisively with foreign interference, both the Cubans and the Soviets.

MR. CARLSON: I think our position has been quite clear we have advocated a cease-fire and an immediate withdrawal of all foreign intervention and a solution of the African problem by Africans.

Q Isn't that policy rather dated at this point because it is clear pro-Soviet forces with Cuban soldiers in the field are making a mockery of the President's goals?

MR. CARLSON: We are still hopeful a solution can be achieved.

Q John, can you be a little more specific on what means are available to him to pursue these goals?

MR. CARLSON: I think other than diplomatic means, I shouldn't go any further.

Q John, this is the second time now the White House has issued a flat statement accusing the Cubans of being involved and yet, as is obvious to the whole world, the South Africans are involved. Is the White House in any way trying to put pressure on the South Africans to get out of Angola and, if so, how?

MR. CARLSON: Bob, I think Dr. Kissinger has addressed this numerous times at State, that we believe all foreign parties should get out of the country, and the sooner the better. Just what diplomatic correspondence we have with other countries I think is not proper for me to discuss from this podium.

Q John, the Secretary said yesterday -- according to some African Ambassadors -- that he is going to visit Africa in March. Can you tell us what interest the Administration has in the Secretary going to Africa?

MR. CARLSON: I think you had better address that to Dr. Kissinger at the State Department. I am not aware of his comments.

Q John, this has to do with the South African situation. I interpreted Kissinger's remarks the other day to mean that we are not presently pressuring the South Africans to pull out of Angola, but that if indeed the Cubans and the Soviets, or just the Soviets, indicated their willingness to stop interfering, that we would agree to use our good offices to get the South Africans out. Is that true? In other words, it must be a quid pro quo.

MR. CARLSON: Who should leave first, is that the question?

Q It seems to me Dr. Kissinger is indicating there has to be some signal from the other side that they are ceasing their intervention.

MR. CARLSON: I would like to stress we believe all foreign parties should be removed from Angola.

Q Does the President or the White House have one scintilla of evidence that anybody is paying on either side -- either the Cubans, the Soviets or the South Africans -- one bit of attention to the President's calls?

MR. CARLSON: I am not privy to the diplomatic correspondence and the communication that goes back and forth, Walt.

Q John, on the NSC committees, isn't it true Kissinger is chairman of two of those subcommittees as of now?

MR. CARLSON: I am told the final details have not been worked out, but it is quite possible he will retain the chairmanship of a couple of the committees.

Q But isn't he chairman of them right now?

MR. CARLSON: I would assume that as of right now Dr. Kissinger will be the chairman, the acting chairman, of those committees until a final decision is made, and I think very shortly.

Q Is it two or three?

MR. CARLSON: Two.

Q Can you tell us which two, John?

MR. CARLSON: The WSAG Committee and the Verification Panel are being chaired by Dr. Kissinger.

Q Why is he keeping those two posts?

MR. CARLSON: I think it is a determination that it is appropriate for Dr. Kissinger to keep the chairmanship of those two posts.

Q What is WSAG?

MR. CARLSON: The Washington Special Action Group.

Q John, to follow up again, how many committees is Scowcroft chairman of, as of now?

MR. CARLSON: That is not fresh in my memory. I talked to General Scowcroft this morning about this whole subject, to get a rough idea, anticipating some of your questions, and all the final details have not been worked out, but he will probably be chairman of at least three of the committees.

Q Who was chairman of the Forty Committee?

MR. CARLSON: I believe Dr. Kissinger was.

Q Who is chairman now?

MR. CARLSON: It is expected that General Scowcroft will be the new chairman -- let me make sure we understand that normally, traditionally, the chairman of the Forty Committee is the Assistant to the President for national security matters.

Q But this change already took place a month and a half ago. What is the situation right now?

MR. CARLSON: They are in the process of reviewing the entire structure, and decisions will be made shortly.

Q Is there a chairman of the Forty Committee at the moment?

MR. CARLSON: General Scowcroft is the acting chairman, and this will all be finalized very shortly.

Q Does this mean the Secretary no longer sits on the Forty Committee?

MR. CARLSON: No, it does not.

Q I thought the Under Secretary represented the State Department on that.

MRS. VANDERHYE: Secretary Kissinger never did sit on it. He was the chairman of it before, but he was the head of the NSC. He was never a member.

Q He is off the Forty Committee now?

MRS. VANDERHYE: That is right.

Q What is the Verification Panel? What does that do?

MRS. VANDERHYE: It handles matters relating to SALT, usually, and to military verifications.

Q That covers five panels. You said there were six. Does somebody else have a chairmanship? There are three for Scowcroft, two for Kissinger, WSAG and verification.

MR. CARLSON: The sixth committee is the Defense Program Review Committee, and that possibly will be chaired by Secretary Rumsfeld, but the whole apparatus has been reviewed because of the change in positions, and it will be finalized shortly.

Q John, if I am not mistaken, you said that the President feels that the solution to the African problems lies with the Africans. I was wondering what was the President's reaction when the OAU split 22 to 22, and would he favor OAU as kind of an expeditionary force to get rid of this Cuban and Soviet colonization effort in Angola? How about troops from the OAU?

MR. CARLSON: We had hoped the OAU summit would bring an end to the fighting.

Q Is that all? What about the idea of the OAU sending troops to get rid of these foreign intruders? Does the President favor this?

MR. CARLSON: The President believes the Africans should solve their own problems, and not have outside interference from foreign Governments.

Q Does he mean all the Africans, the OAU troops? Would he be in favor of that?

MR. CARLSON: I am not aware of his views on that.

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Q Are there plans by the White House to fire the Civil Service Commissioner Robert Hampton, who was frolicking in Maryland recently? (Laughter)

MR. CARLSON: I am not aware of any such plans.

Q Could we have the question elaborated on, please? (Laughter)

Q John, Ron said a couple of days ago that the White House was in the process of updating the President's financial situation to disclose. Can you give us any more guidance on when that is going to be?

MR. CARLSON: I think the updated financial records of the President will be released fairly soon. It is just the process and logistics of updating the material.

Q Wouldn't you think it would come with the New Hampshire primary already starting? Could you be any more specific than that?

MR. CARLSON: I don't want to give a time frame but it will be sooner rather than later.

Q Back to Hampton, if I could. While you are not aware of any plans to fire him, are you aware of any contacts the White House had with him asking about this, questioning it, discussing the propriety of it with him?

MR. CARLSON: I believe Mr. Buchen has talked with Mr. Hampton and I will leave it there.

Q John, could I follow that? Is Mr. Buchen the person who has oversight on matters of standard of conduct and ethics that were promulgated at the beginning of the Ford Administration?

MR. CARLSON: I think that is correct but I think it should also be pointed out that if there is a problem, especially a criminal problem, it would be investigated by the Justice Department and not by the White House.

Q I don't think there is a suggestion here of a criminal problem but one of living up to the standard of ethical conduct. Is it in that regard that Mr. Buchen talked it over with Bob Hampton?

MR. CARLSON: I think that is appropriate for Mr. Buchen to be the contact man on a matter such as this.

Q Has Mr. Buchen suggested that these trips to the hunting lodge not be accepted in the future?

MR. CARLSON: I think Mr. Hampton did express his views in reports I saw in the press.

Q Did Mr. Buchen suggest that he no longer do this?

MR. CARLSON: I don't know the details of the conversation.

Q When was it held, John? Do you know?

MR. CARLSON: I think they discussed the matters this morning.

Q John, what is the President's reaction to the British turnaround on the PLO in the United Nations debate?

MR. CARLSON: What was your question, Sol?  
(Laughter)

Q The President's reaction to the British turnabout on the PLO in the United Nations.

MR. CARLSON: Our position on the issues being debated at the UN are well known and have been publicly stated. I think you should address the State Department to get an update on the day-to-day debate.

Q Could we go a little further on that, John? We would like to know what the President's feeling is on Saul's question. When something like this happens it is fine to call State and we go through that periodically. But what is the President's feeling on this turnabout? Has he said anything to you? Does he ignore it? Is he concerned? Does it please him, or what?

MR. CARLSON: I think Dr. Kissinger and Ambassador Moynihan expressed the President's views. I did not talk to the President about this this morning and I think they probably are prepared at State to discuss it.

Q Is there any plan to see Usery today?

MR. CARLSON: I know of no meeting that has been arranged.

Q John, getting back to the matter of all the time the President has been spending on the State of the Union and the budget, do you have cumulative totals on how many hours he has spent?

MR. CARLSON: I suppose we could draw together that information. I don't know it. Do you want just the budget or the State of the Union?

Q Well, either or both.

MR. CARLSON: I think Ron already mentioned over 100 hours were spent on the budget. As far as the State of the Union --

Q Can you confirm the President has indeed asked the Pike Committee not to reveal CIA participation in Angola and the Cuban situation?

MR. CARLSON: In accordance with the procedures previously established between the President and the Pike Committee, the Pike Committee did submit certain documents to the President for declassification. After reviewing these documents, the President made a determination that it would not be in the interest of national security to declassify these documents and he so advised the Committee Chairman yesterday afternoon in a letter.

Q Do you know what the subject matter of those documents was?

MR. CARLSON: I can't go into that, John.

Q How many documents were there?

MR. CARLSON: I won't go any further, Russ.

Q Can you tell us whether it is still the practice of Secretary Kissinger to surreptitiously monitor telephone conversations with the President as he apparently did in the last Administration and has anyone from the White House asked him if he still does that?

MR. CARLSON: I think you will have to ask the first question of Dr. Kissinger and the latter part of your question, I don't know.

Q Can you tell us how the President feels about the former Chairman of the National Security Council taking some of the NSC files out with him, stripping some of the NSC files, which was in that Safire article yesterday morning?

MR. CARLSON: I don't have any reaction from the President. I am not aware of it.

Q Are any of the phone calls into the White House monitored, either recorded or listened to by people other than those whom the caller assumes he is speaking to?

MR. CARLSON: I don't know.

Q John, is there anything you can say today about Presidential political travels either later this month or February, and are we to assume the Williamsburg speech will be non-political?

MR. CARLSON: I believe it will be non-political and beyond what we have already announced, to my knowledge there is nothing that has been more completely finalized.

THE PRESS: Thank you.