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March 10, 1975

DISCUSSION ON CAMBODIA
WITH RON NESSEN
AND MEMBERS OF THE PRESS

3:00 P.M. EDT

MR. NESSEN: The reason I did considerable research on Cambodia today was primarily because I thought there would be interest in Hubert Humphrey's statement that he had seen some cables which indicated to him that he thought that the Embassy in Phnom Penh was saying, that even with the aid there was no hope for saving Cambodia, and that is not right.

I think the strongest thing that my research showed today was that what the President and Kissinger and others have been saying publicly is precisely what the Embassy has been saying privately; that is, to sort of sum it up, that without additional aid, there is no likelihood that Cambodia will survive this dry season, that with the aid there is a chance that they will survive, and it is very difficult to put the odds on what the chances are.

It is possible that a 50-50 chance with the aid might be right, but it is a reasonable chance that they will survive this dry season if they get the additional aid.

Q Survive in what time frame, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: I say through this dry season and into the rainy season.

Q There is no accuracy saying June 15?

MR. NESSEN: You know, it varies, really, but somewhere.

Q Mid-June?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q More like late or early July in Cambodia?

MR. NESSEN: Yes. Steve has been there. He knows about it.

The circumstances in which Humphrey saw the cables were that he met with Phil Habib and he was shown some cables.



Q You mean at the Hill or somewhere else?

MR. NESSEN: I believe he went to the State Department, although I am not absolutely sure of where the meeting was.

I think it is fair to say that the President has seen all the cables and other reports relating to the situation in Cambodia, and it is based on that that he has said publicly that without aid, there is no chance of survival; with aid there is a reasonable chance of survival, and that the purpose of this aid is not to enable the government there to win a military victory, but the purpose of the aid there is to convince the rebels that they cannot win a military victory.

There are indications that the rebels are having trouble with their own resupply problems and manpower problems, and the hope is that if the Cambodian government can survive this dry season and into the wet season that there would then be an incentive for the rebels to negotiate a settlement, and I say that is a hope that that would happen.

Q Where are you getting the rebel assessment? Their own problems?

MR. NESSEN: That has been reported from the Embassy in Phnom Penh.

Q Supply and what was the other?

MR. HUSHEN: Manpower, I think.

Q Are they having supply problems?

MR. NESSEN: This is just more generally worded that the rebels have been weakened.

Q By what?

MR. NESSEN: By their own losses.

Q That is from a cable?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Ron, hasn't the Administration in fact been having two positions? One is a private position that it is possible to save the government into the rainy season, but it is a long-shot and that if the Administration would like to take the public position, as the President stated, a reasonable chance. Now, there



MR. NESSEN: I know that John and I want to assure you that it is not true.

Q Don't say that unless you know what you are talking about, about what has been said on the Hill in committees by Schlesinger and Kissinger and others.

MR. HUSHEN: I think the President echoed that view in his press conference.

MR. NESSEN: Let's go off the record here.

(Off-the-record discussion.)

MR. NESSEN: Back on the record.

Q Ron, can you tell us if there is anything in the wind for any change in the administration in Phnom Penh? Would that make negotiation more likely?

MR. NESSEN: You know, I think the government here in the United States has always taken the position that that is something for the Cambodians to decide, and I think the President -- I mean, if you read his statement the other night, and I think he emphasized it again in answer to a question, he said the personalities should not or would not stand in the way of a settlement.

Q Has there been any pressure, though, from our Embassy and representatives there to suggest that?

MR. NESSEN: I am not aware of that. One thing to keep in mind here -- and I have been meaning to do this for a couple of days, but the question never seemed to come up -- is how Lon Nol came to power. There is a feeling that somehow Lon Nol is a military dictator who seized power. The fact of the matter is that Lon Nol was appointed Prime Minister by Sihanouk, if you recall, in August of 1969.

Sihanouk appointed Lon Nol to be Prime Minister, and then on March 18, 1970, the National Assembly of Cambodia voted Sihanouk out of office as chief of state. That was during one of his frequent absences. The vote was 92 to zero, and that is considered to have been a legal deposing of Sihanouk.

The Cambodians do have a constitution, and under that constitution, Lon Nol, who had been appointed by Sihanouk, stayed on as Prime Minister and Defense Minister.



Lon Nol was then elected as the first President of the Khmer Republic in June 1972. He had two opponents in that election, it was a contested election, and he got 55 percent of the votes. The other two opponents got 45 percent of the vote, so it was not any sort of put up deal where he won 99 percent of the votes.

The only reason I mention that is that he is a legally and constitutionally elected leader of that country, and they do have a constitution and laws and ways of changing their government, and the United States feels it is up to them if they want to now.

You know, you have seen some of the moves that their Parliament has made in the past few days, so they do have the machinery to do that if they want to do it, and it should not be up to the United States to depose a legally elected President of Cambodia.



Q Lon Nol did come in with a big burst of public support if you are talking about the Phnom Penh intellectual-leadership-oriented public. Nonetheless, the parliament you are talking about now is a very different animal. It is a rubber stamp organization made up of people who have, like Lon Nol, been declared candidates for a firing squad by the other side which brings me back to my question that I asked the other day at the briefing.

Just this whole idea that if ever a man violated a public trust and threw away the support of all his countrymen, here is your prime example. The rampant corruption in that regime, the troops that cannot get paid, all the other things that are documented over and over again, Lon Nol does not have that kind of support anymore; in fact, when I was there the North Vietnamese had to do all the fighting for them or the Viet Cong coming over from the other side -- now they have pulled clear back.

When we were there, you could not get a Cambodian to pick up arms with them except for a few hundred Khmer Rouge up in the Elephant Mountains, and now you have Cambodians running around all over the country trying to throw him out.

MR. NESSEN: Well, they have a method, Steve, and they have a constitution. Just by analogy and nothing more, remember all the flack there was in charges that the United States had overthrown the legitimately elected government of Chile.

You certainly would not want the United States Government to be accused of overthrowing another legitimately elected government.

Q Has the President changed his position on this at all since Hubert Humphrey told him that he could not support him on this?

MR. NESSEN: John, the President truly is doing what he believes right and I think he is doing it in an unemotional and non-strident way. He has weighted the facts and read the cables and talked to people and he truly believes that what he is doing is right.



Q Has the President objected outright to the suggestion by Representative McCloskey that enough aid be given to hold the perimeter and have a mass evacuation of Phnom Penh?

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard it discussed.

Q Without having any role in Lon Nol's overthrow, doesn't the President think that the U.S., at some point, can say, "Given the conduct of your government, any commitment we have no longer exists." Don't we at least have the right to say we don't or do give you more aid based on your performance?

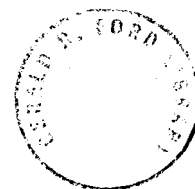
MR. NESSEN: Well, Steve, about the performance, the Embassy in Phnom Penh has looked into the matter and the last figures that are available -- and granted, this is a somewhat tightly based survey -- but it goes to some of the things you asked about.

In the month of February, there were 570 metric tons of rice distributed a day in Phnom Penh. Military and their dependents got 200 metric tons of that. Civil servants and their dependents got 70 metric tons of that and the rest of the civilian population got 280 metric tons of that. The remaining 20 metric tons a day were distributed free of charge to refugees by various voluntary agencies.

Q Is this a denial that large amounts of our aid of that nature ends up on the black market of inflated prices, the kind of thing that has triggered the anti-Chinese riots in Battambang?

MR. NESSEN: I just don't know enough about that, Steve, except that the Embassy has looked into it to this extent and I thought I would pass this along to you.

Q Ron, can you tell us who the President conferred with in drawing up this statement that he had at the press conference the other night, who were the officials who were involved in the conference with him?



MR. NESSEN: Brent Scowcroft, Rumsfeld, Marsh, and Nessen, among others.

Q What would your specific answer be to Scott?

MR. NESSEN: Let's see. Scott says the government should use as much pressure as necessary in order to obtain an immediate change of leadership of the deceased government in Cambodia. Scott said the aim of that policy is the urgent necessity of securing an agreement with the transition Cambodian government for the release of the many thousands of refugees he said would otherwise be slaughtered.

I think the answer would be what I said, that Cambodia has an elected government, elected by 55 percent of the population against two opponents. It is just not the American role to overthrow or pressure out of office a legitimately elected legal government.

At the same time, I call your attention to the President's remarks the other night that a solution in Cambodia did not depend on any particular personalities.

Q So that in other words, the President rejects the idea of using our continued aid as a leader?

MR. NESSEN: You will have to word it the way you want to, Steve. I am just saying that it is a legitimately elected government.

Q He didn't confer at all with Kissinger in connection with this Cambodian statement?

MR. NESSEN: Kissinger had gone already, although I am sure they were in touch by cable or phone.

Q Just one other thing. I don't quite understand why apparently the Administration believes that even with the aid after they get them, say, through the rainy season, that chances are adverse to the Lon Nol government continuing. Is that a fair assessment?

What I mean, are you saying it is a 50-50 chance to get them into the rainy season, which is to get them through the rainy season?



MR. NESSEN: With the aid.

Q Then, what about after the rainy season?

MR. NESSEN: During the rainy season.

Q Once the rainy season is over, once they get to where they can fight again.

MR. NESSEN: I just think there is a hope that the other side would decide to negotiate a settlement.

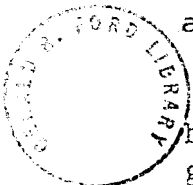
Q A lot of this stuff gets hung up on that time-frame there that people talk about.

Q What kind of role can the U.S. -- or is the U.S. willing to -- play that we agreed to all of this about Kissinger's reluctance to bargain from a lack of strength? I don't think anyone, even your Embassy there, is suggesting that the Cambodians are going to have any renewed strength.

MR. HUSHEN: Let me throw something in here that Kissir said in his meeting last week, and that is as long as the insurgents feel they have military options they will use those, and when they feel those have run out, they will look to the political solution.

Q But this begs the question that it has not been any problem for them to wait for one dry season after the next for God knows how many years already, and all of Indochina and nearly all of Cambodia are each year getting a little stronger, going a little further. What pressure is there so everybody gets a chance to rest, relax, recruit, resupply and each year, they have done better than the year before? Why is there going to be any more pressure on them to negotiate after we get to this wet season than any other?

MR. NESSEN: There is the feeling that they may be hurt, also. Nobody here has ever claimed that if they just get through this dry season and we have got a negotiation -- there is the hope of one. To turn that around, Steve, if Cambodia does not survive the dry season, then clearly there is not going to be any negotiations. It is going to be settled voluntarily. If they get through the dry season without it, then there is the hope or the possibility of a negotiated settlement.



Q Do you admit it is a rather slim hope?

MR. NESSEN: I can't put any measurement on what the possibility is of a settlement during the wet season, or a negotiated settlement.

Q Is the 50-50 chance a reasonable chance, as the President stated -- is that in the cables or is that the President's assessment from reading the cables?

MR. NESSEN: I am not sure that those exact words appear in here. Let's see.

"It can hold its own against the offensive and survive until the end of the current fiscal year."

The sentence starts, "The best current estimate here is that if they receive the additional funds, both military and economic, it can hold its own."

And the other one says basically the same thing: with sufficient military and humanitarian assistance, it has a chance of getting through the dry season.

So, these, plus other things that he has read and been told, leads the President to that assessment.

Q Ron, I don't want to dwell on a single point too long, but in view of the Gallop Poll released yesterday and the seeming reluctance of ~~Connors~~ to go along with this aid or stepped-up aid next year, is there anything that you see that says to the Administration that the Khmer Rouge have any motivation for negotiation during this wet season, as Steve asked earlier? They must get ahold of that poll and know that the American people are not going to continue playing that war forever.

MR. NESSEN: I think there is one interesting line in here that says that the -- let's go off the record on this if we can just to give you the background.

(DISCUSSION OFF THE RECORD.)



Q Has there been any feedback from the other side -- diplomatic or any other channels -- as to their stage of morale, readiness, fighting ability, position?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know whether there has been any feedback. There is a reference in here to the possibility that the other side is seriously weakened, also.

Q This is from the Embassy?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Ron, is there any contact, diplomatic or otherwise, that you can tell us about?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I am aware of, but that is really something that Habib will talk about. I am just not completely up to date on what, if any, additional diplomatic efforts may be made. He went into that at some length the other day on this.

Q Ron, we never really answered the question as to what the U.S. can do in the way of initiating, encouraging or taking part in negotiations.

MR. NESSEN: Habib gave a pretty good rundown on what efforts there have been in the past, and I think you need to ask him where it stands now or what could possibly happen in the future.

Q Did anyone ever answer that story we had seen in the paper, the Schanberg story about the effort was made and this was a recommendation by the Embassy? Was that ever answered by anyone?

MR. NESSEN: No, it was not, and you are going to need to get that answer at the State Department. I am told that they pulled together the background on that episode, and you should talk to them about it.

Q While we have got you here, can you tell us what the President's view was in this last meeting here?

MR. NESSEN: Was that the pay raise for the Judiciary?

MR. HUSHEN: Yes.



MR. NESSEN: I was busy trying to get this together. I will have to check.

Q Can you give us any reaction to the Gallup poll that 70 percent oppose?

MR. NESSEN: I think that Gallup poll was taken toward the end of January or the middle of January, if I am not mistaken. There were two polls; one was taken early February, and one was taken last January.

MR. HUSHEN: The Yankelovich poll was then in late January.

Q Are you saying it is outmoded?

MR. NESSEN: No, it is very difficult to react to something that is that old.

Q Gallup says this publication was ten days behind his poll.

MR. NESSEN: Most of those polls have dates in them, and one was late or mid-January. The other was early February.

MR. HUSHEN: I don't know the date of the Gallup, but the Yankelovich poll was done in late January.

Q Is the White House putting any special hope now on that possible way to bypass the Senate having to approve military funds to go to the contingency and get it up from \$50 to \$125,000 or \$1 million?

MR. NESSEN: The President's feeling is that if this aid is going to get there and have any chance of affecting events, it needs to be done in ten days to two weeks, and he is for whatever legislative method will get that done.

Q Which would not rule out this approach?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Do you plan any special effort to convince Congress?

MR. NESSEN: I think the President has made a statement at the news conference and he talked to Humphrey, Case and Sparkman the other day. I think he has made his views pretty clear.



I feel sure he will be talking to other Members of Congress, too. He saw the delegation that came back from Indochina. He has seen a fair number of people on this already, and probably will see others.

Q Does he have any meetings on it tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: No, I don't see anything specifically on the schedule right now to deal with that.

Q Could we just ask if you have anything to add to this morning along the lines of the three questions you were left with?

MR. NESSEN: Let's see. There were seven major unanswered questions on the CIA, and I just have not gotten the answer yet.

Q Not even on what our present policy is?

MR. NESSEN: I mean, we are pretty clear to at least one of the wires. I forget which one. I mean certainly Don Rumsfeld is not talking off the top of his head.

Q But you still don't want to go on the record saying the same thing?

MR. NESSEN: I mean, Don is a senior adviser and Assistant to the President. I will see if I can get the President's own words, but I think for the moment that is it.

Q What about that memo on the Arab boycott?

MR. NESSEN: Oh, God.

Q They seem to all have lapses. It can't be that hard.

MR. NESSEN: I just have to find it and find out where it stands.

Q Press a button.

MR. NESSEN: Yes, that is right.

MR. HUSHEN: Pick up the phone.

MR. NESSEN: Pick up the phone, as Les would say.



I am glad you were curious about Cambodia because I did have some time.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END (AT 3:35 P.M. EDT)



March 11, 1975

DISCUSSION WITH RON NESSEN
AND MEMBERS OF THE PRESS

4:13 P.M. EDT

MR. NESSEN: Everybody had a chance to talk with Schlesinger. He more or less, I understand, said he agreed with the assessment we have been given here, did he not? That is what he told me back here.

Q The assessment of what?

MR. NESSEN: With the adequate aid and time there was a chance that it wouldn't fall.

Q I just want to differ with you on one point, Ron, a new point that you injected this morning. You said the insurgents were having --

MR. NESSEN: I said the cables from Phnom Penh suggested that they might be having supply and manpower problems.

Q He said, unless I missed the tailend, they are in much better shape this year than they were last year.

Q He says they always have some support problems.

MR. HUSHEN: You missed the tailend because he added to that that they were having some supply problems.

Q Did he say that? I didn't hear that.

Q I didn't hear that either.

Q He talks so softly that they ought to have microphones all the time.

Q They ran out of steam on February 6 of last year.

Q But he said they are much better off this year than they were last year.



MR. NESSEN: I am sure by now you have all read the Tower story more carefully. You will see that Tower made it clear to reporters he was giving his views of the situation and that Schlesinger confined himself to discussing the consequences of the U.S. failure to aid Cambodia.

The meeting with the President, I want to make sure you understand, was not a Cambodia crisis meeting or even a Cambodia meeting. It was a very broad, general review of a couple of situations in the world.

Apparently, Schlesinger started and moved from West to East, so he started out talking about Europe and a couple of places in Europe and the Middle East.

Q Portugal?

MR. NESSEN: He did talk about Portugal.

Q What does he know about Portugal?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't ask for a detailed rundown on that.

He ended up in Southeast Asia, and he said a very, very minor portion of the conversation was about Cambodia and that there was no new information exchanged between him and the President.

Now, that takes care of that.

There is one other thing. This morning -- and it was probably my fault -- for possibly giving the impression that there had been some kind of evacuation suggestion made by the Ambassador. The fact is that Ambassador Dean sent a letter to the American community in Phnom Penh on February 14, which was nearly a month ago -- these were the businessmen; I don't know who else is there, I don't know what Americans do in Phnom Penh -- suggesting that if you were there on nonessential business and you really didn't have to stay, maybe it would be an good idea to leave. That was February 14.

So, I think some of the stories probably seemed to make it appear that this happened today or yesterday, and that it was something new, but it is really nearly a month old.



Q Schlesinger did discuss that, too. He indicated that it extended to American personnel, and he talked about people who were not necessary for the accomplishment of our mission had left.

Q That means wives and children?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q That was some time ago.

Q Schlesinger made it a more encompassing thing than you did. It was not just a casual thing.

Q Ron, we don't get any picture of Presidential involvement in this. You say that he has hardly talked about it. Here is a country that we have fought for for I don't know how many years, supplied, and so forth, and we get no feeling that the President -- all I can say is the news stories are very, very tragic in a sense, and we don't know what the President is doing.

MR. NESSEN: You have worked here a lot of years, and I did before, too. There have been times when there was a kind of crisis atmosphere, but in this case, the President's basic action at this point is to ask Congress for the money he feels is needed.

He is speaking out for that money, and he talks to people on the Hill about it. As far as anything beyond that, I don't know what you expect him to be doing.

Q I expect him to use a lot of initiatives; in ten different directions, you know.

MR. NESSEN: At the moment, it depends on the money, Helen. That is up to Congress.

Q The wire copies you are speaking of has Tower also saying that Schlesinger -- Tower said that Schlesinger said -- in talking about additional aid -- said the Secretary regards aid to South Vietnam of greater importance than aid to Cambodia.



MR. NESSEN: Schlesinger?

Q When I asked Schlesinger about that, I got an answer that I regarded as confirming. It was one of those with diplomatic replies, which was that we have more involvement in Vietnam than we do in Cambodia. To paraphrase it, I thought he was answering yes, but how does the White House feel about that?

MR. NESSEN: The question was, does the President feel that aid to South Vietnam is of greater importance than aid to Cambodia.

I certainly haven't gotten that feeling from the President, John. The situation in Cambodia at the moment appears to be more critical than the one in South Vietnam, but he still feels that \$300 million is needed for South Vietnam, too.

Q This morning, before you had a chance to talk to Schlesinger, I think that you said that the chances were 50-50.

MR. NESSEN: I said a reasonable, or maybe 50-50, chance.

Q As a matter of fact, I think you said there was a 50-50 chance, perhaps better, if given help, that they could survive through the present dry season into the rainy season.

MR. NESSEN: I don't think that I said better than 50-50. I wouldn't like to say better than 50-50.



Q That is what I wanted to ask you about.

MR. NESSEN: I certainly wouldn't. I would rather say a reasonable chance, but not even get into 50-50.

MR. HUSHEN: Ron, on that point, we concluded by saying there is a 50-50 chance to get through the crises and into the rainy season. We never said to negotiations.

MR. NESSEN: We are hoping for the negotiations during the wet season, but I think I made clear that is a hope.

Q Ron, has the President discussed with leaders on the Hill a dollar figure less than \$222 million, provided it is made available and immediately?

MR. NESSEN: I think that he said himself, or Humphrey said, that they had talked last week about some other figure, yes.

Q Can you say anything about a dollar figure?

MR. NESSEN: He really thinks that the \$222 million was needed to be adequate. He is trying to work with Congress, and speed is the most important thing.

Q Secretary Schlesinger said outside that the \$222 million figure includes some equipment, that the primary thing now is ammunition, and that the ammunition could be taken care of with a lesser figure, which he did not specify.

Can you give us any guidance on that?

MR. NESSEN: No, other than he is working with Congress, and speed at the moment is the most important part of it.

Q The possibility is open thmt a smaller figure would be acceptable, provided it is forthcoming?



MR. NESSEN: He thinks \$222 million is what is needed to be adequate, but he thinks speed is the most important thing.

Q Ron, hasn't the Administration indicated that it would go along with the plan to raise the draw-down figure on existing stocks, to raise that from \$75 million to \$200 million.

MR. NESSEN: I have heard that that is one of the ways being discussed on the Hill to get this over there fast.



Q The figure is \$50 million to \$125 million, isn't it?

MR. NESSEN: I think there is another \$50 million somewhere.

Q To make it \$175 million?

MR. NESSEN: That is right.

Q Schlesinger told us outside that he was figuring two to three weeks at best, without the Congressional aid. I think you told us ten to twelve days in the briefing this morning.

MR. NESSEN: The number I got from the President was ten to twelve days. These are not very precise things. You get a feel of the ball park area that we are talking about.

Q Has the Administration decided how it will go, in fact, asking Congress to simply lift the restrictions on the use of that aid, that general aid appropriation, which would then allow the President to make the decision that the aid should be taken away from some other countries and given to Cambodia?

MR. NESSEN: That is one of the ways being discussed, and that is the fastest way to do it.

Q It is being discussed where -- between Friedersdorf and the people on the Hill, or here?

MR. NESSEN: We discussed it with people on the Hill. Speed is really the thing.

Q Is anybody at the White House with the mark-up session up on Capitol Hill today on this \$222 million?

MR. NESSEN: You mean at the session?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END (AT 4:37 P.M. EDT)



MAY 16, 1975

INFORMAL BRIEFING
BY
RON NESSEN

The Briefing Room

11:33 A.M.

MR. NESSEN: Henry will brief at the State Department at 12:15. Also, I am just told that Henry will have casualty figures at 12:15.

Q Cambodians, too?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that.

Q Where did you get that from?

MR. NESSEN: What, the casualty figure?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: From the Pentagon just now.

Q Are they releasing it?

MR. NESSEN: I think the first release -- well, I think they will be leaked between now and 12:15, if I know the Pentagon.

Q You will be finished here in time for us to get over there?

MR. NESSEN: I am not even here.

Q Ron, can you get us some reaction from the President on how he feels about the fact that the casualties almost number as many, or more, as the crew members on the MAYAGUEZ?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, I will.

Q Is the President going to speak



MR. NESSEN: I don't want to accept the premise of your question, first of all.

Q Do you know what they are?

MR. NESSEN: Fran, I know what they are nailing down right now.

Q What about the Cambodian body count?

Q Ron, do you know what was the total cost of this operation?

MR. NESSEN: I don't. The Pentagon would have that.

Q Ron, were you able to find out for certain whether there were two aircraft attacks on the --

MR. NESSEN: Yes, there were. Actually, there were -- you know, I would --

Q Since you are here, could you announce the Charlotte trip?

MR. NESSEN: Announce what?

Q The Charlotte trip.

MR. NESSEN: Since I'm here.

Q Does that mean you are going to hold the briefing?

MR. NESSEN: No, I am not going to hold a briefing.

Do we have announcements and things to put out?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. We have three small announcements, none of which --



MR. NESSEN: We can post this.

The President is going to make a trip to Charlotte next Tuesday, but we will post that with all the details of what it is. I think that is the best way to do it.

Q Charlotte what?

MR. NESSEN: North Carolina.

Q For a speech?

MR. NESSEN: It is a Bicentennial event.

Q Thursday?

MR. NESSEN: Tuesday.

Q Ron, will the President speak at that Scott reception on Sunday?

MR. NESSEN: What Scott reception?
Oh, in Philadelphia.

Q That is mostly informal?

MR. NESSEN: He will probably make some brief remarks of praise for Senator Scott, yes.

Q Ron, are you seriously going to put out the speech for Sunday morning?

MR. NESSEN: I think if we can get it in time and there is any interest in doing it that way, I would be happy to do it that way.

Let's see what the speck looks like before we decide.

MR. HUSHEN: We will try to get you an advance text, of course.

Q If you put it out for Sunday, a.m., can we get it early enough to get some --



MR. NESSEN: I understand your deadline problems for the Sunday paper.

Q How about the joint statement? Will there be one?

MR. NESSEN: Communique?

Q The Iranian meeting.

Q There will not be any joint communique?

MR. NESSEN: Not as of this time. As of this moment, no.

Q Ron, is the President going to sign the strip mining bill?

MR. NESSEN: There is no decision on that.

Q What is his deadline?

MR. NESSEN: May 20.

Q How about tomorrow? What does he do tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: The schedule is very light tomorrow. I don't have any details right now.

Q Do you think he will golf?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what the weather is going to be.

Q Ten percent chance of rain.

MORE



Q Can you tell us about the Charlotte time?
In the morning; afternoon?

MR. NESSEN: We are going to post them.

Q Has the President called the families of
the casualties, at least the ones that we know are dead?

MR. NESSEN: The Pentagon is pulling together
the names, and the President will send a personal
message, probably in writing, or phone calls to the
families of the casualties.

Q Did you say you had more figures on reaction?

MR. NESSEN: This is the kind of informal air I
like to maintain around here. (Laughter)

Q You give us less news because you don't
stand up at the podium.

Q Can you tell us when the pool is going to
be completed?

MR. NESSEN: I said by July 1.

Q Oh, really. Will it be open to all members
of the family?

MR. NESSEN: Which members are you referring to?

Q At the White House, he said we are all one
big family.

MR. NESSEN: I see.

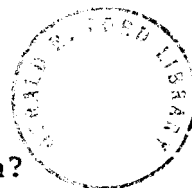
Q I just was wondering, when do we plunge, Ron,
we family members?

Q What about the figures, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: I can post this reaction in writing
so then you can see it.

Q We have other questions.

MR. NESSEN: Is it the 10:30 a.m. reaction?



Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: Okay. Well, you got it then.

Q Ron, at some point it would be nice to have some reaction on the general reaction as to casualties, how the operation went and so on.

MR. NESSEN: This isn't a briefing, don't worry.

Q Will we get that today?

MR. NESSEN: Obviously, the President regrets that there were any casualties, but certainly there was a risk in the operation. The operation succeeded in accomplishing its objective, which was purely and simply -- and no other objective -- other than to free the crew and the ship. So, it was successful.

Q Are you quoting the President, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: I am reflecting his views, Peter, as I try always to do.

Q Nothing else?

MR. NESSEN: Purely and simply, and nothing else other than to free the ship and the crew. So, it succeeded in its objective. There were risks, as there are in any military operation, and he regrets the casualties and extends sympathy to the families and will do so in a more formal sense with either a phone call or a message.

Q Ron, the Post had a little piece this morning saying that a sister ship of the MAYAGUEZ was using the same route. I checked with the company, and they say they are in the area where the advisory was given.

Since it is just advisory and not really compulsory, are we maintaining any vessels in that area that would head off other merchant ships that may be in the area?



MR. NESSEN: Joe tells me that there will be some of the Navy ships remaining in the general area. Where precisely they are and which ones they are, I don't know.

Q That would be part of their plan?

MR. NESSEN: No. I was going to finish by saying I don't know of any plans to in any sense head off --

Q Ron, do you know who has the responsibility of warning merchant vessels in situations like this?

MR. NESSEN: The name of the organization is the Defense Mapping Agency.

Q Have we apologized to Bangkok?

MR. NESSEN: I prefer you address the questions on relations with Thailand to Henry.

Q Ron, the ships that are in the area, are they to respond to --

MR. NESSEN: Phil, you know that is hypothetical. Nothing has happened to anybody else.

Q They are heeding the warning that has been given out by --

MR. NESSEN: By not altering it, by sailing around that is --

Q You don't have your briefing book. Has the President --

MR. NESSEN: I got it all in my head, Walt.

Q Okay. Can you tell me about what our position is on recognizing the new government in Ho Chi Minh City, or Saigon?

MR. NESSEN: Henry will talk about that, if asked.



Q Ron, would you comment on a statement this morning that we were caught somewhat flatfooted by either bum intelligence or lack of intelligence on how many Khmer Rouge there were on the island?

MR. NESSEN: No. I think the Pentagon can probably talk to you about that, if there is any truth in it.

Q Ron, concerning the directive pure and simple -- (Rest of question inaudible on the tape.)

MR. NESSEN: The President very firmly rejects that idea.

Q What idea?

MR. NESSEN: Any idea there is speculation that he has seen printed that there was somehow-- if I am reflecting Neal's question correctly that he is suggesting that some people are writing that this occasion was welcomed, I think, to a certain degree. Well, the President rejects that that was a consideration.

Q Was he advised of the opportunity to bomb the shore installations as an extra bonus of the operation, as some senior official is reported as saying?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know who those senior officials are that you are quoting, but I can tell you that the bombing of the mainland was done for just the reason we said yesterday, which was to prevent the troops and planes that had there from coming and attacking the small force of Marines on the island.

Q Ron, have we established where the crew was taken after they were taken off the MAYAGUEZ?

Q I heard a report -- and I don't know if it is true at all -- that they were taken to the mainland.

MR. NESSEN: There is some indication that they may have spent part of the time on the mainland.

Q Then why would you bomb them?



Q Then why would you bomb them?

MR. NESSEN: I say there are some indications, but it is all very fuzzy and has not been resolved as of this morning, because I checked this morning.

Q Will Henry have that, do you know?

MR. NESSEN: I suspect that he will be able to --

Q Why did the military operations call for an attack on Koh Tang Island by the Marines if there was evidence that the crew had been taken to the mainland?

MR. NESSEN: I said yesterday that there was no clear idea where the crew was at that point.

Q If the pilot had told you that he had seen some people pacing on the deck of the ship --

MR. NESSEN: No, what I said was there were enough people on deck so that it appeared that the ship had more people on board than it normally would carry as a crew, so some doubt was raised as to who they were, and for that reason the ship was not sunk.

Q But you had-not reached the possibility that the crew had been taken off the ship?

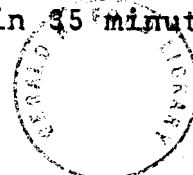
MR. NESSEN: That is correct. There was some suggestion that some of the crew might have been on that boat.

Q Did the President order this operation in the calculation that the crew was on Koh Tang? Was that his assumption?

MR. NESSEN: It just was not known at that point.

Q But to assault Koh Tang with any idea that the crew was not there would be fruitless, would it not?

MR. NESSEN: You know, there was not any solid evidence that they were on the ship, on the island or on the mainland. I mean, you know, it is so silly to ask these questions when the Secretary of State and the President's National Security Advisor is going to go on in 45 minutes.



Q There are many critical questions and we are sitting here -- we have covered the story now for four days. We are very much involved. You are seeing the President three and four times a day. Does he think they are very valid?

MR. NESSEN: I just said that --

Q Ron, would you answer that question, then?

MR. NESSEN: I thought I answered it, Mort, that there was not solid evidence whether they were on the ship, on the island or on the mainland.

Q But you did hvae, as I recall, the scenario, you had indications that they had at least been on the island and might still be there; is that accurate?

MR. NESSEN: They might have been on the island, they might have been on the ship. There was a chance that some may have been on this ship that went to the mainland.

Q Ron, was any consideration given -- after the President received the report of the radio announcement and broadcast at 8:22 or 8:15 -- was there any consideration given to delaying the landing of Marines?

MR. NESSEN: The Marines were on the beach and under fire at about 7:17, a full hour before the translation arrived here.

Q According to your chronology, they took control of the MAYAGUEZ at 8:45.

MR. NESSEN: Yes, the HOLT pulled alongside at 8:45.

Q Did the President ever consider delaying the attack on Kompong Som?

MR. NESSEN: No, because the Marines were on the beach and under fire and there was the possibility that those planes and troops there would have come out and attacked them.



Q It would have taken some time to get the troops out.

MR. NESSEN: That was the purpose of the raid and the purpose remained.

Q Ron, was there any consideration to stopping any part of the activity that had not yet commenced, like the attack on the air base, once the radio message had been received?

MR. NESSEN: Received in its summarized translated form. Well, as you know, our response to the message was that we will stop instantly, as soon as you release the crew. The word came at 11:15 that the crew had been released and at 11:16, the order went out to stop the operation.

Q Was there any consideration before then? For example, the attack on the air base?

MR. NESSEN: I just answered over here that the reason for that attack remained regardless of what the message said.

Q Ron, did nobody -- not Marines, Navy or --

MR. NESSEN: No, Adam. Seriously, I note an expression that you are not satisfied with the answer.

Q Was there any consideration? You are telling me they decided not to -- you are saying it could not be done.

MR. NESSEN: I am saying that the purpose for the attack on the mainland remained after the message came and therefore, the attack was made.

Q No, that does not answer my question.

MR. NESSEN: Well, okay.

Q My question is, did they consider calling it off in light of the radio broadcast?



MR. NESSEN: The raid at 10:57?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: The purpose for the raid remained despite the radio message.

Q Ron, did the Navy, Marines or any other U.S. personnel -- more than one or just one, anybody -- go aboard the freighter when they started out with the guys to debrief them on their way to wherever they are going? I can't believe anybody is not on there giving them some information.

MR. NESSEN: If they are, certainly it has not gotten back here to clear up some of these questions because they are not cleared up at the Pentagon.

Q Ron, I have a related question, if I may. It is a slightly different subject but related.

MR. NESSEN: How did I get into a briefing? How did I get into a briefing?

I must say, I think this is the silliest exercise we have done in a long time.

Q Ron, if I could ask this, please?

MR. NESSEN: It is silly. I mean, the President's National Security Adviser --

MORE



Q Ron, just one question, and it has to do with this morning's Post, the following two-sentence statement: "As of this writing, the President has been too concerned with the logistics of zapping Cambodia to issue the statement about Human Kindness Day, at which more than 300 whites were beaten, mugged or robbed by youthful black hooligans outside Jerry Ford's White House back door. Welcome, America, to Washington and the Bicentennial, and be sure to bring your kids."

That is the Washington Post.

MR. NESSEN: The Washington Post wrote that?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: In its own name?

Q Yes.

Concerning such Federally funded events as Human Kindness Day, will the White House continue saying nothing or will it either guarantee Bicentennial visitors protection or else warn them to stay home?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have an answer for you.

Q Ron, could you get an answer to this?

MR. NESSEN: I doubt it.

Q Okay.

Q Ron, did the President order the military attacks with any confidence that the attacks would not lead the Cambodians to kill the crew?

MR. NESSEN: I know Henry can answer all these questions.

Q Could you try?

MR. NESSEN: As I say, there are risks in every military operation, but the PUEBLO episode was in people's minds here during the planning for this, and I think you are all familiar with the scenario of the PUEBLO case. It was felt that too much of a delay could have led to the kind of solution that occurred in the PUEBLO case.



Q Which was?

MR. NESSEN: That the people would be out of your reach if you waited too long.

Q That does not answer the question. What about the possibility that the men might have been killed by the Cambodians?

MR. NESSEN: There was also an impression in people's minds that the new Cambodian authorities' actions toward their own people since the takeover led people here to feel that if you waited too long, that the lives of the crew might be endangered, so it was considered better to -- there had been no indication that the crew had been harmed and it was felt that it would be better to go and get them after giving two and a half days for diplomatic efforts to succeed.

Q What actions have the Cambodians reported?

MR. NESSEN: Oh, the reports of executions and the evacuation of their capital and general attitude toward their people.

Q Did public opinion enter into or Congressional opinion enter into the President's decision in any way?

MR. NESSEN: The President's decision was based 100 percent and entirely on a single consideration, and that was getting the crew back and the ship back.

Q Was there any order issued to use minimal force to obtain that objective?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q The answer is yes?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Will this extend to other ships, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: Call Henry and tell him he does not need to brief. I have handled everything.



Q Ron, is this a policy that will extend to other ships in that area, or what?

MR. NESSEN: Which policy?

Q Suppose a sister ship is seized?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think I will deal with hypotheticals.

Q What is the policy of the Government, Ron? Is that a hypothetical that they will defend ships from being seized on the high seas or not?

MR. NESSEN: I just think it is hypothetical. No other ship has been seized, Les.



Q Ron, don't you feel there should have been more warning to other vessels in view of the fact that those other three ships were shot at or detained?

MR. NESSEN: The President has requested a report on the sequence of events in the past -- I guess it must add up to about two weeks now -- in terms of other incidents in the area and reports of those incidents and the distribution of those reports, and so forth?

Q Might we expect him to go public this week at some point?

MR. NESSEN: I think we have to wait for the information to be pulled together.

Q Where?

MR. NESSEN: From the various authorities who are involved.

Q What does this report cover?

MR. NESSEN: The previous two weeks and these other episodes involving the Korean ship and the Panamanian ship.

Q Can we assume this was because of his happiness over the lack of communication?

MR. NESSEN: I would not assume that. I think he just wants to know the facts of the case.

Q Do you know who in the Government is responsible for notifying mariners that there might be a danger there?

MR. NESSEN: I know that the warning is issued by this organization at the Defense Department.

Q The Army Map Service?

MR. NESSEN: I think it is called the Defense Mapping Agency.

Q No.

MR. NESSEN: We are on our third go-around now. Maybe I can just read the transcript.



Q You mean the warning for vessels to stay away was issued by the Army Map Service.

MR. NESSEN: Defense Mapping Agency.

Q And they warned people to stay away?

MR. NESSEN: That is right.

Q Who receives these reports? That is Commander-in-Chief, Pacific?

MR. NESSEN: Sarah, I think the Pentagon needs to give you that kind of detail. I just don't have it here.

Q That is what they gave me.

MR. NESSEN: Okay. Well, then, why do you ask?

Q Because it does not seem to be the same as Defense Mapping Service.

Q Thank you.

MR. NESSEN: You don't have to say "thank you," because we are not having a briefing today, Helen.

I came in to talk about resumption of aid to Turkey.

Q Ron, since the record is being made now --

Q Did anything come out or will that come out of the Kissinger briefing?

MR. NESSEN: I think he can be asked about that. It is up to Congress.

Q Would you take a question on another subject?

MR. NESSEN: Sure.



Q Ron, are you any clearer now on what was going on when those gunboats were sunk? Yesterday you told us that it was not clear whether they were coming to the area.

MR. NESSEN: It is not clear to me, but it may be clear to the Pentagon.

Q This was the nicest non-briefing this week.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END

(AT 11:55 A.M. EDT)



Page 1
November 3, 1975

EXCERPTS FROM INFORMATION
GIVEN BY RON NESSEN

11:15 A.M. EST

MR. NESSEN: I don't know how I can answer the question.

Q But decisions were made, and was he apprised of the decisions?

MR. NESSEN: Ted, since nothing has been announced, I don't know how I can answer the question.

Q Could you tell us if he had been informed of the decisions which have not been announced or that he was not informed?

MR. NESSEN: I think I will leave that alone until the subject is announced.

Q Has the President changed his mind on his ideas for a Vice Presidential candidate in the convention time?

MR. NESSEN: Why don't you ask him tonight, Dick? You have the first question. You are sure to get your question in.

Q Does the President still intend to run for President?

MR. NESSEN: Um-hum.

Q What?

MR. NESSEN: A-huh. I don't know how to spell that. Exclamation point.

Q H-u-h.

MR. NESSEN: A-huh, exclamation point.

Q Um-hum.

Q Your first one was --

MORE



MR. NESSEN: You bet your life he does. (Laughter)

Q You bet your life.

MR. NESSEN: I would be astounded and dumb-founded and totally taken aback.

Q But you are already leaning back.

Q Ron, would you still be astounded and dumb-founded and totally taken aback if there were some massive changes at PFC?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q You said you would be very surprised if -- do you still stand by that?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Massive changes in what, did you say?

MR. NESSEN: Dumb-struck was my --

Q Dumb-struck.

MR. NESSEN: I was asked whether I would be surprised if Bo Callaway left and I said I certainly would be dumb-struck, and I still would be. Or maybe it was dumb-founded.

Q Ron, it has been said by some of the people who worked in the organization with Mr. Callaway that Mr. Packard was very difficult to work with --

MR. NESSEN: You know, if you want to make an assessment of the PFC you ought to go over there and make one because people who had, I think, are quite surprised at how well it is coming along.

Q Is the President disappointed at Rockefeller's decision?

MR. NESSEN: You can get that tonight, Phil,

Q Let me ask, since I know we will ask the President, how about the White House Staff people, particularly the political people? Are they disappointed or are they relieved?



MR. NESSEN: I have not had a chance to talk with them.

Q Are they intact?

MR. NESSEN: Intact?

Q Who is the President seeing today? Does he have Congressional leaders down or staff meetings, or what is going on?

MR. NESSEN: He has had staff meetings all morning.

Q Staff meetings all morning?

Q And is he seeing anyone at all today outside of the staff?

MR. NESSEN: So far he has not.

Q Is he going to see Congressional people later in the day, Ron, do you know?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I don't have anything to add to his schedule now.

Q Ron, is there any plan for the President to see the Vice President?

MR. NESSEN: He saw him at 10:30 this morning.

Q Who was this, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: The President and the Vice President met at 10:30 this morning.

Q Was that letter hand-delivered by the Vice President?

MR. NESSEN: It was.

Q Is that what happened at 10:30 this morning -- the Vice President brought that letter in?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Ron, is it possible to go over whom the President on Friday and Saturday before he went to Florida, name-by-name?

MORE



MR. NESSEN: I have to get the logs out and look at them.

Q Could we? That would be very helpful.

Q Why don't you send someone now and bring that back here so you would have it right while you were sitting here? It would be easy.

MR. NESSEN: Maybe I want to keep some of it secret.

Q Ron, how long did Rockefeller and the President meet?

MR. NESSEN: About 20 minutes.

Q Was anybody else present?

Q Ron, was the President forewarned of this before he came over?

MR. NESSEN: They discussed -- the Vice President has discussed his desire to do this over the past couple of days.

Q Was anything else at the meeting or was it just --

MR. NESSEN: I was in on the latter part of the meeting.

Q Ron, you said that the President and the Vice President have a complete understanding. Can you tell us a complete understanding about what?

MR. NESSEN: Of what the Vice President states in his letter.

Q Is this because of New York City?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I am aware of. This is at the Vice President's initiative. You ought to ask the Vice President for his reasons.

Q Well, did the Vice President give the President, in his private conference, any specific reasons which would amplify his not running?

MORE



MR. NESSEN: He said that the letter spoke for itself, and the President agreed that the letter speaks for itself.

Q I am sorry.

MR. NESSEN: The President and the Vice President have a complete understanding about the letter and they both agree that it speaks for itself.

Q Well, that does not give much of a reason.

Q Does it pave the way for a right wing candidate, for the Vice President now to say, please, we want Reagan?

MR. NESSEN: I think you have to ask the President that

Q Has the President been in touch with Ronald Reagan?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I am aware of.

Q Well, how would you describe the mood of this morning's meeting? Cordial?

MR. NESSEN: Very cordial.

Q Tense?

MR. NESSEN: Extremely cordial.

Q And tense.

Q Can you tell us anything of what the President said since you were in the room?

MR. NESSEN: I would rather let the President speak for himself on that, I think.

Q Were there just the three of you in there?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q There is a great similarity to the statement that you are making here and the one that Hugh Morrow is making. Have you coordinated what was going to be said between the two offices?

MORE



MR. NESSEN: The letter was written and released in the Vice President's office and after the meeting the Vice President talked to Hugh Morrow to eliminate the noon release time, and then I got on the phone and asked for a copy of the letter and that was the full extent of the conversation.

Q That means you didn't know about it prior to the meeting?

MR. NESSEN: I knew that the Vice President had discussed this with the President over the past couple of days before the meeting.

Q You really didn't know that he was going to say he would not be his running mate?

MR. NESSEN: I knew that he had discussed this with the President.

Q Well, did the Vice President come over and see the President Sunday morning before he went to Florida?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q You say the past couple of days?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, going back into last week.

Q Will the President have a statement to make at tonight's news conference?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, at the beginning he will.

Q Ron, what about the timing of this, having these events back-to-back? Have you thought about that at all?

MR. NESSEN: No. You know, I don't know that there is any connection.

Q Ron, can you say when the President made up his mind that he would accept the Vice President's wishes in this matter?

MR. NESSEN: I don't see that there is a question of acceptance involved here, Russ.

MORE



Q Would he not at some point, if he didn't want the Vice President to withdraw, would he not try to convince him otherwise or did that in fact ever happen?

MR. NESSEN: I think that is something you have to ask the President about.

Q Because he has been saying all along how much he liked him and how much he wanted him and all that.

MR. NESSEN: He does and still expressed those feelings this morning.

Q Did Kissinger have his morning hour with the President?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, he did.

Q Is Kissinger still in the Administration?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, I think the President has said that.

Q Has the White House ever thought of initiating any action to have Kissinger have some arrangement made whereby Kissinger could become President by Constitutional amendment or something?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I never heard of that before.

Q No, Sarah is talking about line of succession, not a resignation of the President.

Q I am talking about the birth problem.

MR. NESSEN: Oh, I see. No, I have not heard anything about that.

Q Has he talked to Packard in the last few days since Packard's resignation?

MR. NESSEN: Has he? I would have to check the logs and see. I am not aware of it coming in. I don't think so.

Q Is the President worried about the image here that the whole Government is in chaos?

MORE



MR. NESSEN: It has been a long time since I have seen the President in such a good mood.

Q Yes, but, Ron, it is really a long, long time to wait until tonight for all this news.

MR. NESSEN: Oh, go out and have a long lunch. Get your hair done and the time will pass quickly that way. Take in a good movie.

Q Ron, if the President is in such a good mood, does that mean he plans to resign tonight? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: Then you would be in a good mood.

Q Why is he in such a good mood with all of this happening?

MR. NESSEN: With all what happening?

Q The Vice President has just said that he does not want to be on the ticket. We have had all of these reports of firings.

MR. NESSEN: I think you will have a chance to say, "Mr. President, your press secretary told us today you were in a very good mood. Why is that?"

Q Ron, that is a very strange remark there, you must admit.

Q It is like the old slogan, you know, maybe he does not understand the situation.

Q You mean he is happy because he got rid of Schlesinger at last?

MORE



Q There is a serious question here which maybe you can't answer but the programs are comparing this reported story to the Saturday Night Massacre and various other things. I would not think that would be calculated to put any President in a good mood.

Q Maybe he is having to keep from crying.

Q Why do you think he is in such a good mood?

MR. NESSEN: I think he will be able to explain himself tonight better.

Q Do you have any more surprises?

Q Let me ask it bluntly. Is he relieved about -- Ron, we all know there is a Rockefeller problem in the nomination. Is he relieved that that has been removed?

MR. NESSEN: When I say he is in a good mood, I didn't refer to his reaction to the Vice President's letter.

Q Is he going to announce that he will not be a candidate for election in 1976?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Ron, what did you refer to when you talked about him being in a good mood?

MR. NESSEN: Just that he is in a good mood.

Q Well, you said the best mood you have ever seen him in.

MR. NESSEN: See, even Helen has noticed that and she is a veteran President-watcher. (Laughter)

That is unrelated.

MORE



Q Ron, I can't wait. Have you been asked about the delay of the departure of the advance trip to China and is there any significance in that?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that there is a delay because there was never any fixed time.

Q They were supposed to leave today, weren't they?

MR. NESSEN: Tentatively sometime this week, but no particular time.

Q They were on the plane, they didn't go.

Q The trip was aborted.

MR. NESSEN: I saw Red Cavaney at the scheduling meeting this morning and he didn't indicate --

Q Who has the President met with today, one-by-one?

MR. NESSEN: I have to look at the schedule.

Q Could we do that?

Q Let's do that.

MR. NESSEN: I think I can retrace it. He saw Kissinger and Marsh and Hartmann and Nessen and Friedersdorf and Cheney and --

Q Give us the context of those meetings.

MR. NESSEN: They are the morning staff meetings.

Q I understand that but he met with Kissinger privately for an hour, right?

MR. NESSEN: As always.

MORE



Q Right, and then he met with Friedersdorf and the rest of you as a group.

MR. NESSEN: Part of the time.

Q And who was in that group?

MR. NESSEN: Which group?

Q The group that he met with after the Kissinger meeting.

MR. NESSEN: Well, I don't know what the exact timetable was but it is the normal morning schedule of the staff meetings.

Q What was the time?

MR. NESSEN: I have to look at the schedule to get the times.

Q What time is the bipartisan leadership meeting or Republican Congressional meeting?

MR. NESSEN: We have not announced that yet.

Q Is there any today?

MR. NESSEN: We have not announced any.

Q Well, is there going to be one today?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have any additions to the schedule as it is announced now.

Q Ron, has the President --

MR. NESSEN: We are starting around the whole set of questions the second time.

Frank has a new one. No, that was answered earlier.

MORE



Q Is the President terribly concerned --

Q Their conversations, does that preclude Rockefeller from challenging the President for the nomination?

MR. NESSEN: Oh, my goodness. I didn't get the feeling that anything like that would happen, but you would have to ask the Vice President.

Q Does it leave the path open for Packard to become Secretary of Defense?

MR. NESSEN: Does what leave the path open?

Q The leaving of Schlesinger.

MR. NESSEN: We have not announced any leaving of Schlesinger.

Q Schlesinger said he was going, that was enough.

MR. NESSEN: 7:30 will come too fast, you will be surprised how the afternoon will pass.

Q Will the announcement deal with personnel, the President's opening remarks?

MR. NESSEN: I think that is a good guess on your part, Ted.

Q Is the President very concerned about the lack of competent people with experience to head the intelligence community and with competent people to head the Department of Defense.

MR. NESSEN: Is there?

Q There certainly seems to be because some of the contenders that are being mentioned for this job don't seem to have any experience like Rumsfeld and Bush. They don't have any experience for the jobs.

MORE



MR. NESSEN: Well, I will let him speak for himself.

Q Ron, could you comment on the choice of locations for tonight's news conference?

MR. NESSEN: It was my suggestion because I anticipated a somewhat larger crowd than usual and it holds more people.

Q Ron, is there any shifting of the anticipated date of the trip to Peking to begin?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q When is the date, Ron, of that trip?

MR. NESSEN: Whatever Henry said the other day.

Q Around the 28th of November.

MR. NESSEN: To the first or so, I think he said.

Q Is the President pleased with the way Callaway has that office organized over there? Is he aware of the complaints that some of them have made about Mrs. Austin?

MR. NESSEN: Have you gone over and checked your office? You could be surprised.

Q Yes, I have gone over to the office. What would I be surprised about, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: You would be surprised at how well organized it is.

All right. I think we have gone through all the questions.

Q Ron, will you check those schedules, please?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

END

