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THE WHITE HOUSE

PRESS CONFERENCE
OF
ARTHUR A. HARTMAN
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

BRUSSELS SHERATON HOTEL

1:16 P.M. EDT

MR. NESSEN: For a briefing on this morning's bilateral meetings with the President, we have the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, Arthur A. Hartman.

Mr. Hartman.

MR. HARTMAN: I might begin by saying there were three bilateral sessions this morning. The President had breakfast with the Luxembourg Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, Gaston Thorn.

He then had a bilateral meeting with the Greek Prime Minister, Prime Minister Caramanlis, and a further meeting with the Turkish Prime Minister, Prime Minister Demirel.

In the discussions with the Greek and Turkish Prime Ministers, the President was very anxious to point out the will of the United States to be as helpful as possible in helping them to solve the problems and the outstanding issues between them.

He discussed with the Greek Prime Minister the situation in Greece. He pointed out that we give our full and total support to the Greek Prime Minister in his efforts to return Greece to the Democratic Government, and that we are very pleased with the progress that has been made in Greece.

It gave the President an opportunity to hear at first hand from the Greek Prime Minister the situation as he sees it on the Cyprus problem and on the difficulties in the Aegean.

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The United States did not put forward any proposal of its own, but mainly an opportunity to hear an in-depth briefing on their point of view and to express to the Greek Prime Minister our desire to be as helpful as we can be in moving this situation toward a peaceful solution.

With the Turkish Prime Minister, the President also had an opportunity to hear from him the Turkish point of view. A good part of the discussion was devoted to the Turkish Prime Minister expressing the views of his Government and the people of Turkey about the action of the United States Congress in cutting off military assistance and sales to Turkey.

He particularly expressed the difficulties that the Turkish Government had in explaining to the Turkish people the reasons for a complete embargo against a NATO ally for reasons which they do not accept as valid in terms of our bilateral relationship.

Again, the President expressed the view of his Administration that efforts would be made to restore aid to Turkey and to remove the embargo. At the same time, the President stressed his desire to be helpful in seeing that negotiations on the outstanding problems that brought about this situation are dealt with and that the Cyprus situation, particularly, is settled by negotiations.

With Prime Minister Thorn, it was mainly a discussion of U.S.-European nations, the state of the Alliance, a preview of some of the things I am sure the President will be saying this afternoon to the Atlantic Council, a discussion of the economic situation and the progress that is being made, both in the United States and in Europe, toward dealing with the recession and inflation problem that has plagued both the United States and Europe.

Mr. Thorn also expressed his pleasure with the results of the meetings that took place in Paris of the International Energy Agency, and the VOECD.

So, with that, I will take questions.

Q Mr. Hartman, did the President discuss with Mr. Caramanlis the Turkish weapon situation in Congress?

MR. HARTMAN: It was mentioned as a factor which inhibited our ability to influence the Turkish Government at this time.

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Q Mr. Hartman, did the Turkish Prime Minister discuss the question of the future of American bases in Turkey if the arms embargo is not lifted?

MR. HARTMAN: I would say only indirectly that he said that there were questions being raised in Turkey about the compatibility of common defense efforts with an embargo imposed by the United States, but there was no detailed discussion.

Q Can you tell us what the President's response was to that?

MR. HARTMAN: The President, I think, expressed his understanding of the difficulty of explaining these factors to the Turkish public.

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Q Mr. Hartman, was the impression given that any progress was made toward a Turkish-Greek settlement by these meetings?

MR. HARTMAN: The question is whether any progress has been made toward a settlement of these issues in these two meetings.

I think you can't say that progress was made in these meetings. We are very pleased that the Greek and Turkish Prime Ministers will be meeting, I believe, on Saturday.

There will also be a meeting of the two foreign ministers and we will follow those meetings with great interest.

The Secretary will be seeing both foreign ministers again tomorrow for the purpose of getting further information about the status of the talks and hearing whether there is anything we can do to be helpful in either the current discussions or in future discussions that may take place.

Q Was there anything said about restraining Turkey from using any arms in the future that we would give her against an ally? It seems to me if you are supplying a nation of NATO, it should not be attacking its fellow members.

MR. HARTMAN: The Turkish Prime Minister went into the history of this problem in some detail and expressed the point of view of the Turkish government that they were acting in a way which they felt was consistent with their international agreements, and particularly the guarantee agreements that were originally set up in the state of Cyprus.

Therefore, they don't accept the logic of that point that they would not act in accordance with those agreements. They did not ask us to comment on that explanation of the history and we tried to keep the focus of the discussion on how one deals with the problems that we are faced with today and how we can help to get both the communal talks between the two Cypriot communities, which have started in Vienna and will pick up again in June, and to also stimulate a better relationship between Greece and Turkey on the basis of these talks that have already started between the foreign ministers in Rome a week ago, and are continuing here in Brussels today.

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Q How can you help do that?

MR. HARTMAN: I think it is too early. We have already, I think, been of some assistance in encouraging them to begin this dialogue and I think for the specifics, that will have to await a further development of their thoughts.

Q Did the President hold out to Prime Minister Demirel any prospect for House approval of the Senate-passed bill to end the arms embargo?

MR. HARTMAN: The situation was discussed and the Senate action was pointed to as one sign of the Administration's activity, but there was no detailed assessment of what happened in the next phase.

Q Did the President suggest to the Greeks or the Turks that they make any kind of concession to get the process going?

MR. HARTMAN: No, we have been very careful to not put forward any proposals of our own, although in previous discussions, the Secretary has conveyed his impression of the position of one side to the other side, but we have not put forward any suggestions of our own.

Q Did the Prime Minister say anything about the future of any American bases in view of the displeasure of the one vote majority?

MR. HARTMAN: First, there was no specific link to the one vote majority. There was only this general statement made about the difficulty of explaining to the Turkish people the continuation of a bilateral mutual assistance and security relationship at a time when one of the parties had imposed an embargo.

Q Was there a discussion by the Greeks today of the Greek's relation with NATO and its allies?

MR. HARTMAN: There was no discussion of that, although the Greek Prime Minister explained the reasons for the action that the Greek government took shortly after the Cyprus crisis broke.

Q Did the American side get the impression that Greece and/or Turkey now realizes there is no more domestic political gain to be gotten out of the Cyprus crisis?

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MR. HARTMAN: Domestic political gain in the United States?

Q In their own countries.

MR. HARTMAN: I think the basis for that question, I don't think I accept that. That is, that both governments are doing this for the purpose of a domestic political gain.

I think there are definitely in both countries extreme political pressures on the leadership in terms of dealing with the Cyprus crisis. In the case of Turkey, there is a rather fragile coalition and differing views in the coalition as to how the Cyprus problem, among others, should be dealt with.

And in Greece, there is no doubt that the Prime Minister is under some pressures, as well, and he has acted with great restraint in dealing with the Cyprus situation.

Q Could I rephrase it? Do you think, after those talks, both Greece and Turkey understand that the international peril of the situation outweighs any domestic peril in their own countries?

MR. HARTMAN: I don't want to give an assessment of their understanding. All I can say is we have stressed that we think an early settlement not only would be of benefit to countries in the area but would be essential for Atlantic Alliance reasons and also, to avoid a further deterioration that might occur if the situation were allowed to drag on.

Q Was there any indication of softening the position by Turkey on refugee zonal questions that would help to start a settlement?

MR. HARTMAN: We didn't get into that kind of detail and I think it would be inappropriate for me to comment just before they are going to get into their talks, or negotiations.

Q Did the Portuguese situation come up at all in the bilateral discussions this morning?

MR. HARTMAN: It was briefly mentioned at the breakfast with Prime Minister Thorn just as a matter of some concern as to what the developments were and what the outlook was.

Q Did Prime Minister Caramanlis give any indication of how his government would react in the event the arms embargo against Turkey were lifted? We are only getting one side of that story.

MR. HARTMAN: The answer is no.

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Q Didn't he express his views on that, Mr. Secretary?

MR. HARTMAN: No, I think the Greek Government and the Greek Prime Minister have been at some pains not to express a view about what they consider to be a domestic issue in the United States, one way or the other.

Q Mr. Hartman, was there any discussion of the territorial waters dispute?

MR. HARTMAN: No, the Aegean was mentioned, but there was not.

Q In the case of Portugal, did the President ask Luxembourg to go along with any ouster of Portugal from NATO?

MR. HARTMAN: No, he did not.

Q What did he say?

MR. HARTMAN: There was just expression of concern about developments there, and I think both the Luxembourg Prime Minister and the President are looking forward to their discussions with the Portuguese Ministers who are here for the NATO meeting.

Q For about ten weeks now we have been told that Turkey will begin closing down American bases within two weeks. When do you expect Turkey to begin closing down American bases, particularly in light of the President's meeting?

MR. HARTMAN: I don't know who has been telling you we expect it in two weeks. I think we have been saying there is a growing amount of press and political pressure in Turkey, but there was no specific action indicated in the conversations.

Q At issue in the Congress is compliance with an American law governing the military aid. Did the President discuss at all how Turkey could be brought into compliance with that law?

MR. HARTMAN: I think there was an indirect discussion of the opinion in the Congress as to the views behind the action by the Congress. There was a long explanation by the Turkish authorities on why they had taken their action and why they believed that their action was constant with international agreements.

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There was no specific discussion of the legal situation in the United States. As you know, the President feels that this embargo is not helpful in terms either of moving the negotiations on Cyprus along or keeping our Alliance relationship with Turkey or keeping the security situation settled in the Eastern Mediterranean.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

ENd (AT 1:29 P.M. Brussels Time)