

[3-29-75]

## Telegram

NÖ. WDS.—CL. OF SVC.	PD. OR COLL.	CASH NO.	CHARGE TO THE ACCOUNT OF	THIS MESSAGE WILL BE SENT AS A TELEGRAM UNLESS IT IS OTHERWISE INDICATED.	PRESS		OVER NIGHT TELEGRAM
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and the following message, subject to the Telegraph Company's conditions, rules and regulations, which are on file with regulatory authorities.

POOL REPORT 3/29/75

The President came back ~~at~~ about 10:15. He was wearing a blue Air Force One jacket with "Jerry Ford" on a label over ~~kix~~ the left side of his chest, under the Presidential seal. He was asked about his decision to sign the tax bill and responded: "It was a tough call.X...I think it was the right decision." Asked if it was the toughest he has ever made, he said: "No it wasn't, but it was as tough as any. But it was a tough call." He was asked about the situation in South Vietnam and he countered with a smile and said: "Let's talk about Easter." Asked to assess the situation in Vietnam, he replied: "I'll talk to you about that on Thursday." (A reference to his San Diego ~~ix~~ news conference.

Asked about his schedule in Palm Springs, he said it was "going to be work 3/4ths of the time." He said "it will give Betty an opportunity to get some real good sun, which she needs very badly."

The First Lady also stopped in the press section a few minutes after the President went forward. Helen asked ~~zhunk~~ whether she had a new Easter outfit. She said she didn't. "It's not important what I wear," adding that the day itself is what is important. She said that son Jack would be visiting. He is a student at Utah State University. Asked if she had been to Palm Springs before, she said ~~zhunkzhunkzhunkzhunkzhunk~~ the last time was Easter a year ago, but that they had been there many times. Asked about her plans in Palm Springs, she said: "I hope lots of swimming." She noted that the Fred Wilsons have grandchildren, so they had three pools: "one for ~~zhunkzhunk~~ kiddies, one for adults and one for ~~X~~ beauty." Asked about the ERA amendment,

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she said: "If we don't make it this year, we'll make it next year." Asked if she is feeling well, Mrs. Ford replied, "I really do. I feel fine." She was wearing a brown two-piece suede ~~xxxx~~ suit.

Nessen appeared early in the flight to offer some additional comments on the President's statement on the use of American ships to rescue South Vietnamese refugees at Da Nang. He described the ~~x~~ plan as "part of an international humanitarian effort." He said other countries have indicated they will participate: Australia, United Kingdom, Nationalist China, Philippines.

He said: "Our vessels will not enter the combat areas or participate in any hostilities." He said the "requisite members of Congress have been notified." He said he did not know which members have been contacted, but explained that this was being handled by John Marsh. And Nessen said a lot of the members had been sent ~~18881~~ cables.

Nessen offered a lengthy defense of the ship rescue operation. He cited section three of the War Powers Act, saying it "requires that members of Congress be consulted ~~xxxx~~ only when U.S. forces are introduced into situations involving hostilities or where hostilities are imminent. And that is not the case with this evacuation. Nevertheless, the White House is informing members of Congress in keeping with the spirit of the war powers act. ~~xxxxx~~ Involvement in hostilities will be avoided."

Then he mentioned a second law which might be applicable: the August 1973 law prohibiting ~~the~~ U.S. military forces in Indochina. "This action does not violate that law." He said

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this ~~is~~ prohibits U.S. military forces from becoming involved in hostilities. "And this humanitarian effort is not designed to become involved in hostilities."

He also said the action does not violate the 1973 Paris peace accords "because these refugees were created by violations by the North Vietnamese and the United States is not bound to refrain from humanitarian efforts by the Paris peace accords."

He explained that the President's authority had been verified by the legal counsel's offices at the White House and the Pentagon.

Nessen would not say how the idea of using ships had been ~~developed~~ initiated. But said Ford had talked about "his ideas" earlier in the week with Kissinger and Schlesinger.

As if the President still thinks the Thieu government can survive, Nessen replied: "As far as I know." Asked if the President believes Thieu should remain in office, Nessen said: "He's the elected head of the government. What has he to do with the Communist attacks?" Describing the military situation, Nessen ~~said~~ said: "The government is pulling back to what it considers a line it can defend. President Thieu and his generals have to draw that line. It's their war. They're fighting the war. The White House can't tell you where that line is."

No briefing Sunday. No word on social events. ~~Among~~ Among those on board: Rumsfeld, Hartmann and wife, Greenspan, Nessen and family, Lukash, Sheila Weidenfeld.

es,

Girard, Healy