

The original documents are located in Box 20, folder “President - Press Conferences: Transcripts (3)” of the Ron Nessen Papers at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

Copyright Notice

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Ron Nessen donated to the United States of America his copyrights in all of his unpublished writings in National Archives collections. Works prepared by U.S. Government employees as part of their official duties are in the public domain. The copyrights to materials written by other individuals or organizations are presumed to remain with them. If you think any of the information displayed in the PDF is subject to a valid copyright claim, please contact the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

#10
3/6/75

PRESS CONFERENCE NO. 10

of the
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

7:31 P.M. EDT
March 6, 1975
Thursday

In Room 450
The Old Executive Office
Building
Washington, D.C.

THE PRESIDENT: Good evening. Will you please sit down.

Before we start the questions tonight, I would like to make a statement on the subject of assistance to Cambodia and to Vietnam. There are three issues -- the first, the future of the people who live there.

It is a concern that is humanitarian -- food for those who hunger and medical supplies for the men and women and children who are suffering the ravages of war. We seek to stop the bloodshed and end the horror and tragedy that we see on television as rockets are fired wantonly into Phnom Penh.

I would like to be able to say that the killing would cease if we were to stop our aid, but that is not the case. The record shows in both Vietnam and in Cambodia that Communist takeover of an area does not bring an end to violence, but on the contrary subjects the innocent to new horrors.

We cannot meet humanitarian needs unless we provide some military assistance. Only through a combination of humanitarian endeavors and military aid do we have a chance to stop the fighting in that country in such a way as to end the bloodshed.

The second issue is whether the problems of Indochina will be settled by conquest or by negotiation.

Both the governments of Cambodia and the United States have made vigorous and continued efforts over the last few years to bring about a cease-fire and a political settlement.

MORE

THE PRESIDENT: The Cambodian government declared a unilateral ceasefire and called for negotiations immediately after the Peace Accords of January 1973. It has since repeatedly expressed its willingness to be flexible in seeking a negotiated end to the conflict. Its leaders have made clear that they are willing to do whatever they can do to bring peace to the country.

The United States has backed these peace efforts. Yesterday, we made public an outline of our unceasing efforts over the years, including six separate initiatives since I became President.

Let me assure you we will support any negotiations and accept any outcome that the parties themselves will agree to. As far as the United States is concerned, the personalities involved will not, themselves, constitute obstacles of any kind to a settlement.

Yet all of our efforts have been rebuffed. Peace in Cambodia has not been prevented by our failure to offer reasonable solutions. The aggressor believes it can win its objectives on the battlefield. This belief will be encouraged if we cut off assistance to our friends.

We want an end to the killing and a negotiated settlement, but there is no hope of success unless the Congress acts quickly to provide the necessary means for Cambodia to survive.

If we abandon our allies, we will be saying to all the world that war pays. Aggression will not stop, rather it will increase. In Cambodia, the aggressors will have shown that if negotiations are resisted, the United States will weary, abandon its friends and force will prevail.

The third issue is the reliability of the United States. If we cease to help our friends in Indochina, we will have violated their trust that we would help them with arms, with food, and with supplies so long as they remain determined to fight for their own freedom. We will have been false to ourselves, to our word and to our friends. No one should think for a moment that we can walk away from that without a deep sense of shame.

This is not a question of involvement or re-involvement in Indochina. We have ended our involvement. All American forces have come home. They will not go back.

MORE

Time is short. There are two things the United States can do to effect the outcome. For my part, I will continue to seek a negotiated settlement. I ask the Congress to do its part by providing the assistance required to make such a settlement possible.

Time is running out.

Mr. Cormier.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, you wound up saying "time is running out in Cambodia." Can you give us any assurance that even if the aid is voted it will get there in time? Is it stockpiled and ready to roll or what is the situation?

THE PRESIDENT: If we don't give the aid, there is no hope. If we do get the necessary legislation from the Congress and it comes quickly -- I would say within the next ten days or two weeks -- it will be possible to get the necessary aid to Cambodia, both economic assistance, humanitarian assistance and military assistance. I believe there is a hope that we can help our friends to continue long enough to get into the wet season when there will be an opportunity for the kind of negotiation which I think offers the best hope for a peace in Cambodia.

QUESTION: Mr. President, would you tell us what Director Colby has told you of any CIA connection with the assassination of foreign leaders?

THE PRESIDENT: I am not in a position to give you any factual account. I have had a full report from Mr. Colby on the operations that have been alluded to in the news media in the last week or so, really involving such actions that might have taken place beginning back in the 1960s.

I don't think it is appropriate for me at this time to go any further. We do have an investigation of the CIA, of our intelligence agencies, by the Congress, both overt and covert, going back from the inception of the CIA. And, of course, we do have the Rockefeller Commission going into any CIA activities in the domestic front.

But for me to comment beyond that, I think, would be inappropriate at this time.

QUESTION: Mr. President, you say there would be a deep sense of shame in the country if Cambodia should fall. If that would be the case, sir, can you explain why there seems to be such a broad feeling of apathy in the country, and also in the Congress, toward providing any more aid for either Cambodia or South Vietnam.

THE PRESIDENT: I believe there is a growing concern which has been accentuated since we have seen the horror stories on television in recent weeks. The wanton use of rockets in the city of Phnom Penh, the children lying stricken on the streets and people under great stress and strain, bloody scenes of the worse kind.

MORE

I think this kind of depicting of a tragedy there has aroused American concern, and I think it is a growing concern as the prospect of tragedy of this kind becomes even more evident.

So, I have noticed in the last week in the United States Congress, in a bipartisan way, a great deal more interest in trying to find an answer. And yesterday I spent an hour-plus with Members of Congress who came back from a trip to Cambodia and South Vietnam and they saw first-hand the kind of killing, the kind of bloodshed, and it had a severe impact on these Members of Congress, some of whom have been very, very strongly opposed to our involvement in the past in Vietnam.

And I think their impact will be significant in the Congress as well as in the country.

Mr. Lisagor?

QUESTION: Mr. President, the question is raised by many critics of our policy in Southeast Asia as to why we can conduct a policy of detente with the two Communist superpowers in the world and could not follow a policy of detente should Cambodia and South Vietnam go Communist.

Could you explain that to us?

THE PRESIDENT: I think you have to understand the differences that we have with China -- the People's Republic of China -- and with the Soviet Union. We do not accept their ideology. We do not accept their philosophy. On the other hand, we have to recognize that both countries have great power bases in the world, not only in population but in the regions in which they exist.

We do not expect to recognize or to believe in their philosophies, but it is important for us, the United States, to try and remove any of the obstacles that keep us from working together to solve some of the problems that exist throughout the world, including Indochina.

The Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China have supplied and are supplying military assistance to South Vietnam and Cambodia. We have to work with them to try and get an answer in that part of the world, but at the same time, I think that effort can be increased and the prospects improved if we continue the detente between ourselves and both of those powers.

QUESTION: Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: Tom?

QUESTION: Mr. President, putting it bluntly, wouldn't we just be continuing a blood bath that already exists in Cambodia if we voted the \$222 million in assistance?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think so, because the prospects are that with the kind of military assistance and economic and humanitarian aid we are proposing, the government forces hopefully can hold out. If we do not, the prospects are almost certain that Phnom Penh will be overrun; and we know from previous experiences that the overrunning of a community or an area results in the murder and the bloodshed that comes when they pick up and sort out the people who were the school teachers, the leaders, the government officials.

This was told very dramatically to me yesterday by several Members of the Congress who were there and talked to some of the people who were in some of these communities or villages that were overrun.

MORE

It is an unbelievable horror story. If we can hold out -- and I think the prospects are encouraging -- then I think we will avoid that kind of massacre and innocent murdering of people who really do not deserve that kind of treatment.

QUESTION: If I may follow up, as I understand it, the Administration's point is that if we vote the aid that we will have the possibility of a negotiated settlement, not just the avoidance of a bloodbath. Is that correct?

THE PRESIDENT: That is correct, sir.

QUESTION: And yet, just yesterday, as you indicated in your statement, the State Department listed at least six unsuccessful efforts to negotiate an end to the war in Cambodia, dating to the summer of 1973, when American bombing stopped there.

The Cambodian government was certainly stronger then than it would be with just conceivably another \$220 million.

THE PRESIDENT: I think if you look at that long list of bonafide, legitimate negotiated efforts, the best prospects came when the enemy felt that it would be better off to negotiate than to fight.

If we can strengthen the government forces now and get into the wet season, then I believe the opportunity to negotiate will be infinitely better, certainly better than if the government forces are routed and the rebels -- the Khmer Rouge -- take over and do what they have done in other communities where they have had this kind of opportunity.

QUESTION: Mr. President, you said, sir, that if the funds are provided that hopefully they can hold out. How long are you talking about? How long can they hold out? In other words, how long do you feel this aid will be necessary to continue?

THE PRESIDENT: This aid that we have requested on an emergency basis from the Congress is anticipated to provide the necessary humanitarian effort and the necessary military effort to get them through the dry season, which ends roughly the latter part of June or the first of July.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, if I might, I am sure you have seen news accounts to the effect that the conservatives -- especially within your own party -- are considering starting a third party in 1976, and they are bolting.

I understand yesterday that a group of conservative Republican Senators met with you, and afterwards they came out and talked with reporters at the White House and told us they were unhappy with your policies and they thought you were going too far to the left. In fact, they said they wanted you to know that you could no longer take the right wing of your party for granted.

That being the case, sir, do you intend to go out and court conservative Republican support to woo them back for 1976, and do you think anything short of dropping Nelson Rockefeller from the ticket will do that?

THE PRESIDENT: Let me say the meeting that I had with about 11 very fine Republican Members of the United States Senate was a very, very frank discussion, and I think very constructive.

Some of them indicated that in certain areas they had disagreements with me. In other areas, they indicated a strong support for the position that I have taken on various issues.

It is my feeling that the Republican Party has to be a broad-based, wide spectrum party if it is going to be a viable force in the political situation in the United States.

I happen to believe that Nelson Rockefeller is doing a very fine job as Vice President, and if we can broaden the base of the Republican Party, I think we have an excellent chance to prevail in 1976.

My maximum effort will be in getting all elements of the Republican Party on the team, and I think in the final analysis, we will.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, as a follow up, can you really broaden that base without losing the right wing of your party?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, I think we can.

In 1968 and 1972, that was achieved and we were successful. I think it can be done in 1976.

QUESTION: On Rule 22, when Mr. Rockefeller ruled, had you approved what he was doing beforehand? Do you agree with the ruling and do you agree with the assertion of some of the Senators you met with that it is going to make it much harder for your program to get by in the Senate with three-fifths rather than two-thirds?

THE PRESIDENT: I think we have to understand that the Vice-President occupies the position as presiding officer of the United States Senate under the Constitution. He has a constitutional responsibility in that regard.

I am in the Executive Branch of the Government. He, in that part of his responsibility, is in the Legislative Branch. He has the obligation under the Constitution to make a ruling, to preside in the United States Senate.

I think it is inappropriate or inappropriate, I should say, for me to tell him, as a member of the Legislative Branch in that capacity how he should rule. And therefore, I did not. I have had a number of discussions with the Vice-President as to my personal philosophy concerning the United States Senate. I happen to believe that the United States Senate ought to be a somewhat different legislative body than the House of Representatives, whereby a 51 percent vote, a majority can prevail.

But our founding fathers very wisely thought that the Senate ought to be a little different and they provided that the Senate should have other rules, other parliamentary procedures including the requirement of more than 51 percent to conduct its business under certain circumstances.

I expressed those views to the Vice-President, but I went no further, and I do not think it would have been appropriate for me to go any further.

QUESTION: To follow that question up, do you think it is going to be harder for you to get your programs through the Congress with this prospective change in the filibuster rule?

MORE

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think it will be any more difficult to get the programs through. It might be more difficult in other ways but I do not think it will be more difficult to get the programs through.

QUESTION: Mr. President, some people who have visited former President Nixon in recent months have quoted him as saying he would like to, after his illness is over, become a major figure in the Republican Party again.

Do you foresee any time in the future when it would be beneficial for the Republican Party to have him re-emerge as a leader?

THE PRESIDENT: I think any comment that I make in that regard is inappropriate at the present time. Mr. Nixon is still recovering from a very serious illness and for me to speculate down the road, I think, is unwise at this time.

QUESTION: Mr. President, Secretary Simon said the other day that he thought the jobless rate, unemployment rate, could rise to as much as nine percent before things turned around.

Now, in view of this, would you be willing to go for a larger tax deduction? Would you be willing to raise it, say, \$10 billion or some other figure?

THE PRESIDENT: In the first place, I have doubts that it will go to nine percent. It might, but without commenting on whether it will or won't, if there is a need for a greater stimulant, I would certainly go for a greater tax reduction than for increased spending. I think that the tax reduction route is a lot more desirable than just increasing spending on some of these categorical programs or other programs that really do not help the individual as much as a tax reduction which would put money back in his pocket.

I believe that the program we have, as it appears to be moving through the Congress, is at this stage of the game moving in the right direction. The big problem is not the size of the tax reduction, but the slowness with which the Congress is acting on it and the failure of the Congress thus far to limit the tax reduction to something that can be enacted into law quickly.

What we need is speed and a figure of \$16 billion to \$19 billion in tax reduction. If we delay -- and I hope it is not -- then delay is more of a problem than the size.

MORE

QUESTION: Sir, in the bill that came out of the House you really got a different kind of character to that bill than the one you proposed. There is a greater percentage going to lower income groups and yours would go more to middle and higher income groups.

Would you veto a bill if it got to your desk in the form it came from the House or how would you feel about the House bill?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think it is wise for me to speculate on what I would do with the House bill. It does have to go through the Senate committee; it does have to go through the Senate, itself; and then it has to go to conference and come down to me.

For me to speculate at this stage, I think, is very unwise.

I would like to add this, however: I agree with Secretary of the Treasury Simon, who testified yesterday or the day before, that there ought to be a larger increase for the middle income taxpayer. I think the House version of the bill was much too limited. It didn't give a sufficiently large rebate or tax reduction to the middle income taxpayers and those people, I think, deserve a break because in recent years, they have gotten a heavier and heavier burden imposed on them.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I am wondering if you agree, sir, with Leon Jaworski who feels that the time has now come for former President Nixon to tell the truth about Watergate?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think it is appropriate for me to give any advice to Mr. Nixon on that matter at this time. A fairly comprehensive story has been told in the impeachment hearings in the House, in the testimony of many, many people in the court here in the District of Columbia.

I think the proper place for any further discussion in this regard is in the court system of the United States.

QUESTION: What effect do you think last night's massacre in Tel Aviv will have to current Kissinger negotiations, and what advice would you give to Israel to counteract such terrorist attacks?

THE PRESIDENT: Let me answer the last first. I don't think it is appropriate for me to give any advice to Israel, or any other nation, as to what they should do in circumstances like that. I hope that the very ill-advised action -- the terrorist action -- in Israel or in Tel Aviv last night was absolutely unwarranted under any circumstances. I condemn it because I think it is not only inhumane but it is the wrong way to try and resolve the difficult problems in the Middle East.

I would hope that that terrorist activity would not, under any circumstances, destroy the prospects or the possibilities for further peace accomplishments in the Middle East.

QUESTION: Mr. President, to follow up on that, have you considered asking Israel to become part of NATO?

THE PRESIDENT: I have not.

QUESTION: Mr. President, you sounded encouraged about the prospect for Cambodian aid. Can you give us an estimate of what you think the chances are now of it being passed?

THE PRESIDENT: They certainly are better than they were. I had a meeting this morning with Senator Sparkman and Senator Hubert Humphrey and Senator Clifford Case. They want to help. They say the prospects are 50-50. But if they are that, I think we ought to try and make the effort because I think the stakes are very, very high when you involve the innocent people who are being killed in Cambodia.

QUESTION: A follow-up. If the Congress does not provide the aid and the Lon Nol government should fall, would the country be in for any recrimination from this Administration? Would we have another "who lost China" debate, for example?

THE PRESIDENT: I first would hope we get the aid and the government is able to negotiate a settlement. I do not think -- at least from my point of view -- that I would go around the country pointing my finger at anybody.

I think the facts would speak for themselves.

QUESTION: Mr. President, from some of the remarks the Senators who met with you today made, they did not indicate they were quite in as much agreement as you indicated, but Senator Humphrey, for one, asked as part of a negotiated settlement that you spoke of if you would be willing to seek the orderly resignation of Lon Nol.

THE PRESIDENT: I do not believe it is the proper role of this government to ask the head of another state to resign. I said in my opening statement that we believe that the settlement ought to be undertaken and it is not one that revolves around any one individual. And I would hope that some formula, some individuals, on both sides, could sit down and negotiate a settlement to stop the bloodshed.

MORE

QUESTION: A follow-up on that. Are you saying that the United States will support any government, no matter how weak or corrupt, in a situation like this?

THE PRESIDENT: I am not saying we would support any government. I am saying that we would support any government that we can see coming out of the present situation or the negotiated settlement.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, yesterday on unemployment you requested \$1.6 billion for public service jobs to run through mid-1976. Now, your advisers, meantime, keep predicting that the problem will improve in mid-1975, just a month or two from now.

How do you reconcile those two positions?

THE PRESIDENT: The requested additional manpower training funds that I requested will fully fund the authorized amount that was approved by the Congress last year. We believe that this amount is needed to take care of any potential contingencies.

We think there will be an improvement toward the end of this year, and certainly in the beginning of next year, on the unemployment. On the other hand, we think it is wise at this time to be prepared for any adverse developments.

QUESTION: You mentioned earlier it might go to 9. Are you revising upward the figure from 8.5?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I think I said I was not going to agree to any figure, but I did say that if we had any such development, the better way to solve it would be for a further tax cut rather than some of these additional spending programs.

The most important thing was to get the Congress to act affirmatively, quickly, on the tax bill. I am very disturbed with their lack of affirmative action as quickly as I think it should come.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, out of the OPEC summit meeting in Algiers today came a declaration that oil prices should be pegged to inflation and the prices they have to pay for the products they buy.

Do you think this kind of inflation indexing system is fair?

THE PRESIDENT: We are trying to organize the consuming nations, and we have been quite successful. I believe that once that organization has been put together--and it is well along--that we should sit down and negotiate any matters with the producing nations.

I personally have many reservations about the suggestion that has been made by the OPEC organization. I think the best way for us to answer that problem is to be organized and to negotiate rather than to speculate in advance.

QUESTION: Mr. President, things have been sort of piling up since you announced your \$52 billion prospective deficit. You have now postponed your tax proposal for March and April. You have put out \$2 billion for highways, another \$2 billion for relief jobs, and now the Congress has refused to put a ceiling on food stamps.

My question is this: Just how high do you think this \$52 billion deficit is going to go, and where do you think it is at this point?

THE PRESIDENT: The \$52 billion deficit was too high, in my judgment. We did our best to keep it down, and the Congress so far has added substantially to it by not approving the recommended rescissions and deferrals that I proposed.

I think I recommended in one group about a \$950 million rescission, or deferral, and Congress only approved about \$110 or \$120 million of that. They have, in addition, as you indicated, added about \$650 million in additional food stamp costs. I am disturbed.

I will continue to work trying to convince the Congress that a deficit of \$52 billion is too much, and anything above that is very, very bad. If they think the way to stimulate the economy is to blow the Federal budget, I think they are wrong.

I think the better procedure, if we need any additional stimulant, is through a tax cut.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much.

END (AT 8:02 P.M. EDT)

11
3/17/76

PRESS CONFERENCE NO. 11

of the

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

6:03 P.M. EST
March 17, 1975
Monday

In the Auditorium
At the Center for Continuing
Education
South Bend, Indiana

THE PRESIDENT: Good afternoon.

It has been a great and wonderful day here in South Bend. I thank everybody for it, and I am looking forward to this news conference.

Mr. Jack Colwell.

QUESTION: You and Father Hesburgh today had some very kind things to say about one another, and you also had an opportunity to speak with him privately. Do you have any plans for any additional appointments or duties for Father Hesburgh in your Administration?

THE PRESIDENT: Father Hesburgh has done a superb job on the Clemency Board, which is a very time-consuming responsibility. The Clemency Board had a great upsurge in applicants.

I think Father Hesburgh and the others on the Clemency Board are going to be pretty busy in the months ahead. But, let me assure you and others that someone who has as much talent and tremendous civic interest, once that job is over, I think we can use someone like Father Hesburgh in many more responsibilities.

QUESTION: Mr. President, you have said the question of personalities is really not vital to a settlement in Cambodia. My question is, is the survival of a non-Communist government in Cambodia vital to the U.S. security in Southeast Asia?

THE PRESIDENT: Miss Thomas, I think it is. I cannot help but notice that since the military situation in Cambodia has become very serious, and since the North Vietnamese have apparently launched a very substantial additional military effort against South Vietnam, against the Paris peace accords, there has been, as I understand it, in Thailand -- according to the news announcements this morning -- a potential request from Thailand that we withdraw our forces from that country.

MORE

I noticed in the morning news summary before I left Washington that the President of the Philippines, Mr. Marcos, is reviewing the Philippine relationship with the United States.

I think these potential developments to some extent tend to validate the so-called domino theory, and if we have one country after another -- allies of the United States -- losing faith in our word, losing faith in our agreements with them, yes, I think the first one to go could vitally affect the national security of the United States.

QUESTION: May I ask another question I have had on my mind for a long time? Since you supported the invasion of Cambodia five years ago, would you do the same today?

THE PRESIDENT: That is a hypothetical question, Miss Thomas, because under the law I have no such authority to do so. I did support the activities then, the so-called Cambodian incursion, because the North Vietnamese were using that area in Cambodia for many military strikes against U.S. military personnel in South Vietnam.

It was a successful military operation. It saved many American lives because those sanctuaries were destroyed.

Since I do not have the authority to undertake any such military obligation--we have no U.S. military forces in South Vietnam--I think it is a hypothetical question, which really I cannot answer.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, in view of your commitments for Food for Peace programs and your national interest in slowing down increase of food prices, what kinds of farm support legislation will you support?

THE PRESIDENT: I believe the current farm legislation is good legislation. I helped, when I was in the Congress, to obtain its enactment. It has resulted in freeing the Federal Government from trying to run agriculture in the United States. It has resulted in the greatest production of food and fiber in the United States.

It seems to me that this law which was passed several years ago is good legislation. It has supplied our needs. It has made it possible for the United States to contribute very significantly in the Food for Peace effort around the world.

Therefore, I think it is wise, under these circumstances, for us to keep this law and not tinker with it at the present time.

QUESTION: Mr. President, Clark Clifford said today that he has already been questioned by the Rockefeller Commission about a possible CIA assassination plot. Since you created the Commission, I wonder if you think this is a proper area for the Commission to get into?

THE PRESIDENT: Mr. Cormier, let me say at the outset that this Administration does not condone, under any circumstances, any assassination attempts. We, in this Administration, will not participate under any circumstances in activities of that sort. Now, I have watched with interest and personal attention the stories and some allegations to the effect that assassinations were discussed and potentially undertaken.

I have asked members of my staff to analyze the best way in which this serious problem can be handled. I did discuss it with the Vice President last week and I expect within the next several days that I will decide the best course of action for the Rockefeller Commission, or any Executive Branch investigation of such allegations.

QUESTION: Then, you think it should be gone into at least semi-publicly?

THE PRESIDENT: It is a serious matter and I will decide within the next few days the best course of action for the Executive Branch to take on these allegations.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, earlier today here number of young people protested it was inappropriate for you to receive an honorary Notre Dame degree because they considered your lack of sensitivity to the poor and your decision to refund the war in Indochina. What would be your response to that?

THE PRESIDENT: I think you will find the budget I submitted in January of this year was a very sound budget. It was not an austere budget. It did provide substantially for the poor in many respects. It provided for an expanded Community Development Act of \$1 billion 600 million more for next year than for the current fiscal year. It did provide \$202 million for the Older American Act which is a substantial increase in this area over the last several years.

We have proposed, and we will support, a responsible program to help the poor in this country. And I think the budget that I submitted in January does just that.

QUESTION: Mr. President, in your speech here at Notre Dame earlier today, you made a strong pitch for continued foreign aid despite the recession and I was surprised you failed to mention your proposal for more military aid to Cambodia and South Vietnam. I know military aid to Southeast Asia has been unpopular on many college campuses and I wonder if your failure to mention that was because you feared you might be booed or there might be a walkout by students if you professed your policy on that issue?

THE PRESIDENT: The speech that I made this morning on the Notre Dame campus was aimed at the broad concept that the United States must participate in world affairs; that this was a world in which we all lived. I pointed out I had always supported as a Member of Congress the mutual security and the foreign aid programs, both economic, Point IV, Food for Peace, as well as the military assistance programs.

It seemed to me that we needed a restatement of the basic reason why foreign aid is important; that we live in an interdependent world and that the United States has to make its full contribution in that regard.

The details can be discussed, the details can be argued, but we needed a restatement, a strong restatement of the broad general reasons why this country has to be a part of the one world concept, working with our allies, trying to eliminate difficulties between ourselves and our adversaries, and it seemed to me if that could be restated, we could work out the details within that concept and not rekindle the differences and difficulties that existed while U.S. troops were stationed and fighting in South Vietnam.

QUESTION: Let me follow that up. If you had made a strong plea today for military aid for Cambodia and South Vietnam, do you think it would have been well received by the student audience?

THE PRESIDENT: Since I did not consider that as a part of my remarks, I really did not consider the hypothetical question you are asking me.

QUESTION: Mr. President, the Republican candidate for Mayor of Chicago, Mr. John Hoellen, has stated over the weekend that he was either snubbed or given very short shrift by you at the White House. The Cook County Republican Committee is in a state of chaos, and the Republican Committee in Illinois is not much better off.

What are you going to do for Mr. Hoellen, and what are you going to do for the Republican Party in Illinois in order to win it in 1976?

THE PRESIDENT: I seldom interject myself into local partisan elections. I do believe, however, that the President ought to be as helpful as he can in a state-wide partisan way at the proper time.

I do believe that the state organization in Illinois is rebuilding and getting ready for the state and national elections in 1976. I consult with Senator Percy. I consult with the Illinois Republican delegation, and I think in that way I can be a participant in making the Republican Party in Illinois a viable political party in the very important elections of 1976.

QUESTION: Do you plan to ask Donald Rumsfeld to assess the situation? It has been reported that you would.

THE PRESIDENT: Don Rumsfeld made a speech in Illinois Friday night, and I have not had an opportunity to discuss with him his observations based on that speech, but I do intend to, probably tomorrow or the next day.

I have a great deal of faith in Don's understanding of the problems in Illinois, and a great deal of faith in his judgment as to how I and we can help in that regard.

QUESTION: Mr. President, at a time when you say you are trying to end the recession, the money supply in the United States has not increased hardly at all. In the last six months of 1974, the money supply grew by less than 1 percent, and in November, December and January it actually showed a decrease, one of the very few times it has in modern times.

Are you personally satisfied, from the standpoint of ending the recession, with the speed or with the rate of growth in the money supply in this country?

THE PRESIDENT: I met with Arthur Burns, the head of the Federal Reserve, last week. He, of course, is the head of a very autonomous part of our Federal Government, but I do meet with him frequently to get the benefit of his views on our economic circumstances.

I did ask what was the situation, because there had been criticism such as you have indicated. It was pointed out to me by him -- and there were a number of charts that were shown which show the facts to be contrary to the facts that you have stated -- that M-one, two, three, four, five, six, and seven -- all of them show an increase, and I am one who has great faith in Dr. Burns.

We are showing an increase in the money supply. There will be an adequate money supply available for the current economic circumstances we face, and there will be an adequate money supply to meet the problems we have down the road.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, I don't know what Dr. Burns' charts showed you about long-term interest rates which, as you know, are the principal factor in capital formation, but I wanted to ask you this: A lot of people, a lot of economists, are worried that Dr. Burns and Mr. Greenspan, and so forth, are going to take this thing down just as far as they can and wring the last bit of inflation out of it that they can and then try to turn it around.

Are you satisfied, or what confidence do you have we won't go so far with this thing that we can't turn it around?

THE PRESIDENT: Of course, we have made substantial progress in trying to win the battle against inflation.

Last October, the rate of inflation was something like 13 percent. The last figures released about three weeks ago showed it was down to a 7.2 percent on an annualized basis.

Now, the charts that I also looked at, it showed that short-term interest rates had gone from something like 13 percent down to about 6 percent and it showed that the trend on long-term interest rates was also a favorable one, going more slowly down than the short-term interest rates, but the trend is encouraging, and if we act responsibly and don't have a larger deficit than I have proposed in the Federal Government so that the Federal Government does not go in and sop up all of the money that is needed, we can keep the trend in long-term interest rates going down.

QUESTION: Mr. President, the steel workers and auto workers in your State and in Indiana are still out of work. What can you say to them by the way of encouragement? How far do they have to wait?

THE PRESIDENT: The biggest stimulant we could get to the economy right now, which means more jobs for auto workers and steel workers, is to get the Congress of the United States to move quickly; to enact a substantial tax reduction at the Federal level.

In January -- I believe on January 15th in the State of the Union Message -- I urged a \$16-1/2 billion tax reduction bill as quickly as possible. It is now two months and two days and the Congress has not completed action on that tax reduction bill. I hope that before Congress goes on its Easter recess, it will enact a tax reduction bill like the one I proposed, or one that is reasonably acceptable.

MORE

If we could get a tax reduction bill out of the Congress promptly, that would be the best hope to stimulate the economy and to provide jobs for the auto workers and steel workers who are at the present time, particularly the auto workers, in desperate straits.

QUESTION: Mr. President, you have hinted about it before but so far, you have stopped short of saying flatly that Vice President Rockefeller will be your running-mate in 1976.

My question, sir, is: Will he be?

THE PRESIDENT: I did not think I ever equivocated on that and if the interpretation is that I have, then I want to straighten it out right now.

Nelson Rockefeller has been an exceptionally active and able Vice President. I said when I nominated him I wanted him to be a partner. He has been, in the responsibilities on the Rockefeller Commission, in his responsibilities in the Domestic Council.

I think he deserves great praise and I see no reason whatsoever that that team should not be together in the campaign in 1976.

QUESTION: Mr. President, in regard to the Rockefeller Commission's investigation into the CIA, would you, at any time, consider changing their mandate to include an investigation of possible domestic activities by the CIA in regard to assassination attempts?

THE PRESIDENT: Let me reiterate, as a preface, I will not condone -- in fact I condemn -- any CIA involvement in any assassination planning or action.

Now, I did indicate, in answer to a previous question, that I am personally analyzing, looking at, all of the more recent charges of any assassination attempts by the CIA or actual assassinations from its inception to the present.

I am personally analyzing all of these charges. I have asked my staff to bring all of the material that is available to me personally. I have talked to Vice President Rockefeller about it and I will determine within the next few days the best course of action to make sure that the matter is handled in the most appropriate way.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, the State Department announced today that it had found some over \$20 billion (million) in 1974 funds that had been voted for aid to Cambodia and had not been sent, and that it was making that money available now.

Is this an artifice to get around Congressional appropriations, and are there other sources of such funds that could be found?

THE PRESIDENT: I was informed last Friday of what appears to be very sloppy bookkeeping in the Department of Defense, and I condemn it, if it is, and I will not condone it in the future.

I was surprised by these revelations. I don't think it was anything malicious. I don't think it was any purposeful action. But if the money is available and was appropriated by the Congress for the purposes set forth, it will be used according to the law.

QUESTION: Have similar investigations of past Vietnam appropriations been made?

THE PRESIDENT: The Inspector General, as I understand it, found out the \$21 million in Cambodian military aid that was revealed last week to me and publicly announced today.

The Inspector General has a continuing responsibility to find out any and all circumstances, such as the one that we are discussing.

QUESTION: Mr. President, as Father Hesburgh put it in his speech today, you are the first President to set foot on a first-rate campus in about ten years. In that context, in light of the fact that President Nixon fired Father Hesburgh from the Civil Rights Commission, I wonder if you would elaborate on your feelings about restoring better relations with the academic world in the task ahead of you in that respect.

THE PRESIDENT: One of the first actions I took, one of the first trips I undertook, was to go to the campus of Ohio State University. I might say parenthetically, for a Michigan graduate to go to Ohio State is doing double duty.

But I was well received there, and I had a fine opportunity to present a new concept that we have for higher education. This is another opportunity on the Notre Dame campus -- to continue that dialogue that I hope will not only expand but grow by leaps and bounds between the academic community and the Federal Government.

MORE

There is no reason why we should not work together. There are a great many reasons why we should use the talent, the ability, the personnel that does exist on the campuses all over the United States, and I certainly intend to do so in the months ahead.

QUESTION: The second part of the question, how much of a job is there ahead of you to restore better relations?

THE PRESIDENT: Based on the very warm welcome I received at Notre Dame today, I think we are on a good footing, and I certainly will bend over backwards to continue it and to expand it.

I think the dialogue is excellent. About a week or ten days ago I met with ten or 15 top college and university Presidents. That was another step in this better rapport between the academic community and this Administration.

I can assure you we intend to do everything possible to make sure that it works.

QUESTION: Mr. President, will you be giving Congress all the material that is asked for as part of its investigation of intelligence activities?

THE PRESIDENT: The Senate committee has asked for a considerable amount of material. That request is currently being analyzed by the top members of my staff. I will make a judgment on that as soon as we have had an opportunity to review all of the very substantial number of requests.

I can assure you and others that we will do all we can to indicate maximum cooperation, but until we have had an opportunity to review this request in detail, I am not in a position to give you a categorical answer.

QUESTION: Am I to understand this Executive Branch investigation that you raised the possibility of outside the Rockefeller Commission would possibly make it necessary or advisable for you to delay giving Congress the material it has asked for?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think there is any necessary conflict between the Rockefeller Commission and the one or more Congressional committees. The Rockefeller Commission has been in operation now for a month or two, so they are underway.

They had planned to finish their work within the next month, as I recollect. They may have to go beyond that, depending on certain circumstances, but we intend to make as full disclosure as is possible without jeopardizing America's national security.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, tonight you are meeting with several Midwestern Governors. In light of some sagging revenues at state and local levels and your own budget tightening, what can you tell them about your long-range plans for return of the Federal dollar--both to state and municipalities--revenue sharing and this type of thing?

THE PRESIDENT: In my State of the Union Message and in the budget message, I indicated that I was recommending an extension of the general revenue sharing program with the annual add-on that takes care of the inflation impact as far as the state and local units of government are concerned.

So, I am on record now, urging the Congress to extend the existing general revenue sharing plan.

MORE

QUESTION: Have the dollar amounts that you have been able to expend been affected by the current events?

THE PRESIDENT: It is my best recollection that the amount we recommended for the first year of the extended program is close to \$7 billion a year, which is a substantial increase over the amount that was used in the first year of the present program.

It is a very, I think, generous proposal. It does crank in the inflation factor and if the Congress goes along, I think it will be materially beneficial to the States, and local units of government.

QUESTION: Mr. President, we have not asked you about the gasoline tax lately. This afternoon or this morning, on Air Force One, what Mr. Zarb said led me to believe there may be a softening of the Administration's attitude. Are you still willing to stand by your earlier statement that you will veto any gasoline tax?

THE PRESIDENT: I could not help but notice over the weekend 102 Democrats joined in a statement in the House of Representatives condemning a gasoline tax.

I think a gasoline tax of the magnitude that several have proposed is not the right approach and I do not think the Congress will approve it. I think the energy crisis, the energy program, can be best implemented by the proposal I submitted in January and I hope that in the negotiations between Mr. Zarb and myself, with the Members of Congress on the respective committees, will result in an approach that is comparable to mine, because I think the Congress will pass that.

I have very grave doubts that the Congress would pass a gasoline tax, and certainly, my feeling in that regard was reaffirmed by 102 Democrats putting their name on the line saying they would not vote for one.

And I think there is a better way to do it, and we are going to work with the chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means, hoping to find an answer that is more like the approach that I have recommended.

QUESTION: To follow that up, you did say a gasoline tax of the magnitude that is being proposed by some. I seem to note a shift in your position there. Mr. Ullman has come down from 40 cents to possibly 25 cents. If he were to come down a little further, would you be willing to talk about it? Maybe 20 cents?

MORE

THE PRESIDENT: I read a news report a few minutes ago which said the bill he introduced included a gas tax up to 37 cents over a 3- or 4-year span. I don't think that is the right approach and I don't think it is feasible in trying to get the Congress to act. Therefore, I go back to a program that we proposed which I think will be the answer, which I think the Congress eventually will buy substantially.

I am very happy that we are negotiating. We are trying to find an answer with Mr. Ullman, the Chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means, and I am encouraged by what I understand is the progress that is being made.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mr. Cormier. Thank you all very much.

END

(AT 6:30 P.M. EST)

#12
4/3/75

PRESS CONFERENCE NO. 12

of the
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

12:01 P.M. PDT
April 3, 1975
Thursday

In the Silver Room
At the San Diego Convention
and Performing Arts Center
San Diego, California

THE PRESIDENT: Will you please sit down.

At the outset, let me express my appreciation to Mayor Pete Wilson and the fine people of San Diego for the very warm welcome.

I also am delighted to see one or more of my former colleagues in the Congress here. It is always nice to see them and all others who may be here. Good morning.

I have a short opening statement.

We are seeing a great human tragedy as untold numbers of Vietnamese flee the North Vietnamese onslaught. The United States has been doing -- and will continue to do -- its utmost to assist these people.

I have directed that all available Naval ships to stand off Indochina, to do whatever is necessary to assist. We have appealed to the United Nations to use its moral influence to permit these innocent people to leave, and we call on North Vietnam to permit the movement of refugees to the area of their choice.

While I have been in California, I have been spending many hours on the refugee problem and our humanitarian efforts. I have directed that money from a \$2 million special foreign aid children's fund be made available to fly 2000 South Vietnamese orphans to the United States as soon as possible.

I have also directed American officials in Saigon to act immediately to cut red tape and other bureaucratic obstacles preventing these children from coming to the United States.

MORE

I have directed that C-5A aircraft and other aircraft especially equipped to care for these orphans during the flight be sent to Saigon. I expect these flights to begin within the next 36 to 48 hours. These orphans will be flown to Travis Air Force Base in California, and other bases on the West Coast, and cared for in those locations.

These 2000 Vietnamese orphans are all in the process of being adopted by American families. This is the least we can do, and we will do much, much more.

The first question is from Mr. George Dissinger of the San Diego Tribune.

QUESTION: Mr. President, are you ready to accept Communist takeover of South Vietnam and Cambodia?

THE PRESIDENT: I would hope that that would not take place in either case. My whole Congressional life in recent years was aimed at avoiding it. My complete efforts as President of the United States were aimed at avoiding that.

I am an optimist, despite the sad and tragic events that we see unfolding. I will do my utmost in the future -- as I have in the past -- to avoid that result.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I understand you are soon going to ask Congress for new authority to extend humanitarian aid in Southeast Asia. I wondered if you stand by your request, though, for more military aid for South Vietnam.

THE PRESIDENT: We do intend to ask for more humanitarian aid. I should point out that the Administration's request for \$135 million for humanitarian aid in South Vietnam was unfortunately reduced to \$55 million by Congressional action. Obviously, we will ask for more; the precise amount we have not yet determined.

We will continue to push for the \$300 million that we have asked for and Congress had authorized for military assistance to South Vietnam, and the possibility exists that we may ask for more.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, how and why did the U.S. miscalculate the intentions of the will of the South Vietnamese to resist?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't believe that we miscalculated the will of the South Vietnamese to carry on their fight for their own freedom.

There were several situations that developed that I think got beyond the control of the Vietnamese people. The unilateral military decision to withdraw created a chaotic situation in Vietnam that appears to have brought about tremendous disorganization.

I believe that the will of the South Vietnamese people to fight for their freedom is best evidenced by the fact that they are fleeing from the North Vietnamese and that clearly is an indication they don't want to live under the kind of government that exists in North Vietnam.

The will of the South Vietnamese people, I think, still exists. They want freedom under a different kind of government than has existed in North Vietnam. The problem is how to organize that will under the traumatic experiences of the present.

QUESTION: Unilateral decision by whom?

THE PRESIDENT: It was a unilateral decision by President Thieu to order a withdrawal from the broad, exposed areas that were under the control of the South Vietnamese military.

QUESTION: Mr. President, what is your response to the South Vietnamese Ambassador to Washington's statement that we had not lived up to the Paris peace accords and that the Communists are safer allies?

THE PRESIDENT: I won't comment on his statement. I will say this: That the North Vietnamese repeatedly and in massive efforts violated the Paris peace accords. They sent North Vietnamese regular forces into South Vietnam in massive numbers -- I think around 150,000 to 175,000 -- well-trained North Vietnamese regular forces, in violation of the Paris peace accords, moved into South Vietnam.

We have objected to that violation. I still believe that the United States, in this case and in other cases, is a reliable ally and although I am saddened by the events that we have read about and seen, it is a tragedy unbelievable in its ramifications.

MORE

Page 4

I must say that I am frustrated by the action of the Congress in not responding to some of the requests for both economic, humanitarian and military assistance in South Vietnam. And I am frustrated by the limitations that were placed on the Chief Executive over the last two years.

But let me add very strongly, I am convinced that this country is going to continue its leadership. We will stand by our allies and I specifically warn any adversaries they should not, under any circumstances, feel that the tragedy of Vietnam is an indication that the American people have lost their will or their desire to stand up for freedom any place in the world.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, can you explain why President Thieu, with our close military ties as allies, did not tell you what he was going to do in terms of the retreat?

THE PRESIDENT: I think the only answer to that can come from President Thieu.

QUESTION: Mr. Ford, recently you said the fall of Cambodia could threaten the national security of this country. Considering the probable fall of South Vietnam to Communist forces, do you feel that will threaten our national security, and if so, how?

THE PRESIDENT: At the moment, I do not anticipate the fall of South Vietnam, and I greatly respect and admire the tremendous fight that the government and the people of Cambodia are putting up against the insurgents who are trying to take over Cambodia.

I believe that in any case where the United States does not live up to its moral or treaty obligations, it can't help but have an adverse impact on other allies we have around the world. We read in European papers to the effect that Western Europe ought to have some questions.

Let me say to our Western European allies, we are going to stand behind our commitments to NATO, and we are going to stand behind our commitments to other allies around the world.

But, there has to be in the minds of some people, a feeling that maybe the tragedy of Indochina might affect our relations with their country. I repeat, the United States is going to continue its leadership and stand by its allies.

QUESTION: Are you, in fact, a believer of the domino theory of, if Southeast Asia falls, then perhaps some of the other countries in the Pacific are next?

THE PRESIDENT: I believe there is a great deal of credibility to the domino theory. I hope it does not happen. I hope that other countries in Southeast Asia, Thailand, the Philippines, don't misread the will of the American people and the leadership of this country to believing that we are going to abandon our position in Southeast Asia.

We are not, but I do know from the things I read and the messages that I hear, that some of them do get uneasy. I hope and trust they believe me when I say we are going to stand by our allies.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, as you are well aware, there are about 7000 Americans still in Saigon. They are in danger not only from Communist attack, but from South Vietnamese reprisals. There are reports that the South Vietnamese are in a bad temper toward Americans.

Do you feel that under the War Powers Act and also under the limitations voted by Congress in 1973 on combat by Americans in Indochina, that you could send troops in to protect those Americans, and would you, if it came to that?

THE PRESIDENT: I can assure you that I will abide totally with the War Powers Act that was enacted by the Congress several years ago. At the same time, I likewise assure you that we have contingency plans to meet all problems involving evacuation, if that should become necessary. At this point, I do not believe that I should answer specifically how those contingency plans might be carried out.

QUESTION: Sir, you don't want to talk specifically. Can you tell us, however, if you do believe that you do have the authority to send in troops? You are not saying, I understand, whether you would, but do you have the authority?

THE PRESIDENT: It is my interpretation of that legislation that a President has certain limited authority to protect American lives. And to that extent, I will use that law.

QUESTION: Mr. President, despite your statement here this morning about war orphans, there apparently is a lot of red tape in Washington. A San Diego man who is trying to get four Vietnamese children out of that country has received hundreds of calls from people all over the Western United States wanting to help, even adopt children, but despite this outpouring of compassion by the American people, all he gets in Washington is, "No way."

There is nothing that can be done. Why is he running into this problem, if we are trying to help?

THE PRESIDENT: Having had some experience in the past with the Federal bureaucracy, when we had a similar problem involving Korean orphans, I understand the frustration and the problem.

But, I am assured that all bureaucratic red tape is being eliminated to the maximum degree and that we will make a total effort, as I indicated in my opening statement, to see to it that South Vietnamese war orphans are brought to the United States.

MORE

QUESTION: Do you think something can be done before it is too late for many of them?

THE PRESIDENT: I can only say we will do what has to be done, what can be done, as a practical matter. I cannot guarantee that every single South Vietnamese war orphan will get here, but I can assure you that we intend to do everything possible in that humanitarian effort.

QUESTION: Mr. President, the Gallup Poll shows a very healthy majority of the American people, 60 percent of the American people, are more concerned about the high cost of living than they are about any other issue including the recession and international developments.

I would like to ask you, in view of that, if Congress does not respond to your repeated appeals to hold down spending and not exceed a level that would produce a deficit of \$60 billion. If they don't do that, and government borrowing increases to cover the deficit, do you have any plans, is there anything you plan to do beyond just these appeals to Congress to prevent a resurgence of inflation?

THE PRESIDENT: As I clearly indicated last Saturday night when I approved the Tax Reduction Act, I have drawn the line on additional Federal spending. That is as far as we dare go.

If we go beyond that, we amplify the potentialities for a resurgence of double-digit inflation. I intend to appeal to the Congress to hold the lid and I intend to appeal to the American people to get their Members of Congress -- Senators and Congressmen -- to stop coming to the White House with one spending bill after another.

In addition, I am asking the Congress to enact a provision that would make applicable for fiscal year 1976 the Budget Control Act that was enacted last year by the Congress.

Under the present law, the Budget Control Act, which forces the Congress to set a ceiling, does not actually come into effect until fiscal year 1977. It seems to me in the crisis that we face today, that the Congress ought to amend the Budget Control Act and make it applicable to fiscal year 1976 so they will impose on themselves, individual Members of Congress -- House and Senate -- a spending limitation.

Now, they are going through sort of a practice session on it. I wish they would abandon the practice session and get down to the ball game, and they, themselves, set a spending limit at the level that I indicated.

MORE

QUESTION: What I am asking you, Mr. President, is if you have any strings to your bow other than these Congressional strings? In other words, what I am asking you is, do you plan any executive action to try to curb a resurgence or prevent a resurgence of inflation?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, the executive actions will be directives to the various departments of the government to limit their spending even within the appropriated amounts that Congress has made available.

We are expecting every department to spend as little as possible to carry out their programs or their mandates, and this includes holding the line on Federal personnel; it includes the limitations on spending for anything that cannot be justified. Under the law, that is the maximum that I can do in an executive capacity.

QUESTION: Mr. President, if it would alleviate the refugee problem in South Vietnam and bring about something of a temporary ceasefire, would you urge President Thieu to resign?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't believe that it is my prerogative to tell the head of state elected by the people to leave office. I don't believe whether it is one head of state or another makes any difference in our efforts to help in the humanitarian program.

We are going to carry it on, I hope, with a full cooperation of the South Vietnamese government, and I don't think it is appropriate for me to ask him, under these circumstances, to resign. I don't think his resignation would have any significance on our humanitarian efforts.

QUESTION: In that regard, are there any plans underway by the U.S. government to accept large numbers of Vietnamese refugees in this country other than the 2,000 orphans that you have talked about?

THE PRESIDENT: Under existing law, action by the Attorney General can permit refugees who are fleeing problems in their own country to come to the United States. This authority was used after World War II. This authority was used after the Hungarian invasion by the Soviet Union.

This authority has been used on a number of other occasions. I can assure you that that authority is being examined and if it will be helpful, I certainly will approve it.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, what is your judgment now on when you expect the recession to end and recovery to begin? Is it the third quarter of this year, or will it be later?

THE PRESIDENT: Our best judgment is that the recession will turn around during the third quarter of this calendar year. We are already seeing some significant changes in the statistics that give us more certainty that the recession will end and that economic recovery will begin in the third quarter of this calendar year.

QUESTION: Could you tell us what those signs are, please, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. The latest report shows that there has been an increase in the ordering of manufactured goods. The first time I think in six months that there has been an increase rather than a decrease.

Interest rates are dropping. More money for borrowers is being made available. The inflation is receding, or at least the rate of inflation is receding. As of the last report, it would annualize at about 7.2 percent, contrasted with a 12 or 13 percent rate of inflation in 1974.

When you add up all these various economic indicators, it does show that the recession is receding and that economic conditions will get better in the third quarter of 1975.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, in line with the spending question last year when you campaigned in California, you asked voters to help defeat the big spenders in Congress and, if they happened to be Republicans, well, so be it.

Do you plan to use the same philosophy in campaigning next year, and to the extent you will openly campaign against Republicans whose philosophies or policies may contradict yours? If so, how does this sit with your statement that the Republican Party is broad enough for all views?

THE PRESIDENT: I expect to be campaigning very hard for my own re-election in 1976. I will, of course, urge that voters in every state support those candidates who believe as I do, that we have got to hold a line on and restrain excessive Federal spending.

My enthusiasm for an individual candidate will, of course, depend upon his strong support for my policy of fiscal restraint, but I am not going to pass judgment today on individuals, whether in one party or another.

QUESTION: Does this mean then that there is a possibility that during that campaign you could come out openly in support of a Democrat as opposed to a Republican?

THE PRESIDENT: I believe in the need for the country to have individual Members of the House and Senate who believe that these massive Federal spending programs are bad for America.

I certainly will look with favor on anyone who believes as I do, that we cannot spend ourself into prosperity. A tax cut approach is a far better way, and that massive spending programs are not good for America.

QUESTION: Mr. President, you now head an Administration which came to power on a strong law and order platform, but the crime rate since 1969 has done nothing but go up and the statistics include crimes at the highest levels of government.

My question is, whether you think it would be fair for the Democrats to charge that this Administration is soft on crime, or at least is incapable of dealing with the problem?

THE PRESIDENT: Unfortunately, for the country the crime rate has been increasing for the last ten or 15 years, whether it was under a Democratic administration, under President Kennedy or President Johnson, or, except for, I think, one year under the former President, the crime rate has been going up. I don't think it is a partisan issue.

It is my judgment that we have to maximize our efforts--the Federal Government, state government and local units of government--to try and have proper enforcement of the law, which includes the prosecution of people who violate the law.

I can only assure you that to the extent that the Federal Government can do something about it, we -- this Administration -- will do it. The facts of life are that most law enforcement is the local responsibility.

Through the Law Enforcement Assistance Act, the Federal Government has been spending for the last several years around \$800 million to help local units of government, state units of government in the upgrading of their law enforcement capability, helping police departments, helping sheriff's departments, helping the courts, and will continue to do it.

But, the principal responsibility rests at the local level.

QUESTION: Will you be able to spend any more money under your proposition that the line has to be drawn somewhere on fighting the crime problem?

THE PRESIDENT: I think in the budget I submitted, there is ample money for a Federal effort to carry out the Federal role in the area of law enforcement.

QUESTION: Mr. President, you spoke a few minutes ago about being frustrated by the limitation of the War Powers Act. If it were not forbidden now, would you like to send American planes and Naval forces and possibly ground forces into Vietnam to try to turn the situation around?

THE PRESIDENT: I have said that there are no plans whatsoever for U.S. military involvement in Vietnam. On the other hand, I think history does prove that if a Chief Executive has a potential to, it, to some extent, is a deterrent against aggressors.

QUESTION: So, that is your frustration, because you do not have that power to at least threaten the possibility?

THE PRESIDENT: I did not use the word "threat." I said the potential for power, I think, over the years has indicated that that potential is a deterrent against aggression by one country against another.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, in view of the possible primary entries by Governor Reagan and perhaps Governor Thompson of New Hampshire, would you be good enough to discuss your own timetable?

When will you set up your committee, specifically, and can you also tell us, do you plan to enter any primaries yourself, or through a stand-in candidate?

THE PRESIDENT: We have not defined our precise timetable, nor our precise plans for the pre-convention campaign. We are in the process of putting together our timetable and our plans. I have said repeatedly that I intend to be a candidate, but I have made no categorical announcement to that effect. But, the matter is not being neglected.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, in light of current concerns regarding the assassination of President Kennedy and the recent showings of the Zapruder films, do you still have the same confidence in the finding of the Warren Commission that you had as a Member of that Commission?

THE PRESIDENT: I think you have to read very carefully what the Warren Commission said. And I, as a member of the Warren Commission, helped to participate in the drafting of the language. We said that Lee Harvey Oswald was the assassin. We said that the Commission had found no evidence of a conspiracy, foreign or domestic.

Those words were very carefully drafted. And so far, I have seen no evidence that would dispute the conclusions to which we came.

We were most careful because in 1963 and 1964, when we most carefully analyzed all the evidence available, there was none of the involvement of anybody or anybody as a group, in the assassination.

It is my understanding that the Rockefeller Commission may, if the facts seem to justify it, take a look at it, at the problem, and I suspect that the House and Senate committees that are currently investigating CIA history may do the same.

But the Commission was right when it made its determination and it was accurate, at least to this point -- I want to re-emphasize that -- as to the evidence that we saw.

QUESTION: Mr. President, some people are saying this week that despite all our massive aid in Vietnam and all the lives that were lost there, that the whole thing has come to nothing.

Now, how do you feel about this, and do you think there is any lesson to be learned in what has been happening over there?

THE PRESIDENT: I believe that the program of the previous four or five Presidents -- President Kennedy, President Johnson, President Nixon, and myself.-- were aimed at the -- in the right direction, that we should help those people who are willing to fight for freedom for themselves.

That was a sound policy. Unfortunately, events that were beyond our control as a country have made it appear that that policy was wrong. I still believe that policy was right if the United States had carried it out as we promised to do at the time of the Paris peace accords where we promised, with the signing of the Paris peace accords, that we would make military hardware available to the South Vietnamese government on a replacement, one-for-one basis. Unfortunately, we did not carry out that promise.

MORE

QUESTION: Are you blaming Congress for this, then?

THE PRESIDENT: I am not assessing blame on anyone. The facts are that in fiscal year 1974, there was a substantial reduction made by the Congress in the amount of military equipment requested for South Vietnam.

In fiscal year 1975, the current fiscal year, the Administration asked for \$1 billion 400 million in military assistance for South Vietnam. Congress put a ceiling of \$1 billion on it and actually appropriated only \$700 million.

Those are the facts. I think it is up to the American people to pass judgment on who was at fault or where the blame may rest. That is a current judgment.

I think historians, in the future, will write who was to blame in this tragic situation. But the American people ought to know the facts and the facts are as I have indicated.

I think it is a great tragedy, what we are seeing in Vietnam today. I think it could have been avoided. But I am not going to point a finger. The American people will make that judgment. I think it is more important for me and the American people and the Congress, in the weeks and months ahead, to do what we can to work together to meet the problems of the future.

That is what I intend to do, and I will go more than half way with the Congress in seeking to achieve that result. I think we have the capability in America. I think we have the will to overcome what appears to be a disaster in Southeast Asia. To the extent that I can, I hope to give that leadership.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, regardless of what caused it, it seems apparent that for the first time in our Nation's history, the enemy is about to win a war where Americans fought and died. Do you think those 55,000 lives were wasted?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not think they were wasted, providing the United States had carried out the solemn commitments that were made in Paris. At the time American fighting was stopped in South Vietnam, at a time when the agreement provided that all of our troops should be withdrawn, that all of our POW's should be returned, if we had carried out the commitments that were made at that time, the tragic sacrifices that were made by many -- those who were killed, those who were wounded -- would not have been in vain.

When I see us not carrying through, then it raises a quite different question.

QUESTION: Is that a yes, then, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: I still think there is an opportunity to salvage the situation in Vietnam, and if we salvage it, giving the South Vietnamese an opportunity to fight for their freedom, which I think they are anxious to do, if given an honest opportunity, then there was not a sacrifice that was inappropriate or unwise.

QUESTION: Good afternoon, Mr. President.

In a speech you are going to deliver here in San Diego this afternoon, you warn against the fatalism, despair and the prophets of doom. Yet, as I look back over the past eight months or a year -- and I don't mean to suggest that these are in any way your responsibility or fault -- I have a laundry list which cites Portugal as having a leftist government raising serious questions about its future in NATO.

Greece and Turkey are at each other's throats, threatening the Southern flanks of that alliance. We are familiar that Secretary Kissinger's mission failed in his peace talks with Egypt, and Israel, and we don't need to rehash the situation in Cambodia and South Vietnam.

That being the case, sir, how can you say that the world outlook -- and particularly as you address it in your speech next week on the state of the world -- is anything but bleak for the United States when many of the minuses which I cited are actually plusses for the Soviets?

MORE

THE PRESIDENT: The speech that I am giving to Congress and to the American people next week will deal with many of the problems that you have raised. I think we do face a crisis, but I am optimistic that if the Congress joins with me, and the American people support the Congress and me, as President, we can overcome those difficulties.

We can play a constructive role in Portugal; not interfering with their internal decisions, but Portugal is an important ally in Western Europe. We can find ways to solve the problem in Cyprus and hopefully keep both Greece and Turkey strong and viable members of NATO.

We can, despite the difficulties that transpired in the Middle East in the last several weeks, find a way to keep a peace movement moving in that very volatile area.

It may mean -- and probably does -- that we will have to take the problem to Geneva. I would have preferred it otherwise, but the facts are that if Congress and the American people and the President work together -- as I expect they will -- then in my judgment, those disappointments can become plusses.

QUESTION: But, sir, can you cite any specific reasons for the optimism you express?

THE PRESIDENT: The historical character of the American people, that is the main ingredient that in my judgment, will take America from the disappointments of the present to the optimism of the future.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, very much.

END (AT 12:45 P.M. PDT)

#13

5/6/75

PRESS CONFERENCE NO. 13

of the

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

7:31 P.M. EDT

May 6, 1975

Tuesday

In Room 450

In the Old Executive
Office Building

Washington, D.C.

THE PRESIDENT: Will you please sit down.
Good evening.

Miss Thomas?

QUESTION: What are the lessons of Vietnam in terms of the Presidency, the Congress and the American people in terms of secret diplomacy and fighting a land war in Asia, and also, would you welcome a Congressional inquiry into how we got in and how we got out of Vietnam?

THE PRESIDENT: Miss Thomas, the war in Vietnam is over. It was sad and tragic in many respects. I think it would be unfortunate for us to rehash allegations as to individuals that might be to blame or Administrations that might be at fault.

It seems to me that it is over. We ought to look ahead, and I think a Congressional inquiry at this time would only be divisive and not helpful.

QUESTION: Mr. President, may I ask you, then, don't you think we can learn from the past?

THE PRESIDENT: Miss Thomas, I think the lessons of the past in Vietnam have already been learned, learned by Presidents, learned by Congress, learned by the American people, and we should have our focus on the future. As far as I am concerned, that is where we will concentrate.

Miss Lewine?

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, your forthcoming meetings with Egyptian President Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Rabin, do they represent the beginning of a new American-led negotiation in the Middle East toward a peace settlement?

THE PRESIDENT: They do not represent a new negotiating process. I am meeting with President Sadat and Prime Minister Rabin for the purpose of getting from them any recommendations they might have as to how we can maintain the peace in the Middle East, how we can come to some final settlement that will be beneficial to all of the parties.

We are in the process of reassessing our Middle East policy, and they can make a very valuable contribution with their on-the-spot recommendations.

QUESTION: Mr. President, do you now see any hopeful signs that there is any movement there off dead center?

THE PRESIDENT: I am always optimistic. I believe that the leaders of all of the countries, both Arab and Israeli, as well as others, recognize the seriousness of any new military engagement in the Middle East and the ramifications that might come from it.

So, I am optimistic that as we try to move ahead aimed at avoiding a stalemate, avoiding stagnation, that we can work with other countries in order to ensure the peace and a settlement that will be satisfactory to all parties.

MORE

REACTION TO THE PRESIDENT'S PRESS CONFERENCE - 9:45 a.m. #13

TELEGRAMS & MAIL:

PHONE CALLS

PRO - 447 NOTE: Of the total telegrams PRO - 237
CON - 240 and letters; 34 on gun control CON - 181
COMMENT - 17 and 1 on the Warren Commission COMMENT - 30 (approx)
the rest are on refugees.

TOTAL TELEGRAMS, LETTERS AND PHONE CALLS ON THE
PRESIDENT'S PRESS CONFERENCE:

PRO - 684
CON - 421
COMMENT - 47

OVERALL TOTAL OF LETTERS AND TELEGRAMS ON REFUGEES
(INCLUDING ORPHANS) FOR THE PAST 5 WEEKS:

PRO - 6,425
CON - 4,411
COMMENT - 306

TOTAL TELEGRAMS AND LETTERS RECEIVED ON RESETTLEMENT
OF REFUGEES IN U.S.:

PRO - 613
CON - 1,234
COMMENT - 88

NOTE: This total does not include telegrams and letters received in
response to the President's press conference statements on the
refugee issue.

QUESTION: Mr. President, you have been reported as being damned mad about the adverse reaction of the American people to the Vietnamese refugees. I would like to ask you how do you explain that reaction? What in your judgment is the cause of that?

THE PRESIDENT: Mr. Lisagor, I am primarily very upset, because the United States has had a long tradition of opening its doors to immigrants from all countries. We are a country built by immigrants from all areas of the world and we have always been a humanitarian Nation.

And when I read or heard some of the comments made a few days ago, I was disappointed and very upset. I was encouraged this afternoon, however. I understand that the Executive Committee of the AFL-CIO passed a resolution urging that the United States open its doors and make opportunities available for the South Vietnamese who have been driven or escaped from their country.

I understand that the American Jewish Committee has likewise passed a resolution this afternoon endorsing the policy of making opportunities available in the United States for South Vietnamese. And I am very proud of those Governors, like Governor Pryor of Arkansas, Governor Askew of Florida, Governor Longley of Maine, Governor Evans of Washington, Governor Ariyoshi of Hawaii, as well as Mayor Alioto, who have communicated with me and indicated their support for a policy of giving the opportunity of South Vietnamese to come from this country to escape the possibility of death in their country under the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong, and individuals who wanted an opportunity for freedom.

I think this is the right attitude for Americans to take and I am delighted for the support that I have gotten.

MORE

QUESTION: Could I follow that and ask you, why in your judgment is there such a widespread adverse reaction to this?

THE PRESIDENT: I understand the attitude of some. We have serious economic problems. But out of the 120,000 refugees who are either here or on their way, 60 percent of those are children. They ought to be given an opportunity. Only 35,000 heads of families will be moved into our total society.

Now I understand people who are concerned with our economic problems, but we have assimilated between 50,000 and 100,000 Hungarians in the mid-50s and we have brought into this country some 500,000 to 600,000 Cubans. They have been good citizens and we ought to welcome these people in the same way, and despite our economic problems I am convinced that the vast majority of Americans today want these people to have another opportunity to escape the probability of death, and therefore I applaud those who feel that way.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I would like to ask a political question. What steps have you taken so far toward the creation of a campaign organization in 1976, and if you haven't taken any steps, what steps do you plan to take in the future, and when do you plan to take them?

THE PRESIDENT: Within the last week a group headed by Dean Burch have indicated that they would like to get started in a very informal way to kick off a campaign at the proper time. This group is meeting within the next few days, I understand. They expect to get a great many more who will join them.

The precise time when we will take the formal step to declare my candidacy has not yet been determined, but I would only reiterate my intention to become a candidate.

QUESTION: Mr. President, you have said many times that you intend to become a candidate and yet there seems to be continual skepticism in some quarters of your own party that you really will be. Why do you think that skepticism has endured?

THE PRESIDENT: I am surprised myself that there is any skepticism. I know my intention. I have said it repeatedly, as you have indicated. I intend to be a candidate. I believe that I have the best opportunity to solidify the Republican Party, getting strength from both the right as well as the left within the Republican spectrum and to put on a good campaign against the individual that the Democratic Party nominates.

There should be no skepticism about my intention. I will be at the proper time a candidate in a legal sense and no one should feel otherwise.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, if I could follow that up. Will you this year be going out and speaking at Republican gatherings doing the kind of political things that Presidents often do in the year before they run for election?

THE PRESIDENT: I undoubtedly will make an effort to help the Republican Party. I think that is a proper function for a President. I did it a week or so ago for the Republican Party in the State of Virginia and I will do similar activities in the future.

But that effort will be aimed at helping the party. We need a strong two-party system and I have a responsibility to try and help the Republican Party.

Miss McGrory, may I congratulate you on your Pulitzer Prize, and I am delighted to recognize you.

QUESTION: Thank you very much, Mr. President.

I was wondering if now that the war is over for everybody and we are admitting many thousands of Vietnamese, including, we are told, some young men who did not obey their country's draft laws, have you reconsidered your position on amnesty towards young Americans?

THE PRESIDENT: Miss McGrory, about six months ago, I initiated a program under former Congressman Charles Goodell and a group of eight others, to grant relief, or amnesty, to some 120,000 individuals who were either deserters or did not comply with the Selective Service laws.

As I recollect, up to a week or so ago, approximately 30,000 out of that group had applied. I assume that most of them will have a change in their status. I hope so.

And therefore, I have taken, I think, a step that was right. It is a good program and I just wish that more had taken advantage of it.

At the present time, we are in the process, or they, the Commission, are in the process of handling the applications. I hope they will expedite and be very generous in their consideration of the records of those who have applied.

There is always a chance in the future if the facts justify it.

MORE

QUESTION: Even though the war is over, sir, there are many Americans who must still live with the agonies that it caused them. I speak primarily of those wounded and crippled and the families of those who died.

In very human and personal terms, how would you speak to them about the sacrifices that were made?

THE PRESIDENT: First, let me say very emphatically they made a great sacrifice. The 56,000 that died and the countless thousands who were wounded, I honor and respect them and their contribution was most significant. I think their contribution was not in vain.

Five Presidents carried out a national policy. Six Congresses endorsed that policy, which was a policy of our country, and they carried out that responsibility as a member of our Armed Forces.

I think we should praise them, congratulate them, and we have an unbelievable commitment to them in the future. All we can say is, thank you very much for what they have done for freedom.

QUESTION: Mr. President, you mentioned that you spoke to some Virginia Republicans the weekend before last and at that time, you said that in 1976 we will have some excellent results in foreign policy. After the past few weeks, we can all use a little good news. Can you tell us just what you do expect in 1976?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, I think between now and the end of 1976 we are going to make progress in the negotiations for a SALT II agreement. It hasn't been finalized, but the atmosphere is good.

There is going to be some hard negotiating, but I will approach that important meeting with Mr. Brezhnev aimed at achieving results, and I think his attitude will reflect the same.

I think you are going to find a greater solidarity in Europe. I am going to Europe the latter part of this month to strengthen that solidarity and to work on a more unified position in solving our joint economic problems, in trying to solve the energy problems that are serious for all of us.

It is my judgment that we can move ahead even in the Pacific. We will have to not reassess, but assess, how we can proceed, but it is my aim to tie more closely together South Korea with the United States, to reaffirm our commitments to Taiwan, to work more closely with Indonesia, with the Philippines, and with other Pacific nations. These are the kind of, I believe, forward movements in foreign policy that will be beneficial in the maintenance of peace.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I would very much like to follow that up. Is your job going to be complicated by what happened in Southeast Asia? You have gone out of your way in the past week or two to say the United States will honor its foreign commitments. What sort of private feedback are you getting in foreign capitals? Is there a lack of confidence now? A loss of confidence in the United States?

THE PRESIDENT: We do get reactions from foreign governments wondering what our position will be, asking where we will go and what our policy will be. We have indicated to our friends that we will maintain our commitments. We understand the perception that some countries may have as a result of the setback in South Vietnam. But that perception is not a reality because the United States is strong militarily.

The United States is strong economically, despite our current problems, and we are going to maintain our leadership on a worldwide basis, and we want our friends to know that we will stand by them and we want any potential adversaries to know that we will stand up to them.

QUESTION: Mr. President, there have been persistent reports here in Washington that the Rockefeller Commission is looking into reports that somehow or the other, discussions of the assassination of Fidel Castro may have somehow triggered the assassination of John Kennedy. Can you tell us is there any connection between those two events?

THE PRESIDENT: I cannot give you the inside information on the Rockefeller Commission because I established it for the purpose of investigating the CIA and making any recommendations concerning it. It is my understanding that they are taking a very broad look. Until I get their report, I think it would be premature for me to make any comment as to precisely where they are going with their investigation.

Now, as a former member of the Warren Commission, a commission that I think did a good job, we found as a Warren Commission, no connection of anything between Cuba and the United States. We found no evidence of a conspiracy, foreign or domestic.

QUESTION: Mr. President, after eight years of a Republican in the White House, there probably will be a lot of people who next year will say it is time for a change. Now what accomplishments can you cite to rebut the argument that there should be such a change?

MORE

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think there ought to be a change. I strongly believe that a continuation of the basic policies of the last eight years will be good for America, and let me take a minute or two to talk about foreign policy.

A Republican Administration ended the war in Vietnam. They withdrew 550,000 American military personnel. They brought back all of the POW's. The United States under a Republican Administration took the first meaningful steps in trying to control nuclear arms, and I think we are going to have continued success in that area.

In the domestic area, we have gone through a difficult time, but when you look at the overall, a period of eight years, I think domestically there will be far more pluses than minuses and therefore it is my judgment that the American people, if we sell the program properly, we will have an excellent opportunity of prevailing in November of 1976.

QUESTION: Mr. President, on the economic issue, I assume that is what you are saying; but if the economy is at a low ebb next year, if unemployment is about what it is now, can you win?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think the economic concerns in 1976 will be comparable to those today. I think we are at the end of the recession. I believe that we can look forward to some improvement economically in the third and fourth quarters of 1975 and they ought to improve in 1976. Therefore, in my judgment, we will be looking in the future towards better times at home and a good foreign policy abroad.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, events in Indochina outran the deliberative process of the Congress, and you weren't given clearly defined authority to use U.S. forces to evacuate there because of Cambodia and Vietnam.

My question goes to the matter of whether it was a personal dilemma for you as Commander-in-Chief to use U.S. forces without the expressed concurrence of the Congress?

THE PRESIDENT: Our prime objective, of course, both in the evacuation from Phnom Penh and Cambodia and in Saigon was to bring all Americans out of both locations. Now, in the process it did appear to be wise, particularly in Saigon, to take out a number of South Vietnamese.

We did that because, number one, we felt that a number of these South Vietnamese had been very loyal to the United States and deserved an opportunity to live in freedom and secondly, the possibility existed if we had not brought out some South Vietnamese, that there could have been anti-American attitudes develop that would have complicated the evacuation of our American personnel.

So, I felt that what we did could be fully justified in not only evacuating Americans, but evacuating some of the South Vietnamese who wanted to come to the United States.

QUESTION: Secretary Kissinger said that all of the Americans who wanted to leave South Vietnam were evacuated, but there may be some reason to believe not all were evacuated. Some organizations have, for example, reported at least eight missionaries captured in the Northern part of South Vietnam.

So, I am wondering if there is some process to check this sort of thing out and what could be done about it.

THE PRESIDENT: We certainly made a maximum effort to get every American out. We found in the last week that on a certain day they could tell us that there were 1,000 Americans that were ready to come out, and we would take 300 or 400 out and then the next day we would find that a number of other Americans had come into Saigon and wanted to get out.

So, we certainly made a tremendous effort to get all Americans out. I am sure there are some who are left. At this time, I can't give you the specifics as to how we will seek to get any Americans who are still there, but we will do all we can to achieve that result.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, you praised Ambassador Graham Martin's record in Vietnam, and you have also defended the evacuation of Vietnamese civilians. Yet, there is some evidence that Mr. Martin's actions made it impossible for some Vietnamese to escape who were longstanding employees of the U.S. Government and others were evacuated on the basis of their ability to pay.

Have you investigated any of these charges and do you still believe that Ambassador Martin's record is one of effectiveness?

THE PRESIDENT: Because of the ability of Ambassador Martin to handle a tough situation -- and it was very difficult -- we got all Americans out and we got roughly 120,000-plus South Vietnamese.

Now, I am familiar with some individuals who are critical of the way in which Ambassador Martin handled it. I never had much faith in Monday morning quarterbacks or grandstand quarterbacks. I would rather put faith in the man who carried out a very successful evacuation of Americans and a tremendous number of South Vietnamese.

Rather than be critical of somebody who I think did a good job, I think we ought to praise him. If some of these people want to, in hindsight, who didn't have the responsibility, criticize him, I think we will accept it for what it is worth.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, there has been some references tonight to the economic situation. The overall unemployment rate is nine percent but among black teenagers and young black males and some other minority groups it is three times that. What plans do you have to cope with the social consequences of that kind of unemployment?

THE PRESIDENT: We are concerned about the unemployment of the youth, particularly, and the highest percentage, of course, of unemployment falls in the black youth group.

I submitted to the Congress about a month ago a request for \$450 million, as I recollect, to fund a young people's employment program for this coming summer.

Now, unfortunately, the Congress has not approved that funding and the steps that have been taken, I think, will hamper the possibility of getting that funding to meet this problem, and they have added about \$3 billion over and above extra funding that I don't think can be justified.

If the Congress would approve the request that I made for roughly \$450 million, we would be in a position right now to do something about the problem that you raise.

QUESTION: Mr. President, the record of recent years is that that kind of summer jobs and that kind of thing has not prevented what really is a chronic long-term problem of 30 percent unemployment among young minority groups. What I am really asking is this: A great many economists think instead of coming out of this recession dramatically, we are just going to have a long period of stagflation where we don't have a really serious situation, but we don't have things very well indeed, and this kind of chronic unemployment among minority groups just persists.

What I am trying to find out is other than summer jobs and that kind of thing, do you think this is really a serious problem that the United States ought to address and try to do something about and if you do, what are your plans for it?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. I think it is a serious problem, but the most important problem is to meet the present difficulty which begins with the end of the school year, and that is why I think the Congress ought to act quickly on the request that I made for summer employment.

MORE

Now, in the long run, the best way to get the young people properly employed in our economy is to have a healthy economy, not a Government-dominated economy. I think we are in the process of coming out of the recession. I am optimistic in the future and when we, in the third and fourth quarters of this year, have the success that I think we are going to have, some of the problems will be answered that you have raised.

Mr. Jones?

QUESTION: You apparently had some intelligence reports about a bloodbath in Cambodia. I am wondering if you can bring us up to date on anything in this area in Cambodia and whether or not there is any report of a bloodbath in South Vietnam?

THE PRESIDENT: We do have some intelligence reports to the effect that in Cambodia some 80 or 90 former Cambodian officials were executed and, in addition, their wives were executed.

This is very hard intelligence. That is, I think, very factual evidence of the bloodbath that has taken place or is in the process of taking place in Cambodia.

Now, a turn to Vietnam. As you know, there is a very tight censorship in South Vietnam. The news that gets out is pretty heavily controlled by the North Vietnamese and by the Viet Cong. So, we really don't have the same kind of hard evidence there that we have had in Cambodia in the instance that I have indicated.

But I think probably the best evidence of the probability is that 120,000-plus South Vietnamese fled because they knew that the probability existed, that if they stayed, their life would be in jeopardy.

That is the best evidence of what probably will take place.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, if I may follow up on this, you say you don't have any hard evidence. Do you have any report, any intelligence reports that indicate this is going on?

THE PRESIDENT: At the moment, we have not.

QUESTION: May I ask you something, sir, and simply a matter of style and nothing of substance. Reading Mr. Hersey, who has spent a week with you, and reading others, you seem to be a kind of a peaceful, quiet man, a placid man. Do you ever get mad at people? Do you ever chew people out? Do you yell? Do you fire people? Do you kick people around?

THE PRESIDENT: I have learned to control my temper. I get very upset internally, but I have learned that that is not the best way to solve a problem. I do have occasional outbursts on the golf course, but in dealing with people I have found that the best way to meet a personnel problem or to handle a serious matter where a decision has to be made, that if you can keep cool, you can make a better decision. I have learned that over a long period of time.

QUESTION: If I may follow up, sir, you were described as very angry about those rumors that you were going through a political charade and were secretly not going to run -- this story in the news magazine a week or so ago. How did you express yourself?

THE PRESIDENT: I didn't shout.

QUESTION: They said you were damn mad.

THE PRESIDENT: I didn't raise the devil with anybody. I simply indicated to my staff that the stories were totally untrue, which they are, and that no such meeting took place where such a policy was outlined by me.

I found the best way to handle the matter is to be very firm, very calm, but very forthright, dealing not only with my staff, but with others. I think they understand what I mean by the way I say it, but you don't have to shout to do it.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, Attorney General Levi has proposed banning of handguns in high crime areas, and the Justice Department says that the White House cleared that position before he made it clear.

Does that represent an extension of your proposal that the Saturday night specials only be controlled?

THE PRESIDENT: It is my understanding that the Attorney General, when he made that speech, indicated that this was an alternative way of meeting the problem created by Saturday night specials.

It is my understanding that he didn't recommend this as the way to handle the problem. I think it is a unique approach, and it is being discussed with the Department of Justice within our Domestic Council, but there is no firm decision on whether that approach or any other approach is the right way to meet the problem.

QUESTION: Do you expect effective gun control legislation to be passed, and are you going to get behind effective control?

THE PRESIDENT: I am not going to recommend the registration of gun owners, and I am not going to recommend the registration of guns, or handguns, I should say.

If we can find some responsible way to do it other than that approach, we certainly will consider them.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, a growing number of Americans, lower and middle class, are being priced out of the housing market, and now there is new evidence that mortgage rates may be turning around, and indeed the FHA has increased its rate by half a percentage. Can you tell the American people tonight that makers of houses, potential buyers of houses -- can you give them any assurance that in the next months, the next year or two, more housing will be available at relatively moderate prices and that interest rates will stay down?

THE PRESIDENT: The most encouraging development in the housing area is the fact that the inflow of deposits in the savings and loans has gone up very substantially. It is my recollection that in the last reported month about \$4 billion in deposits flowed into savings and loans and that over the last three months it has been a very favorable inflow into the S and L's. This means, of course, that there is money available for home buyers and it is my judgment that once we start the upturn from the present recession that the consumer interest in buying homes will increase significantly and with the money available in the S and L's, I think the prospects for an upturn in the housing industry are very encouraging.

QUESTION: Do you then approve the FHA increase, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: I approve the increase because if you are going to have FHA handling of mortgages, if you are going to have the government guarantees, they must be competitive with other interest rates, and I happen to think that an FHA loan or a VA loan, either are very good, and we want those competitive with the regular conventional interest rates, and therefore to make them competitive I agreed with the decision.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very, very much.

END

(AT 8:05 P.M. EDT)

#14
5/30/75

PRESS CONFERENCE NO. 14

of the

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

2:30 P.M. EDT

May 30, 1975

Friday

Brussels, Belgium

THE PRESIDENT: Let me first set out the basic reasons why we welcome the United Kingdom's proposal for this meeting at the highest level and why we gave it the forte and thought it was very timely. We wanted to reaffirm the need for undiminished defense efforts and to have a general discussion of the problems associated with collective defense.

Second, we wanted an opportunity in this Atlantic forum to review the issues on what we have called the new agenda: the energy problem and its ramifications, the food problem, the interaction of national economy. We think, and we very much agree with Chancellor Schmidt and others that these problems affect the well-being and future of all of the countries of the Alliance as much as would a potential military threat.

Of course, we know that there are other international bodies to deal specifically with these problems, but we feel that this political forum is a good and suitable one in which to have a broad discussion of the approaches.

Third, we felt it timely to review the status of East-West relations, the progress of our efforts to achieve meaningful detente with countries of the East. This is particularly so because the Geneva Conference on Cooperation and Security in Europe is in its decisive phase.

Fourth and finally, there are clearly some problems within the Alliance itself. We felt it was desirable to have an opportunity to review these where appropriate to have some bilateral and private contact. Among these problems is the dispute between Greece and Turkey and the uncertain developments in Portugal which concern us.

MORE

I have been extremely pleased with the tone and contents of the remarks that were made around the NATO table. I feel these discussions and numerous bilateral contacts -- at the King's dinner last night and the Secretary General's luncheon today and the final public statement -- fully justified this meeting.

In terms of our objectives, the common interest of all of the allies in a strong defense and in safeguarding our security by common efforts were reaffirmed, and we also recognize that there is much room for improvement in this area, including with respect to more efficient use of existing resources.

I think new emphasis has been given to the work of the military body of the Alliance. All of us came away, in my judgment, with a sense of urgency in dealing with the items on the new agenda and we were especially pleased to hear Chancellor Schmidt's review of these issues.

I think it was a good expression of political will by the allies following the recent sessions of IEA and OECD. We reaffirm the need for giving detente real meaning in terms of the values of our country. We agreed to continue the close and full consultations among allies and East-West relations as well as continue to pool our efforts in on-going negotiations like CSCE and MFR.

We face Alliance problems in a mature and a quite constructive way. I was struck by the fact that all allies stress common interest even when, as in the case of Greece and Turkey, there exists differences in particular instances. It is a measure of the general sense of satisfaction with this meeting that quite spontaneously there arose sentiment for holding these high level meetings at more regular intervals as proposed by Prime Minister Trudeau.

I would strongly support this. We can be quite flexible in the precise manner in which such meetings are prepared and held, but it is clear that there was widespread feeling among allies that contact at the highest level, the highest political level, is valuable.

Finally, I found it noteworthy that many allies stress that they did not feel a need of any special American reassurance concerning our commitment to the Alliance. They stress that they consider our commitment firm and vigorous. Their confidence is fully justified.

With that I will be glad to recognize Mr. Cormier.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, the NATO communique laid heavy emphasis on military preparedness, and I wonder if this reflects any misgivings about the future of detente?

THE PRESIDENT: I certainly did not have that impression, Mr. Cormier. The feeling was that, by strengthening our allied forces, we could be more effective in implementing the detente approach.

On the other hand, any weakening of our military forces within the Alliance could make it more difficult to proceed with detente between not only the United States and the Soviet Union, but between the East and the West, in general.

Ms. Thomas.

QUESTION: Mr. President, would you use nuclear weapons if there was a conventional attack on Europe by the Soviet Union?

THE PRESIDENT: Ms. Thomas, I don't think I should discuss military decisions at this time. I think the decision of that kind would have to be made in the proper channels. I, of course, would not expect, if our strengthening and detente prosper, that there would be any need for such a hypothetical circumstance developing.

QUESTION: Mr. President, what do you consider to be the most important achievement of your visit to Brussels?

THE PRESIDENT: Mr. Smith, I think it was extremely healthy for the heads of State to get together on this occasion because there had been some difficulties, some traumatic experiences in Southeast Asia. There were rumors to the effect that the United States, because of that experience there, was retreating to an isolationist stature.

It seemed to me that it was wise, under these circumstances, for me to come here representing the United States and speak, so firmly, so unequivocally, as to our commitments to the Alliance, but, in addition, the exchange of views among the heads of State on the need for close cooperation in the economic field -- and I say "the economic field" in the broadest sense.

We recognize that the free world must have a healthy economy if we are to sustain an adequate military stature, and it is important, therefore, that we work together to move us all out of the recession that has been plaguing us for the last few months. And the exchange of views in this area, in my judgment, will be helpful in meeting this particular challenge.

MORE

Of course, within the parameters of the economic problems, we did follow, on the IEA and the OECD, on the questions of energy and other commodities. So, those three areas, particularly, plus, I think, the meeting itself gave the people of the 15 countries a feeling that unity did exist and that we have a solidarity that would continue the blessings we had in the last 26 years.

QUESTION: Mr. President, in your interview with the five foreign journalists last week, you expressed your concern about Portugal, and I wonder if, after your meeting with the Portugal leaders, that concern has been eased or not?

THE PRESIDENT: Mr. Lisagor, we had an extremely candid discussion with the Portuguese Prime Minister and his colleague. The Portuguese Prime Minister explained the goals of the political movement in his country. He explained, in some detail, the political setup as it existed and as they anticipated it would be for a period in the future.

I spoke very frankly about the concern of democratic forces in Portugal, and I particularly emphasized this because, all of us in the Alliance greeted the revolution that took place there about a year ago -- we had much hope, and we had much sympathy for the trend that had developed as a result of that revolution.

Equally, however, I did point out the contradiction that would arise if Communist elements came to dominate the political life of Portugal, and it is my judgment that others among the allies had a somewhat similar concern. There is a general agreement that the situation must be watched with care and concern, but, also, with deep sympathy and friendship of the people of Portugal.

What I said last week, I think, coincides with what I have said today. We are all hopeful, but we have to be watchful.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, after the natural revamp with Spain, what new proposals have you in mind to save the American-Spanish agreement?

THE PRESIDENT: We will be negotiating, of course, with the Spanish Government for the extension of base rights and the bilateral relationship. I don't think it is proper for me at this time to get into the details of those negotiations and the talks that will take place tomorrow.

I might, since the question was raised about Spain, indicate the situation as it developed here in the last 24 or 36 hours. As I think most of you know, I believe very strongly that the role played by Spain through its contribution to Western defense by its bilateral U.S. defense relations is an important one. The bilateral relations that the United States has with Spain, as we see it, does contribute significantly to the defense of the West.

Without speaking personally for any one of the other allies, I think this is an understood fact and hopefully, therefore, the negotiations that you speak of can be concluded successfully.

Now, if I could add one other comment vis-a-vis Spain and the allies, we, the United States, continue to favor a Spanish relationship with the Alliance. We think this is important even though we recognize the unlikelihood of it taking place in the future or the immediate future. But it is an issue that the Alliance must face and we hope that as time moves on there will be a better understanding of it and hopefully a developing relationship.

QUESTION: Mr. President, in your address to the NATO Conference, you talk about partial membership or special arrangements in the Alliance, and we all know that Greece has a special arrangement now and that France has a special arrangement now.

Could you tell us the differences as you see them between those two relationships and what ought to be done with them?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, the comment that was included in my prepared text did not refer to France's permanent relationship. The comment on the text has specific relationship to the circumstances involving Greece.

MORE

As you know, following the Cyprus difficulties of last summer, Greece made a decision to terminate its previous relationship with the allies. It is now in a different relationship than any one of the others in the Alliance. It is a relationship, however, that we hope once the Greek-Turkish dispute is resolved over Cyprus that Greece will return to its previous status within the Alliance, and, of course, the meetings that have been held between Greece and Turkey over the last several months and the meeting that the foreign ministers of Greece and Turkey are having tomorrow, will hopefully lead to some progress in this dispute.

If that progress materializes--the dispute is settled--we are most hopeful that Greece will return to its permanent previous relationship within the Alliance.

QUESTION: Mr. President, the NATO communique refers to the need for deed in terms of the accomplishments projected for the European Security Conference, and you also have referred to that, sir. Also, we have the problem of the SALT negotiations to be concluded.

Do you think, sir, there is any risk that the timetable may be upset which could affect the meeting of the Summit Conference in Washington with Secretary Brezhnev?

THE PRESIDENT: The CSCE negotiations are reaching a point where there is some reasons for optimism. There are some points that must be resolved, but progress is being made.

I am not in a position to forecast when the final agreement will be achieved, if it is, but there is a possibility that the time schedule of several months ago might materialize, and if it does, then I think the follow-on SALT II meeting in Washington can also be on schedule. But in both cases there is no final agreement, so I hesitate to be precise as to a date in either case.

QUESTION: Mr. President, in your head-to-head talks with some of the leaders from the other nations, did you carry the ball in the discussions or did you rely on Secretary Kissinger to do most of the talking?

THE PRESIDENT: Most bilateral discussions between myself and the heads of State were carried out in the traditional fashion. In each case, the foreign minister representing the other government and Secretary Kissinger were present. They were constructive. They were, I think, a free discussion where the parties there fully participated.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, in your meetings with the full Council and the individual heads of State of Government, did there come up in the conversation the difficulties you have had in trying to get a Middle East peace settlement, and did you come away with the feeling that you would have support of the member nations in your efforts in Vienna with President Sadat and later in Washington with Rabin?

THE PRESIDENT: In almost every bilateral meeting, the question of the Middle East did come up. In each instance, we gave our reassessment procedure. We indicated that I was meeting with President Sadat in Salzburg and then subsequently meeting with Prime Minister Rabin in Washington. We pointed out the three alternatives that have been well written about. We indicated that any views or recommendations that might be made by the heads of State or the foreign ministers would be most welcome.

We did reemphasize that our objective in the Middle East peace, that we could not tolerate stagnation or a stalemate. We felt that movement was essential. And the recommendations that I do make sometime the latter part of June, early July, will be a position of movement aimed at the objective of a secure peace in the Middle East, and I think the feeling of the allies here was one of supportive of the general objectives without getting into any of the procedures or the details.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Mr. President.

END

(AT 2:51 P.M. EDT)

PRESS CONFERENCE NO. 13

of the

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

7:31 P.M. EDT
May 6, 1975
Tuesday

In Room 450
In the Old Executive
Office Building
Washington, D.C.

THE PRESIDENT: Will you please sit down.
Good evening.

Miss Thomas?

*needs no
intro*

QUESTION: What are the lessons of Vietnam in terms of the Presidency, the Congress and the American people in terms of secret diplomacy and fighting a land war in Asia, and also, would you welcome a Congressional inquiry into how we got in and how we got out of Vietnam?

THE PRESIDENT: Miss Thomas, the war in Vietnam is over. It was sad and tragic in many respects. I think it would be unfortunate for us to rehash allegations as to individuals that might be to blame or Administrations that might be at fault.

It seems to me that it is over. We ought to look ahead, and I think a Congressional inquiry at this time would only be divisive and not helpful.

Helen

QUESTION: Mr. President, may I ask you, then, don't you think we can learn from the past?

THE PRESIDENT: Miss Thomas, I think the lessons of the past in Vietnam have already been learned, learned by Presidents, learned by Congress, learned by the American people, and we should have our focus on the future. As far as I am concerned, that is where we will concentrate.

Miss Lewine?

MORE

Bar Levine -

Page 2

Sheet 5'1", Start Rain Mid

QUESTION: Mr. President, your forthcoming meetings with Egyptian President Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Rabin, do they represent the beginning of a new American-led negotiation in the Middle East toward a peace settlement?

*to
Daily 40's*

THE PRESIDENT: They do not represent a new negotiating process. I am meeting with President Sadat and Prime Minister Rabin for the purpose of getting from them any recommendations they might have as to how we can maintain the peace in the Middle East, how we can come to some final settlement that will be beneficial to all of the parties.

We are in the process of reassessing our Middle East policy, and they can make a very valuable contribution with their on-the-spot recommendations.

QUESTION: Mr. President, do you now see any hopeful signs that there is any movement there off dead center?

THE PRESIDENT: I am always optimistic. I believe that the leaders of all of the countries, both Arab and Israeli, as well as others, recognize the seriousness of any new military engagement in the Middle East and the ramifications that might come from it.

So, I am optimistic that as we try to move ahead aimed at avoiding a stalemate, avoiding stagnation, that we can work with other countries in order to ensure the peace and a settlement that will be satisfactory to all parties.

MORE

Peter Lisagor
QUESTION: Mr. President, you have been reported as being damned mad about the adverse reaction of the American people to the Vietnamese refugees. I would like to ask you how do you explain that reaction? What in your judgment is the cause of that?

THE PRESIDENT: Mr. Lisagor, I am primarily very upset, because the United States has had a long tradition of opening its doors to immigrants from all countries. We are a country built by immigrants from all areas of the world and we have always been a humanitarian Nation.

And when I read or heard some of the comments made a few days ago, I was disappointed and very upset. I was encouraged this afternoon, however. I understand that the Executive Committee of the AFL-CIO passed a resolution urging that the United States open its doors and make opportunities available for the South Vietnamese who have been driven or escaped from their country.

I understand that the American Jewish Committee has likewise passed a resolution this afternoon endorsing the policy of making opportunities available in the United States for South Vietnamese. And I am very proud of those Governors, like Governor Pryor of Arkansas, Governor Askew of Florida, Governor Longley of Maine, Governor Evans of Washington, Governor Ariyoshi of Hawaii, as well as Mayor Alioto, who have communicated with me and indicated their support for a policy of giving the opportunity of South Vietnamese to come from this country to escape the possibility of death in their country under the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong, and individuals who wanted an opportunity for freedom.

I think this is the right attitude for Americans to take and I am delighted for the support that I have gotten.

MORE

QUESTION: Could I follow that and ask you, why in your judgment is there such a widespread adverse reaction to this?

THE PRESIDENT: I understand the attitude of some. We have serious economic problems. But out of the 120,000 refugees who are either here or on their way, 60 percent of those are children. They ought to be given an opportunity. Only 35,000 heads of families will be moved into our total society.

Now I understand people who are concerned with our economic problems, but we have assimilated between 50,000 and 100,000 Hungarians in the mid-50s and we have brought into this country some 500,000 to 600,000 Cubans. They have been good citizens and we ought to welcome these people in the same way, and despite our economic problems I am convinced that the vast majority of Americans today want these people to have another opportunity to escape the probability of death, and therefore I applaud those who feel that way.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I would like to ask a political question. What steps have you taken so far toward the creation of a campaign organization in 1976, and if you haven't taken any steps, what steps do you plan to take in the future, and when do you plan to take them?

THE PRESIDENT: Within the last week a group headed by Dean Burch have indicated that they would like to get started in a very informal way to kick off a campaign at the proper time. This group is meeting within the next few days, I understand. They expect to get a great many more who will join them.

The precise time when we will take the formal step to declare my candidacy has not yet been determined, but I would only reiterate my intention to become a candidate.

QUESTION: Mr. President, you have said many times that you intend to become a candidate and yet there seems to be continual skepticism in some quarters of your own party that you really will be. Why do you think that skepticism has endured?

THE PRESIDENT: I am surprised myself that there is any skepticism. I know my intention. I have said it repeatedly, as you have indicated. I intend to be a candidate. I believe that I have the best opportunity to solidify the Republican Party, getting strength from both the right as well as the left within the Republican spectrum and to put on a good campaign against the individual that the Democratic Party nominates.

There should be no skepticism about my intention. I will be at the proper time a candidate in a legal sense and no one should feel otherwise.

MORE

Lisiger

Barnes

*in Fred Barnes
Blonde
glasses -
young, early
30's W. Stat
medium
build -*

blue eyes

Cannon

*Lou Cannon -
mustache,
glasses,
redish
brown
short
W. Post*

QUESTION: Mr. President, if I could follow that up. Will you this year be going out and speaking at Republican gatherings doing the kind of political things that Presidents often do in the year before they run for election?

THE PRESIDENT: I undoubtedly will make an effort to help the Republican Party. I think that is a proper function for a President. I did it a week or so ago for the Republican Party in the State of Virginia and I will do similar activities in the future.

But that effort will be aimed at helping the party. We need a strong two-party system and I have a responsibility to try and help the Republican Party.

Miss McGrory, may I congratulate you on your Pulitzer Prize, and I am delighted to recognize you.

QUESTION: Thank you very much, Mr. President.

I was wondering if now that the war is over for everybody and we are admitting many thousands of Vietnamese, including, we are told, some young men who did not obey their country's draft laws, have you reconsidered your position on amnesty towards young Americans?

THE PRESIDENT: Miss McGrory, about six months ago, I initiated a program under former Congressman Charles Goodell and a group of eight others, to grant relief, or amnesty, to some 120,000 individuals who were either deserters or did not comply with the Selective Service laws.

As I recollect, up to a week or so ago, approximately 30,000 out of that group had applied. I assume that most of them will have a change in their status. I hope so.

And therefore, I have taken, I think, a step that was right. It is a good program and I just wish that more had taken advantage of it.

At the present time, we are in the process, or they, the Commission, are in the process of handling the applications. I hope they will expedite and be very generous in their consideration of the records of those who have applied.

There is always a chance in the future if the facts justify it.

MORE

*peacock
Blue shirt,
Blue
suit
he's
true*

Carson

Mary Mc Gray

Tom
Brown
white
brown/maroon
suit

Mustache
young - early
30's

medium
build
brown hair

QUESTION: Even though the war is over, sir, there are many Americans who must still live with the agonies that it caused them. I speak primarily of those wounded and crippled and the families of those who died.

In very human and personal terms, how would you speak to them about the sacrifices that were made?

THE PRESIDENT: First, let me say very emphatically they made a great sacrifice. The 56,000 that died and the countless thousands who were wounded, I honor and respect them and their contribution was most significant. I think their contribution was not in vain.

Five Presidents carried out a national policy. Six Congresses endorsed that policy, which was a policy of our country, and they carried out that responsibility as a member of our Armed Forces.

I think we should praise them, congratulate them, and we have an unbelievable commitment to them in the future. All we can say is, thank you very much for what they have done for freedom.

NBC

QUESTION: Mr. President, you mentioned that you spoke to some Virginia Republicans the weekend before last and at that time, you said that in 1976 we will have some excellent results in foreign policy. After the past few weeks, we can all use a little good news. Can you tell us just what you do expect in 1976?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, I think between now and the end of 1976 we are going to make progress in the negotiations for a SALT II agreement. It hasn't been finalized, but the atmosphere is good.

There is going to be some hard negotiating, but I will approach that important meeting with Mr. Brezhnev aimed at achieving results, and I think his attitude will reflect the same.

I think you are going to find a greater solidarity in Europe. I am going to Europe the latter part of this month to strengthen that solidarity and to work on a more unified position in solving our joint economic problems, in trying to solve the energy problems that are serious for all of us.

It is my judgment that we can move ahead even in the Pacific. We will have to not reassess, but assess, how we can proceed, but it is my aim to tie more closely together South Korea with the United States, to reaffirm our commitments to Taiwan, to work more closely with Indonesia, with the Philippines, and with other Pacific nations. These are the kind of, I believe, forward movements in foreign policy that will be beneficial in the maintenance of peace.

Tom
Cochran
young
early 30's
dark
suit
white
shirt
maroon
tie
light blue
hair
medium
build

Cash

QUESTION: Mr. President, I would very much like to follow that up. *Is your job going to be complicated by what happened in Southeast Asia? You have gone out of your way in the past week or two to say the United States will honor its foreign commitments. What sort of private feedback are you getting in foreign capitals? Is there a lack of confidence now? A loss of confidence in the United States?*

THE PRESIDENT: We do get reactions from foreign governments wondering what our position will be, asking where we will go and what our policy will be. We have indicated to our friends that we will maintain our commitments. We understand the perception that some countries may have as a result of the setback in South Vietnam. But that perception is not a reality because the United States is strong militarily.

The United States is strong economically, despite our current problems, and we are going to maintain our leadership on a worldwide basis, and we want our friends to know that we will stand by them and we want any potential adversaries to know that we will stand up to them.

QUESTION: Mr. President, there have been persistent reports here in Washington that the Rockefeller Commission is looking into reports that somehow or the other, discussions of the assassination of Fidel Castro may have somehow triggered the assassination of John Kennedy. Can you tell us is there any connection between those two events?

THE PRESIDENT: I cannot give you the inside information on the Rockefeller Commission because I established it for the purpose of investigating the CIA and making any recommendations concerning it. It is my understanding that they are taking a very broad look. Until I get their report, I think it would be premature for me to make any comment as to precisely where they are going with their investigation.

Now, as a former member of the Warren Commission, a commission that I think did a good job, we found as a Warren Commission, no connection of anything between Cuba and the United States. We found no evidence of a conspiracy, foreign or domestic.

QUESTION: Mr. President, after eight years of a Republican in the White House, there probably will be a lot of people who next year will say it is time for a change. Now what accomplishments can you cite to rebut the argument that there should be such a change?

MORE

Ball CBS
schiff
checked
sent
usually
with
Godfrey
checked
sent by me,
with sheet

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think there ought to be a change. I strongly believe that a continuation of the basic policies of the last eight years will be good for America, and let me take a minute or two to talk about foreign policy.

A Republican Administration ended the war in Vietnam. They withdrew 550,000 American military personnel. They brought back all of the POW's. The United States under a Republican Administration took the first meaningful steps in trying to control nuclear arms, and I think we are going to have continued success in that area.

In the domestic area, we have gone through a difficult time, but when you look at the overall, a period of eight years, I think domestically there will be far more pluses than minuses and therefore it is my judgment that the American people, if we sell the program properly, we will have an excellent opportunity of prevailing in November of 1976.

Paul QUESTION: Mr. President, on the economic issue, I assume that is what you are saying; but if the economy is at a low ebb next year, if unemployment is about what it is now, can you win?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think the economic concerns in 1976 will be comparable to those today. I think we are at the end of the recession. I believe that we can look forward to some improvement economically in the third and fourth quarters of 1975 and they ought to improve in 1976. Therefore, in my judgment, we will be looking in the future towards better times at home and a good foreign policy abroad.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, events in Indochina outran the deliberative process of the Congress, and you weren't given clearly defined authority to use U.S. forces to evacuate there because of Cambodia and Vietnam.

My question goes to the matter of whether it was a personal dilemma for you as Commander-in-Chief to use U.S. forces without the expressed concurrence of the Congress?

THE PRESIDENT: Our prime objective, of course, both in the evacuation from Phnom Penh and Cambodia and in Saigon was to bring all Americans out of both locations. Now, in the process it did appear to be wise, particularly in Saigon, to take out a number of South Vietnamese.

We did that because, number one, we felt that a number of these South Vietnamese had been very loyal to the United States and deserved an opportunity to live in freedom and secondly, the possibility existed if we had not brought out some South Vietnamese, that there could have been anti-American attitudes develop that would have complicated the evacuation of our American personnel.

So, I felt that what we did could be fully justified in not only evacuating Americans, but evacuating some of the South Vietnamese who wanted to come to the United States.

QUESTION: Secretary Kissinger said that all of the Americans who wanted to leave South Vietnam were evacuated, but there may be some reason to believe not all were evacuated. Some organizations have, for example, reported at least eight missionaries captured in the Northern part of South Vietnam.

So, I am wondering if there is some process to check this sort of thing out and what could be done about it.

THE PRESIDENT: We certainly made a maximum effort to get every American out. We found in the last week that on a certain day they could tell us that there were 1,000 Americans that were ready to come out, and we would take 300 or 400 out and then the next day we would find that a number of other Americans had come into Saigon and wanted to get out.

So, we certainly made a tremendous effort to get all Americans out. I am sure there are some who are left. At this time, I can't give you the specifics as to how we will seek to get any Americans who are still there, but we will do all we can to achieve that result.

MORE

From Journal
Brown suit
being
shirts
labeled
labeled
stuffed
tie
late
30's

Forest
Coyle
Hassess
White
Red & White
Palke
Art
Shut

QUESTION: Mr. President, you praised Ambassador Graham Martin's record in Vietnam, and you have also defended the evacuation of Vietnamese civilians. Yet, there is some evidence that Mr. Martin's actions made it impossible for some Vietnamese to escape who were longstanding employees of the U.S. Government and others were evacuated on the basis of their ability to pay.

Have you investigated any of these charges and do you still believe that Ambassador Martin's record is one of effectiveness?

THE PRESIDENT: Because of the ability of Ambassador Martin to handle a tough situation -- and it was very difficult -- we got all Americans out and we got roughly 120,000-plus South Vietnamese.

Now, I am familiar with some individuals who are critical of the way in which Ambassador Martin handled it. I never had much faith in Monday morning quarterbacks or grandstand quarterbacks. I would rather put faith in the man who carried out a very successful evacuation of Americans and a tremendous number of South Vietnamese.

Rather than be critical of somebody who I think did a good job, I think we ought to praise him. If some of these people want to, in hindsight, who didn't have the responsibility, criticize him, I think we will accept it for what it is worth.

MORE

mark
my
stupid
and
stupid
passes,
Dark
shit
blind
the
early 30's
husband
Hoffa
Longfellow

QUESTION: Mr. President, there has been some referencetonight to the economic situation. The overall unemployment rate is nine percent but among black teenagers and young black males and some other minority groups it is three times that. What plans do you have to cope with the social consequences of that kind of unemployment?

THE PRESIDENT: We are concerned about the unemployment of the youth, particularly, and the highest percentage, of course, of unemployment falls in the black youth group.

I submitted to the Congress about a month ago a request for \$450 million, as I recollect, to fund a young people's employment program for this coming summer.

Now, unfortunately, the Congress has not approved that funding and the steps that have been taken, I think, will hamper the possibility of getting that funding to meet this problem, and they have added about \$3 billion over and above extra funding that I don't think can be justified.

If the Congress would approve the request that I made for roughly \$450 million, we would be in a position right now to do something about the problem that you raise.

QUESTION: Mr. President, the record of recent years is that that kind of summer jobs and that kind of thing has not prevented what really is a chronic long-term problem of 30 percent unemployment among young minority groups. What I am really asking is this: A great many economists think instead of coming out of this recession dramatically, we are just going to have a long period of stagflation where we don't have a really serious situation, but we don't have things very well indeed, and this kind of chronic unemployment among minority groups just persists.

What I am trying to find out is other than summer jobs and that kind of thing, do you think this is really a serious problem that the United States ought to address and try to do something about and if you do, what are your plans for it?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. I think it is a serious problem, but the most important problem is to meet the present difficulty which begins with the end of the school year, and that is why I think the Congress ought to act quickly on the request that I made for summer employment.

MORE

Jim Dean
Mid 40's
Classes
hair
combined
dark
hair
all
hair
major
Mid
height

palmer dot he
Reader

Now, in the long run, the best way to get the young people properly employed in our economy is to have a healthy economy, not a Government-dominated economy. I think we are in the process of coming out of the recession. I am optimistic in the future and when we, in the third and fourth quarters of this year, have the success that I think we are going to have, some of the problems will be answered that you have raised.

Mr. Jones?

QUESTION: You apparently had some intelligence reports about a bloodbath in Cambodia. I am wondering if you can bring us up to date on anything in this area in Cambodia and whether or not there is any report of a bloodbath in South Vietnam?

THE PRESIDENT: We do have some intelligence reports to the effect that in Cambodia some 80 or 90 former Cambodian officials were executed and, in addition, their wives were executed.

This is very hard intelligence. That is, I think, very factual evidence of the bloodbath that has taken place or is in the process of taking place in Cambodia.

Now, a turn to Vietnam. As you know, there is a very tight censorship in South Vietnam. The news that gets out is pretty heavily controlled by the North Vietnamese and by the Viet Cong. So, we really don't have the same kind of hard evidence there that we have had in Cambodia in the instance that I have indicated.

But I think probably the best evidence of the probability is that 120,000-plus South Vietnamese fled because they knew that the probability existed, that if they stayed, their life would be in jeopardy.

That is the best evidence of what probably will take place.

MORE

Phil Jones
South Vietnam
recession
Law
Green
Print

QUESTION: Mr. President, if I may follow up on this, you say you don't have any hard evidence. Do you have any report, any intelligence reports that indicate this is going on?

THE PRESIDENT: At the moment, we have not.

QUESTION: May I ask you something, sir, and simply a matter of style and nothing of substance. Reading Mr. Hersey, who has spent a week with you, and reading others, you seem to be a kind of a peaceful, quiet man, a placid man. Do you ever get mad at people? Do you ever chew people out? Do you yell? Do you fire people? Do you kick people around?

THE PRESIDENT: I have learned to control my temper. I get very upset internally, but I have learned that that is not the best way to solve a problem. I do have occasional outbursts on the golf course, but in dealing with people I have found that the best way to meet a personnel problem or to handle a serious matter where a decision has to be made, that if you can keep cool, you can make a better decision. I have learned that over a long period of time.

QUESTION: If I may follow up, sir, you were described as very angry about those rumors that you were going through a political charade and were secretly not going to run -- this story in the news magazine a week or so ago. How did you express yourself?

THE PRESIDENT: I didn't shout.

QUESTION: They said you were damn mad.

THE PRESIDENT: I didn't raise the devil with anybody. I simply indicated to my staff that the stories were totally untrue, which they are, and that no such meeting took place where such a policy was outlined by me.

I found the best way to handle the matter is to be very firm, very calm, but very forthright, dealing not only with my staff, but with others. I think they understand what I mean by the way I say it, but you don't have to shout to do it.

MORE

*After
rumors
passed
around
I
heard
set
Halliburton
no de
I was
the shirt*

QUESTION: Mr. President, Attorney General Levi has proposed banning of handguns in high crime areas, and the Justice Department says that the White House cleared that position before he made it clear.

Does that represent an extension of your proposal that the Saturday night specials only be controlled?

THE PRESIDENT: It is my understanding that the Attorney General, when he made that speech, indicated that this was an alternative way of meeting the problem created by Saturday night specials.

It is my understanding that he didn't recommend this as the way to handle the problem. I think it is a unique approach, and it is being discussed with the Department of Justice within our Domestic Council, but there is no firm decision on whether that approach or any other approach is the right way to meet the problem.

QUESTION: Do you expect effective gun control legislation to be passed, and are you going to get behind effective control?

THE PRESIDENT: I am not going to recommend the registration of gun owners, and I am not going to recommend the registration of guns, or handguns, I should say.

If we can find some responsible way to do it other than that approach, we certainly will consider them.

MORE

Ask Nelson Bureau Chief of Times
Stellen
ask
talk
mid 30's
June 1964
pres

QUESTION: Mr. President, a growing number of Americans, lower and middle class, are being priced out of the housing market, and now there is new evidence that mortgage rates may be turning around, and indeed the FHA has increased its rate by half a percentage. Can you tell the American people tonight that makers of houses, potential buyers of houses -- can you give them any assurance that in the next months, the next year or two, more housing will be available at relatively moderate prices and that interest rates will stay down?

THE PRESIDENT: The most encouraging development in the housing area is the fact that the inflow of deposits in the savings and loans has gone up very substantially. It is my recollection that in the last reported month about \$4 billion in deposits flowed into savings and loans and that over the last three months it has been a very favorable inflow into the S and L's. This means, of course, that there is money available for home buyers and it is my judgment that once we start the upturn from the present recession that the consumer interest in buying homes will increase significantly and with the money available in the S and L's, I think the prospects for an upturn in the housing industry are very encouraging.

QUESTION: Do you then approve the FHA increase, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: I approve the increase because if you are going to have FHA handling of mortgages, if you are going to have the government guarantees, they must be competitive with other interest rates, and I happen to think that an FHA loan or a VA loan, either are very good, and we want those competitive with the regular conventional interest rates, and therefore to make them competitive I agreed with the decision.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very, very much.

END (AT 8:05 P.M. EDT)

*Jerry
O. Powell
tree,
Garry
Bull
like
brown
Dentist*

Jerry O. Powell