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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 12:10 P.M. EDT

JUNE 24, 1976

THURSDAY

MR. NESSEN: I just want to tell you, in case you were not aware, that Attorney General Levi is having a briefing at the Justice Department on the busing legislation. It is starting about now.

Q May I ask a housekeeping question, or procedural question, on this?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Why were the briefings arranged in such a way as to be so inconvenient, requiring us to run all over town when they might have been held in 450, as other major Presidential announcements?

MR. NESSEN: Well, there was no intention to make you run all over town, Mort. The Attorney General is briefing at his department, and HEW Secretary Mathews is briefing at his department.

Q What time is this briefing?

MR. NESSEN: The Mathews briefing is at 2:15 in room 5051 of the North Building.

Q When the CIA announcements came out, they were not briefings at State and CIA and the Justice Department; they were briefings in 450.

MR. NESSEN: Well, this is a complex piece of legislation dealing in very complex legal matters, and it was felt that the Secretary and the Attorney General preferred to have the briefings in their own buildings where the people who normally cover their departments would have an opportunity to cover their briefings.

Q Ron, does this arrangement suggest that Levi and Mathews have separate and not necessarily compatible views toward this legislation?

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MR. NESSEN: No, but the legislation breaks into two parts: One, the part dealing with court decisions on busing, and that is the part on which Ed Levi has played the largest role; and the other part of the legislation deals with a commission that would help communities to voluntarily end the racial concentration of their schools before the case got to the courts requiring busing, and that is a separate matter that comes from Dave Mathews' department.

Q Well, the Secretaries, then, will brief on the separate parts of the legislation?

MR. NESSEN: That is correct.

Q Do you suppose the next time you have a briefing you can announce it here?

MR. NESSEN: I thought it was announced over the loudspeaker, Walt.

Q Ron, can you give us a play-by-play on why the Congressional meeting was cancelled this morning?

MR. NESSEN: I understand the Senate went in at 9:00 and the House went in at 10:00, or the other way around, and they were up there working on legislation. They will be briefed, however, but not at a White House meeting.

Q Ron, when the President said in the Oval Office that a concern had been expressed about -- that his actions now would encourage those that have been violently resisting desegregation, he said, "Let me state here and now that this Administration will not tolerate unlawful desegregation." Does that imply that the Administration will tolerate lawful segregation, if there is such a thing?

MR. NESSEN: I think the President's views on discrimination of all kinds is clear.

Q Well, what about the term "unlawful desegregation"?

MR. NESSEN: Well, what we are dealing with here -- again, we have to think about this -- are court cases which challenge racial concentration or segregation caused by the legal actions of local school boards. I mean, we are dealing with a specific legal question. He is not talking about his own broader views of racial relations, and I think you know what they are.

Q But he has accepted such a thing as lawful segregation exists, in his stated views in the CBS interview on Face the Nation, about private schools.

MR. NESSEN: But this legislation does not deal with private schools, Walt.

Q But he is at odds with his Justice Department and the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, the Haynesworth court, on what is lawful and what is not lawful on segregation vis-a-vis private schools.

MR. NESSEN: But I would not like to open up the question of private schools today.

Q One other logistical point. Contrary to what occurs in other circumstances as well, there is no piping-in anywhere in the White House of the Levi or the Mathews briefings, which makes it impossible to do one's job covering the White House and also be completely informed about the legislation the President is sending out.

MR. NESSEN: When some of your colleagues asked me about this this morning, Mort -- and I don't recall that you did -- they said there is a conflict between the White House briefing and Ed Levi's briefing, and I said if you have to write the busing story go to Ed Levi's briefing because I don't have anything here today other than house-keeping matters, and had you called I would have given you the same advice.

Q Can you tell us one more thing about the committee chairmen who could not come here today? When did they inform the White House they were unable to attend?

MR. NESSEN: When?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. The Legislative Liaison Office dealt with them. I don't know when it was.

Q The explanation given was the press of business on the Hill; is that correct?

MR. NESSEN: They are going to be briefed, John. The point is, they are going to be briefed today, but the Senate went in early and so did the House and they were there and working.

Q Well, Congress is in session quite often. It is sort of unusual --

MR. NESSEN: The Senate, I understand, is not only working but working on two important matters at one time.

Q Well, it is a bit unusual, isn't it, though, for the people on the Hill -- I mean, when the President offers to give you a private briefing, an in-person briefing, and for them to turn that down, I just wonder if Mr. Ford considers that an insult in any way or --

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. It sounds to me like you have reached your conclusion already.

Q No, I am asking.

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know, both the Senate and the House were in early. The Senate is working on two different matters and the committee chairmen will be briefed on the legislation.

Q Excuse me. I don't think the question was answered. Was that the reason given for them not coming? Was the reason given that it was the press of business on the Hill?

MR. NESSEN: So far as I know, that is why they didn't come.

Q There is a slight inconsistency here. You are saying they are going to be briefed, and one of your people -- (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: I am amused by the entire thing.

Q -- one of your people earlier suggested that perhaps indeed they had already been briefed, past tense, and that they felt there was no need for them to come down here because they had already been briefed by your liaison people. Now, would you tell me which way it is, please; that they will be briefed or that the liaison people have already briefed them?

MR. NESSEN: Well, they are being briefed today. Now, whether some of them have already been and others will start in 15 or 20 minutes, or 2 hours or 4 hours, I don't know, Walt. They will be briefed, though.

Q What chances does the President think he has? Has he taken any kind of a reading on passage?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that he has really counted noses, Helen. Obviously, the hope is that the legislation will be taken up quickly and approved quickly.

Q Ron, there is a story in the New York Times this morning saying that the Justice Department has grave misgivings about some potentially illegal things that are going on in the Teamsters Union. In light of that, I would like to ask if Usery talked to you at all about any of the nice things he was going to say at the convention in Las Vegas?

MR. NESSEN: I think we went through this last week. I would be happy to go through it again.

The Teamsters is the largest union in the country. Bill Usery is the Labor Secretary who deals with labor unions. He was invited to the convention, and he went to the convention. The comments he made at the convention, as I said last week in response to the same question, had to do with the Teamsters Union's representation of its members and labor-management negotiations. As I also said last week, it obviously had no effect whatever on the investigations that are going on of certain allegations regarding the welfare and health fund of the Teamsters Union.

Q Ron, the New York Times today is running the story I asked you about yesterday --

MR. NESSEN: Which was?

Q About the FBI's illegal break-ins since 1971. Is the White House concerned about it? Is it doing anything about it? It is misleading in the Times.

MR. NESSEN: Yes, I know. I am trying to think -- we looked into it. Let me find out what we found out.

Let me finish my announcements, if I can.

On the Puerto Rican trip, the departure times, the baggage will be accepted in room 87 of the EOB all day Friday, until 6:00 p.m. If you don't want to bring it over there, you can take it to Andrews with you on Saturday, and check-in time is 6 o'clock, with or without baggage.

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Q Is that P.M.?

MR. NESSEN: A.M. The press plane departs at 7:00 A.M. from Andrews on Saturday. The flight time is three and a half hours. The President leaves Andrews at 8:30 A.M. The press plane arrives in San Juan at 10:30 and the President arrives at Noon. The reason for the one and a half hour difference in arrival times is that a pre-position pool will be taken by helicopter from San Juan International Airport to the Dorado Beach complex area and there needs to be sufficient time left for that helicopter movement of the pre-position pool.

The weather there is hot and humid with rain showers. It is acceptable to dress casually both in the press center and in the pool, which will be at Dorado. That means slacks and sport shirts for the men, no shorts. In the casinos, incidentally, if you are interested in that, the requirement is that you wear a jacket but you don't have to wear a tie.

We will not be able to hold a briefing tomorrow, as we had anticipated, on the San Juan trip, the reason being that the various people that we had hoped to bring together for the briefing are occupied in their own preparations for the trip. So what I can suggest to you is that you get ahold of the transcript of the briefing held by Secretaries Kissinger and Simon and Greenspan and Seidman at the time of the announcement of the trip which gives you considerable background on the trip and also take advantage of this offer yesterday of private conversations and phone calls with most of the people.

Q You said you were putting together a leaflet about the --

MR. NESSEN: That is right. We hope to have that either late tonight or tomorrow.

The President is going to be working on his own preparations for the summit meeting this afternoon from 3 o'clock to 5 o'clock. He has kept his schedule clear so that he can review some of the material on the meeting, and tomorrow I expect that he will be having a meeting with Alan Greenspan, Brent Scowcroft, Bob Hormats and Ed Yeo to discuss the upcoming summit meeting.

Q Does he expect any concrete new programs to develop?

MR. NESSEN: I don't want to foreclose that possibility but the overall purpose of the meeting is not to reach some new agreement or sign some piece of paper or make some big and dramatic announcement. The purpose of the meeting, as you know, is to deal with a number of specific matters but more it is to continue this process of the leaders of the industrial world, industrial democracies getting together to discuss problems before they become crises rather than meeting hurriedly later to deal with some international economic matter after it has become a crisis.

Q Will the President depart with any fanfare either here or at Andrews statement-wise?

MR. NESSEN: No. I don't anticipate any fanfare, as you call it.

Q Any farewell?

MR. NESSEN: He will have an arrival statement in San Juan.

Q No departure statement?

MR. NESSEN: But no departure statement.

Q Will we have that before we depart?

MR. NESSEN: I am certainly hoping so.

Q Those of us who have other people going to Puerto Rico, can you tell us so that we can tell them where they can get a copy of the Seidman, Kissinger, Greenspan, Simon briefing?

MR. NESSEN: Right here in the Press Office.

Q You have got spares here?

MR. NESSEN: If we don't, we will run some more off.

Q Ron, does the President have any reaction to Jimmy Carter's characterization of our foreign policy as being Lone Rangerish and other criticisms that he made in the speech yesterday in New York.

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Ron, on the -- I am sorry.

MR. NESSEN: I just had a few more announcements.

The Fourth of July sign-up sheet is up and the deadline for it is 6 o'clock tomorrow. The reason for the early deadline on the sign-ups for Fourth of July travel is that it is going to involve a fair number of helicopter flights and we need the exact number of people going so that we can figure out the chopper movements.

Q On coverage, the Fourth of July he is due back at the White House from New York late afternoon, as I remember the tentative schedule.

MR. NESSEN: Right.

Q Then you have got him watching the fireworks and watching the Mars landing. Now by way of actual coverage, what are we going to be able to cover beyond the return from the New York trip?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know yet whether there is going to be a pool for the fireworks watching or even more general coverage than that. We have not worked out that aspect of it yet.

Q We would like to request coverage all the way.

MR. NESSEN: All right.

Q Ron, was that the end of your comment on John's question about Carter -- it is plain no, there is no comment, no reaction?

MR. NESSEN: Correct.

Q Ron, let me ask one question about the Fourth of July. The President will helicopter from Philadelphia to New York Harbor, is that the plan?

MR. NESSEN: I am not sure that that has been decided yet except for the flight back from New York. Tentatively at the moment all the President's travel that day will be by helicopter except for the flight from New York back to Washington.

Q Is the plan for all the press to accompany him in helicopters?

MR. NESSEN: That is why I need the specific numbers, Russ, to see whether it is realistically going to be possible to move everybody by helicopter.

Q Can the President watch the press get on its helicopters? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: No, the President will be kept 150 yards back behind a crab apple tree at the time the press boards its helicopter.

Q A crab apple tree. Why did you use that expression?

Q Have you finished your announcements?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q The President was a member of the Warren Commission and the Senate Intelligence Committee has concluded that both the CIA and the FBI covered up crucial information and withheld that information from the Warren Commission. Is the President, as a former member of that Commission, concerned enough to take action against the CIA and FBI or at least look into those allegations now?

MR. NESSEN: Well, you know, it is a lengthy report and the President has not had an opportunity to study it, but it will be studied and -- it will be studied.

Q It would seem that this is a matter which, you know, should not be delayed by just saying that, well, the President is going to study this if indeed the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Central Intelligence Agency withheld information from a commission as important as the Warren Commission investigating the assassination of President Kennedy. Isn't the President more concerned than just to say, "Well, it is going to be studied?" Isn't he upset about this?

MR. NESSEN: Walt, calm yourself now. You have to find out what it is the Senate Committee has alleged first and then decide where to go from there. It is not as if the allegations were new ones, Walt, they have been kicking around for some time.

Q Therefore, we can expect indictments tomorrow?
(Laughter)

Q The allegations have been kicking around.

MR. NESSEN: That's correct.

Q Is the President concerned?

MR. NESSEN: You know, when he was asked that question at his news conference on November 26, for instance, the question specifically concerned the allegations which were then around of the CIA or the FBI allegedly not making the Warren Commission aware of all the information it knew of, the President, "If those particular developments could be fully investigated without reopening the whole matter, I think some responsible group or organizations ought to do so," but he is opposed to reopening the entire Warren Commission investigation and he feels that it would not be proper for the White House or the Executive Branch to undertake any new investigation.

Q Why?

Q He is the President of the United States in charge of both the CIA and the FBI.

MR. NESSEN: Well, first of all, as I say, the first step, Walt, would be to have the report studied to find out exactly what the allegations are.

Q What you are saying is that the President does not --

Q Why is the President opposed to reopening the Warren Commission?

MR. NESSEN: Because there is, to my knowledge, and I think probably -- I have not read the Senate report fully either, but as I understand it, the Senate Committee never suggested that the conclusion of the Warren Commission Report was not -- there has been no evidence to throw any doubt on the conclusion of the Warren Commission Report. What we are talking about here now is a question of, number one, procedure followed by the FBI and CIA in its dealings with the Warren Commission. That is a procedural matter, and secondly and somewhat related, the question of motive.

So the President does not see any need -- since the basic finding has never been questioned he sees no reason to reopen the overall investigation. If there is any new evidence in the two areas of procedure and motive, then he feels perhaps a more narrowly focused look at those two points from a group outside of the White House.

Q Doesn't this information deal with motive, though?

MR. NESSEN: I say those are the two matters that I think the Senate Committee raises.

Q When you say a group outside the White House you mean a non-governmental group on its own, created on its own?

MR. NESSEN: It has not reached the point yet where it --

Q What do you mean "outside the White House?" You mean not government, no Executive Branch?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that he is prepared to give such a precise prescription at this point until he has had a chance to see what the Senate Committee has come up with.

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Q Well, you have obviously seen it because you have spoken rather eloquently on this in analyzing it, Ron -- no, I mean you seem to have a grasp on it. Ron, you, as the Press Secretary, have studied it; it was a top story this morning. Now I am just wondering how much more study. Are they going to memorize it or contemplate it, or what?

MR. NESSEN: The Senate report, I think, runs over a thousand pages.

Q I see.

MR. NESSEN: And the Legal Counsel's Office here will take a look at it and see what the allegations are.

Q I see.

Q Will you please be eloquent on the subject of the President's reaction to and judgment on Secretary Kissinger's talks with Prime Minister Vorster?

MR. NESSEN: Well, since there is a second day of the talks underway, Dick, I would rather not at this stage go into any more detail than what the Secretary said yesterday himself.

Q Ron, you said you would take the question about the Embassy in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem as urged by the Democratic Party and by Governor Jerry Brown, as a matter of fact, and by Congressman Jerry Ford.

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q You have an answer, I can tell. I can just tell.

MR. NESSEN: But is it eloquent? That is the only question.

Q Well, that remains to be seen.

MR. NESSEN: If you recall, Les, on August 28, 1974, when you asked the President at his news conference --

Q Yes, I do recall that.

MR. NESSEN: You said, "My question, sir, is, would you, now that you have to set foreign policy, request that the Embassy be shifted from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem along with 17 other national embassies?"

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: An eloquently worded question, I think.

And the President said: "Under the current circumstances and the importance of getting a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, I think that particular proposal ought to stand aside. We must come up with some other answers between Israel and the Arab nations in order to achieve a peace that is both fair and durable."

Q Right.

MR. NESSEN: In fact, that general answer is true today, but --

Q Well, my question is, it has not changed, in other words?

MR. NESSEN: The question of location of the American Embassy -- I mean, what was unsaid in the President's answer when he talked about that must stand aside while we await some answers to other Arab-Israeli questions, has to do with the broader question of the status of occupied territories. The American policy is that the status of the occupied territories and the status of Jerusalem must be resolved through negotiations among the parties as they work out a final settlement to the peace question in the Middle East. And that is not a new policy I am stating today nor is it a partisan policy, because it is a policy that has been followed by both Republican and Democratic Administrations regarding the location of the American Embassy in Israel, and that is why the American Embassy has remained in Tel Aviv since Israel was established as a state in 1949.

Q But, Ron, do you know of any other country in the world where we put an Embassy in a city other than their national capital?

MR. NESSEN: I did not study that aspect of it, Les, but I am giving you the reason why the American Embassy is not located in Jerusalem, which I thought was the thrust of your question.

Q Are we pulling out of Quemoy, Matsu and Taiwan? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: Ted, we have a little cheering section here.

Well, first of all, let me give you --

Q That is a 1954 question.

Q Quemoy, Matsu and Taiwan, I think you said, right?

Q I am sorry for the interruption.

Q I would like an answer to the question, please.

MR. NESSEN: All right. First of all, let me give you the facts of the matter.

The facts of the matter are that -- should I do it chronologically or in a flashback?

Q Just eloquently.

MR. NESSEN: All right. I will do it chronologically. In 1974--November 27 of 1974, to be exact--the Joint Chiefs of Staff approved a Joint Manpower Program, it was called, which involved --

MRS. VANDERHYTE: Approved in March of 1975. It was done in 1974.

MR. NESSEN: Well, the manpower study program was approved in 1974, the actual --

MRS. VANDERHYTE: It was done in 1974. The JCS approved the --

MR. NESSEN: That is right.

The Joint manpower study was done in 1974, at the end of 1974, and then on March 26 of 1975 the Joint Chiefs of Staff approved the implementation of this manpower study and, as a result of that, on June the 2nd, of 1976, the one officer and two enlisted men of the United States Army left Matsu. Now, the officer was -- well, all three of them, in fact, were working in assistance and training. The officer specifically, and the two enlisted men, were simply there to help him with his communications. That was on June 2nd.

On June 15, the one officer involved in training and assistance on Quemoy and his two enlisted men involved with communications left Quemoy.

That has no policy implications. The departure of the six people was routine and it was done by the JCS based on a routine decision on grounds of efficiency in keeping with this manpower utilization study.

The last part of your question, I think, Helen, had to do with Taiwan. There are currently 2,300 American military people in Taiwan.

Q 2,300?

MR. NESSEN: Approximately.

There is no change in the status of the American military people there. There is none contemplated. Once again, let me just say that there are no policy implications in the removal of these six people from Quemoy and Matsu.

The final point --

Q Excuse me. Isn't there a policy in effect to reduce American personnel on Taiwan? You say there has been no change in the situation there but there is an ongoing policy to reduce all --

MR. NESSEN: At the moment, there is no further reduction anticipated.

Q What was the last reduction?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. Greener can probably help you with that, Dick. I didn't get into that.

Q Ron, is there any plan to replace these men on Quemoy and Matsu?

MR. NESSEN: There is not, no. As I say, it was done routinely for efficiency reasons and for no policy reason.

Q By saying no change in policy, Ron, do you mean the United States supports Taiwan's claim to Quemoy and Matsu?

MR. NESSEN: I am not enough of an expert on that part of the world to take that one, Dick.

Q You are saying this is in no way related to the Shanghai Communique?

MR. NESSEN: These six particular people are not related to the Shanghai Communique.

Q Is there not an existing timetable to phase out all American military personnel on Taiwan despite the fact that right now no one is being pulled out?

MR. NESSEN: No, there is no timetable.

Q How many were there at the time of the Shanghai Communique?

MR. NESSEN: You've got me. Bill Greener can help you.

Q A lot more?

MR. NESSEN: When you say "there," what do you mean?

Q In Taiwan.

MR. NESSEN: Oh. In Taiwan there were about 10,000. I thought you meant Quemoy.

I don't know how many on Quemoy and Matsu.

Q At any time? How about when Mr. Ford became President?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know the answer to that, but Greener might.

Q The 10,000, what date was that?

MR. NESSEN: The Shanghai Communique was in 1972.

The other point to make here, I think -- and unfortunately I ran out of time this morning before I could track this all down -- there is the feeling here, and I don't know if we ever researched it down yet, that this manpower study done in 1974 was done because Congress ordered a reduction in military assistance personnel stationed overseas and that really the removal of the six from Quemoy and Matsu, it is believed, is part of a worldwide reduction as directed by Congress, but I don't know if we have had time to track that down yet.

MRS. VANDERHYTE: We were not able to find out any evidence of a Congressionally mandated order to get rid of them, but that is part of the security assistance authorization legislation now that they want MAAG phased out by the end of FY 1977 except where specifically authorized.

Q Could we get that again?

Q Ron, with Kissinger out of the country, would you please try to find out whether or not the American policy on Quemoy and Matsu -- what that policy is as to whether the United States still supports Taiwan's claims to Quemoy and Matsu?

MR. NESSEN: Okay. I think you would get your answer faster if you went to the State Department, Dick.

Q On the reduction, I understood you to say -- and the reason I keep asking this question is because of Reagan's political charge that the United States intends to --

MR. NESSEN: He has not spoken on this, has he?

Q According to the Post story.

MR. NESSEN: On Quemoy and Matsu?

Q He said on Taiwan.

MR. NESSEN: Oh, on Taiwan, yes.

Q I am asking again about the 2,300 troops.

MR. NESSEN: Right.

Q There is, contrary to what Mr. Reagan says, no plan to eliminate the American garrison on Taiwan; is that absolutely correct?

MR. NESSEN: As I said, at the moment there are no plans for further reductions.

I mean, what we said before when that came up is still true, Walt, which is that the number of American military people stationed anywhere is determined by the best interests of the United States. You must remember that in 1972 the Vietnam War was going on; the whole political atmosphere of the Far East was different from what it is today, and so those reductions have been made because of our own interests and not for any other reason.

Now, you are familiar with the Shanghai Communique and the wording of it, and the principles of the Shanghai Communique do govern our relations with Mainland China.

Q Ron, has there been any communication with either the Chinese Liaison Office here, in Peking, or through the American Liaison in Peking or in Washington with the Chinese Government regarding the decision to withdraw those people from Quemoy and Matsu?

MR. NESSEN: Look, you know, regardless of how it looks today, those six guys were pulled out as an efficiency measure by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, based on the manpower study and had no policy implications and would not be any level near where you would want to notify.

Q Has Taiwan communicated to the President any dealings on this?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know, they have not.

Q Ron, has anybody in the name of efficiency been pulled out of South Korea and is there any contemplation of reducing -- I think we have 50,000 or 30,000 troops there?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what the number is.

Q Have they reduced in South Korea as well, or has this just applied to Taiwan, Matsu and Quemoy?

MR. NESSEN: As I say, my belief is that it is a worldwide reduction of --

Q In other words, proportionately spread out.

MR. NESSEN: -- military assistance and training people. As Margie points out, under the new security assistance bill Congress has mandated an actual elimination of this particular category of military training people except where specifically authorized.

Q Regarding the 2,300 on Taiwan, you said there are no plans for further reduction.

MR. NESSEN: Correct.

Q Is the 2,300 the level that we intended to reach or has the reduction merely been suspended for, let's say, a certain period?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know how I could even answer that question, Ted.

Q Suspended for the duration of the political campaign or did you get -- well, all right. Is that the level we intended to get down to?

MR. NESSEN: Well, whether it goes up or down or remains the same, it will be unrelated to any political campaign. It will be related to our own needs in the area.

Q Ron, I am wondering, is the President going to veto this latest public works bill that the House passed yesterday?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I think you probably know that the Treasury and the OMB, Office of Management and Budget, are advocating a veto. The bill also seems to contain at least some features that were objectionable to the President when this matter came here before, but the President does want to study the specific legislation before he makes a decision.

Q Why did the President want to see Angola's membership to the UN vetoed?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I think the American Ambassador up there stated the reasons quite well yesterday, for one thing. Well, one is a procedural matter. Why bring the matter up now when the General Assembly is not meeting until September and so there would be no hope of completing action on this until September, but on a more substantive matter, the United States has a real question about whether Angola fulfills the requirements of self-government and so forth as long as it has such a massive contingent of non-Angolan troops on its soil.

Q Well, you said look at the Ambassador's remarks, and as I saw the quote in the paper, the quote from Scranton was a more propitious time could have been chosen, or something to that effect.

MR. NESSEN: Well, Scranton wasn't there. Ambassador Sherer spoke for the United States.

Q The quote was "a more propitious time" and diplomats at the UN, as I read the story, suggested that the more propitious time had more to do with the American political scene and Mr. Ford's battle with Mr. Reagan.

MR. NESSEN: Everything in the world seems to have to do with the American political scene as I read the wires and listen to the --

Q Does not seem to be immune from it, does it?

MR. NESSEN: If that was indeed a quote from Ambassador Sherer, and I didn't see it, then he must obviously have been speaking of the first point I made which was the procedural point. Why force this issue to the Security Council when the General Assembly cannot deal with it until September?

The substantive argument against admitting Angola now is that there is a real question of whether it meets the self-government requirements for membership in light of the large contingent of Cuban troops on its soil.

Q Ron, there is a report today that the Cubans are pulling out faster than we had anticipated and it is merely a report that indicated. Do you have anything on that?

MR. NESSEN: I think, as the State Department has said repeatedly and as we have said on those occasions when asked, we have no reliable evidence that there has been any net reduction in the number of Cuban troops in Angola.

Q So you are denying political motivation?

MR. NESSEN: I said net reduction. Obviously there is some suggestion that there may have been rotation but we have no reliable evidence of any net reduction.

Q Can you tell me who is going to the summit meeting with the President from the big power countries?

MR. NESSEN: Dr. Kissinger is coming from Europe and Bill Simon is coming from Europe. From here you will have Alan Greenspan, obviously, Brent Scowcroft, Under Secretary Yeo of the Treasury Department, Bob Hormats, one of the Associate Directors of the NSC who deals in international economic affairs.

Q Seidman?

MR. NESSEN: Yes. Seidman, obviously, yes, Seidman.

Q Ron, does the President feel that the prospects for success in Puerto Rico were enhanced by the results in the Italian elections?

MR. NESSEN: I don't see the relationship.

Q Well, the President has said that the Italian elections was the opportunity for continuation of democratic government. I assume we can deal more readily if one of our partners in Puerto Rico has a democratic government, than at least a partly Communist Government.

MR. NESSEN: Well --

Q Probably the reasons the Communists have different economic theories.

MR. NESSEN: That's true.

Q Ron, the Italian Government will not have been formed by this weekend, I would not think, any way.

MR. NESSEN: I would not think so either but they have a government which will be represented.

Q One more question on Matsu.

Q Is your answer on that you don't know?

MR. NESSEN: I don't quite understand the specific question.

Q Well, if the Communists were about to join the chameleon Government having been formed, they obviously would have some voice one would think in the deliberations in Puerto Rico. Now they apparently won't according to what the Christian Democrats say, so does this help in any way in conducting these discussions in Puerto Rico from the United States' point of view?

In other words, the Christian Democrats say the Communists will not be taken into a coalition.

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q So apparently the Communists will not have a silent voice in the Puerto Rican deliberations. Are we pleased with that? Does this help the prospects for success?

MR. NESSEN: I just don't know how to answer that question. Why don't you call one of the people on that list and try it on them? I don't quite understand it.

Q Is it our Government's view that withdrawing the last six men from Quemoy and Matsu had no symbolic importance and does not make them any more vulnerable to attack or invasion?

MR. NESSEN: Well, these six guys -- well, one guy on each island basically, an officer on Quemoy and an officer on Matsu plus two guys who ran the radio -- I mean that is basically why they were there, was to run the radio -- obviously had completed their training and assistance activities to the satisfaction of the JCS or else they would not have been pulled out. Their services as training and assistance officers was clearly no longer needed but that was done, as I say, in a routine way on the grounds of efficiency.

Q Are you saying there was no symbolic importance to them being the last ones being withdrawn but that does not make those islands more vulnerable, the fact that we --

MR. NESSEN: That one officer is gone?

Q Well, one or three or -- the American presence, yes.

MR. NESSEN: Those guys, as I say, were there to train and to assist.

Q I understand that.

MR. NESSEN: The departure of one officer I don't think -- well, it was done on grounds of efficiency and policy is involved and I don't see the symbolism myself.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

(AT 12:48 P.M. EDT)