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N E W S C O N F E R E N C E

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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH JERRY TER HORST

AT 1:25 P.M. EDT

AUGUST 26, 1974

MONDAY

MR. TER HORST: My apologies for keeping you waiting. I know you don't like it any better than I did. The problem was that several things were occurring which I felt you wanted to know about, and rather than wait until later, I thought it best to try to delay you minimally now so I could give you the information I have to give you.

As you know, the President met with his Cabinet to discuss the economic summit. I have something I can give you on that, but let me go through the announcements first and then we will take questions afterward.

Earlier he met with Counsellor Kenneth Rush, the Chairman of the steering committee for the economic summit, and the Executive Director, William Siedman. He also met this morning with General Haig, Secretary Kissinger and myself.

As you know, just about now the President will greet about 160 youngsters who participated in the Little League Baseball World Series in Williamsport, Pennsylvania last week. Those who watched the Saturday afternoon television show noted that the team from Taiwan won its fourth state championship.

The President will greet the eight teams, which reached the world series, in the State Dining Room.

That is all the schedule I can give you at the moment for the day, but as other items develop, we will post those.

I don't have a schedule to give you for Tuesday, but on Wednesday the President will hold his first news conference. The time has not been finally nailed down, but the press conference will be in the East Room and it will be a live television, full-scale news conference.

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Q Do you have a rough time frame?

MR. TER HORST: I am not certain yet, but stay flexible. It certainly won't be in the morning.

At the Cabinet meeting today, the President presented his plans for the summit conference on inflation, which will be held September 27 and 28. The President says that the conference will be asked to achieve five goals. I will read them off in order.

One is to clarify the Nation's present economic condition. The second is to identify the causes of inflation. The third is to develop a consensus, if possible, on basic policies to deal with inflation. The fourth is to consider new and realistic approaches to the inflation problem, and the fifth will be the area of defining hardship areas requiring immediate action.

As you know, Mr. Seidman has been actively involved in trying to organize this series of meetings leading up to the summit, as well as the summit itself, and he has agreed to be available to you at 3 o'clock today here in this room to discuss with you and take your questions on the economic summit, and the reasons and the approaches to it that have been developed.

I have a couple of other announcements, also.

The Chinese People Institute of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China has invited a bipartisan Congressional delegation to visit China for two weeks, I believe, beginning September 2.

Q How many weeks?

MR. TER HORST: For two weeks. The delegation will be headed by Senator J. William Fulbright, with Representative Peter Frelinghuysen of New Jersey as deputy leader. The delegation will include Representatives Clement Zablocki of Wisconsin, William Broomfield of Michigan, Senator Hiram Fong of Hawaii, Senator Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota, and Representative Barbara Jordan of Texas.

Q Will there be more, Jerry?

MR. TER HORST: No, that is the delegation that will be going. The details of the trip were agreed to in principle during Secretary of State Kissinger's trip to Peking in November 1973, and those details are now being worked out between White House officials and State Department officials in consultation with the liaison office of the PRC.

Q Is that seven in all?

MR. TER HORST: I believe that is correct, yes.

Q How did this particular group get chosen, Jerry?

MR. TER HORST: The selection, as I say, was worked out also between the officials of the White House, the State Department, the Members of Congress and the liaison office of the People's Republic of China. Senator Fulbright obviously is Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee. Mr. Frelinghuysen and Mr. Zablocki have been very active in foreign affairs committees of the House; Mr. Broomfield is a Member of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House, and Senator Humphrey obviously is on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Just for your background information, this will be the sixth delegation of American officials to visit China since the Administration initiated efforts to normalize relations with the PRC, beginning with President Nixon's visit to Peking in February 1972.

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Q Jerry, does that mean this is the sixth group since the President went?

MR. TER HORST: Well, yes; I think you have to look at it that way because Henry Kissinger's trips prior to that -- I am not counting those.

Q Who will they be meeting in Peking?

MR. TER HORST: I think if you would check with the State Department they would probably give you further guidance along that line.

Q Why was Mrs. Jordan chosen?

MR. TER HORST: I think you could ask her yourself and you could ask the State Department.

I have a couple of other announcements also.

Israeli Prime Minister Rabin has accepted the President's invitation to meet in Washington during the first half of September. I don't have the precise date to announce. We hope to do that later.

On BACKGROUND, I could tell you that it will probably begin about the 10th of September.

I have another announcement. The President has signed H.R. 7218 relating to District of Columbia insurance laws. We will post details on that bill.

I believe that is the extent of the announcements I have.

Q Jerry, do you have any information on the format of this economic summit conference?

MR. TER HORST: In what way, Ralph?

Q Well, will it be an open meeting? Will it be televised? The President spoke about every American in a sense participating. I wondered what the physical arrangements were.

MR. TER HORST: The summit itself will be available for coverage and will be open in that sense, but leading up to it will be a series of meetings covering a broad spectrum of the economy, and I think Mr. Seidman is going to be prepared to speak to that, both directly and through your questions when he is here at three o'clock. But there are a number of meetings scheduled designed to lead up to this economic summit.

The meeting this morning with the Cabinet was the first opportunity the full Cabinet had to consider any discussion on the summit conference on inflation. Obviously preliminary meetings have already taken place with those members who will probably chair certain of the summit meetings or the preliminary summit meetings.

As you know, there is a Joint Executive Legislative Steering Committee involved in this composed of Senators Humphrey and Tower, Congressmen Conable and McFall, and for the Administration, Alan Greenspan, Kenneth Rush, Roy Ash, and William Simon.

I think probably rather than my trying to give you capsule form about it, it would be better if you could wait another hour and get Mr. Seidman on the record.

Q When can we expect the Director of the Cost of Living Council?

MR. TER HORST: I think the President hopes to make that announcement in a day or two. Not only the Director but also the membership of the Council itself.

Q I wanted to ask a question about amnesty, if I may -- a two-party question. First, to your knowledge did the President ever, while he was Congressman or Vice President, ask for such amnesty -- that is, before amnesty was apparently needed by Mr. Nixon?

MR. TER HORST: Les, the position of the President prior to becoming President is that he did not favor unconditional or blanket amnesty.

Q Did he favor any kind of amnesty, conditional?

MR. TER HORST: I am not aware that he addressed himself to any details or breakdown of it, but I do know that was then and remains his firm position.

Q Following that up, earlier this year Attorney General Saxbe made the following statement in pleading these two sentences: "One man goes to prison for years for theft while another man involved in a conspiracy to steal our freedoms is out of jail in the wink of an eye. As we have seen in Water-gate men who have held positions of great power have defaulted on their oaths of office and to the responsibility they owe the public."

Does President Ford agree or disagree with that statement?

MR. TER HORST: I think if you look again at the President's speech in Chicago to the Veterans of Foreign War on the amnesty question, he rather well outlined his overall views that he wanted the Secretary of Defense and the Attorney General and other agents of the Government and people outside the governmental sphere with an interest in the matter of amnesty to put on his desk by September 1 a list of recommendations dealing with methods in which these young men could earn their way back to American society and he also spoke -- I think he used the word not only of earned re-entry but "working your way back."

Q Has he invited Senator Taft and some of the other sponsors of that sort of legislation to give their input on that?

MR. TER HORST: I am sure they are covered under his hope that they will touch base with everyone who has had a concern in this matter.

Q Did you, by the way, confirm that Senator Taft was down here working with some of your people before the President's announcement?

MR. TER HORST: I have not been able to confirm that, no.

Q Was Mr. Ford, when he was Vice President, aware that Secretary Kissinger and the Joint Chiefs of Staff were keeping a very close watch on the military and military developments less something untoward happen, and if so, how close consultation was he involved in and what was the major worry?

MR. TER HORST: I discussed those reports that have emanated over the weekend with the President and I can give you a direct quote from the President on this subject if you would like to take it. These are the President's words: "I had a meeting today with the Secretary of Defense. We discussed the matter and I have been assured that no measures of this nature were actually undertaken."

Q Measures of what nature?

MR. TER HORST: The President was responding to me regarding the press reports which were in various papers today and also over the weekend concerning the fact, as Mort mentioned, that there was supposed to have been some unusually close control over the lines of command.

Q Is he saying that the Secretary of Defense told him that no unusual measures were taken to ensure against military action or is he saying that no military action actually was undertaken?

MR. TER HORST: He is saying no measures of this nature were actually undertaken.

Q In the Defense Department or on the part of the White House regarding the Defense Department?

MR. TER HORST: He is talking about the Defense Department which is the nature of the story.

Q When you say "actually undertaken" do you mean it was thought about, bandied about?

MR. TER HORST: I believe that at least one newspaper account quotes Defense Secretary Schlesinger on the record and as I recall, his quotation was that in keeping with the statutory responsibilities he had to assure himself that there would be no question about the proper constitutional and legislative chain of command, that there never was any question in his mind.

And I would think for any further detail on that, you would have to go to the Defense Department.

Q Did Schlesinger make an inquiry about the chain of command or didn't he at the time? I mean, did he inquire into the situation at the time during the five days?

MR. TER HORST: I think I will have to let you go to the Pentagon for that answer, Helen. I can give you the President's statement over again, but I can't go beyond it. The President has been assured by the Secretary of Defense that no measures of this nature, as described in the various articles, were actually undertaken.

Q That leaves open the suggestion that there were certain standby measures.

MR. TER HORST: I can't address that specifically, but as is well-known, not only at the White House level but at every agency of Government, whether it is domestic or foreign responsible officials are expected to be alert to situations as they develop, no matter what the situation is, and to think ahead down the road.

Now, the President has said that Secretary of Defense Schlesinger has assured him that despite the report in the paper, no measures of this kind were actually undertaken.

Q The Secretary's concern was that the President might issue an order without going through the normal chain of command. Did the Secretary mention that?

MR. TER HORST: I will have to ask you to take that question up with the Defense Department precisely, but I can tell you, as is obvious to everyone in this room, that the chain of command and the system of the United States Government worked pretty well during those days of travail and trauma.

Q When you refer us to the Defense Department, are you saying they are authorized to discuss this whole matter with us?

MR. TER HORST: No, I can't say that. They will speak for themselves, but they certainly are aware of your interest in this, and I think they are prepared to take your questions.

Q Are they prepared to give us any answer? That is the question.

MR. TER HORST: Why don't you ask the Pentagon.

Q Has the President or have you authorized Friedheim to give us a detailed discussion of what went on during this period? If you haven't, you know, it is like spit in the wind.

MR. TER HORST: I have not directly advised Mr. Friedheim or the Secretary of Defense either for that matter. They are aware of the stories that have appeared in the paper, obviously. The President is aware of the stories that have appeared in the paper, and that is the reason we went to the, I think, rather special length to give you the statement I have just given you.

I think the thing to remember is that despite what may appear to be news accounts dealing with a hypothetical situation that the military chain of command, the Department of Defense, along with all other agencies of Government, performed and functioned as we all would expect them under the Constitution during those days which we have just gone through.

Q Jerry, you used the word these measures were never actually undertaken. Does that refer to the reported monitoring, careful care to watch about lines of communication? Is that what kind of action or measures you are talking about?

MR. TER HORST: I can't specify the measures. I am talking about the accounts in the paper and the President says he has been assured that no measures of this nature were actually undertaken.

Q No measures of what sort?

MR. TER HORST: I think if you read the news accounts they will tell you. I don't see any reason I should read the news accounts to you here.

Q There were two possible actions. One is that Schlesinger and the Joint Chiefs watched very closely. That is one kind. The other is what they were watching for, the possibility of unconstitutional military actions either directed by the White House or someone else.

Which kind of measures were never actually undertaken, the monitoring or the military?

MR. TER HORST: The President's statement is a blanket one, and I would suggest that you address your other questions to the Secretary of Defense and his people there.

Q Did the President call the Secretary of Defense in here ahead of the Cabinet meeting for this talk?

MR. TER HORST: He talked to the Secretary of Defense following the Cabinet meeting for some length.

Q Can I try to interpret this to see if I am on the right wave length with you? The Secretary has told the President, as you understand, that he had no special interest and took no special concern during this period with the possibility of unconstitutional actions from anyone outside the Pentagon?

MR. TER HORST: Well, I can't go beyond what the President himself is saying, Henry, and the President's statement is on the record that he had discussed this matter with the Secretary of Defense, and he has been assured that no measures of this nature were actually undertaken. I don't know how I can push it beyond that for you.

Q That leaves a broad field that Schlesinger was thinking about it, that he did stay in Washington during that time and was keeping close tabs and investigating his own responsibilities and you are not answering any of that.

MR. TER HORST: I can't very well speak for the Secretary of Defense. He can speak for himself and so can his people.

Q You are speaking for him now.

MR. TER HORST: No, I am speaking for the President in regard to a meeting with the Secretary.

Q What did the President ask the Secretary this morning?

MR. TER HORST: I did not sit in on the meeting.

Q Something in those news reports concerned him. What was the general area of concern?

MR. TER HORST: I think the news reports speak for themselves. They spoke of a potential risk to the constitutional processes of the military being under a firm civilian control and I think a matter of that nature would be of great concern to any Chief Executive.

Q He was concerned that he might have a "Seven Days in May" situation or the military would unilaterally take some sort of action?

MR. TER HORST: I can't speak to your description of it, but what I am saying is that you have in the President's own words his view of the situation, and I think further development of this would have to come from the Pentagon.

Q Jerry, the problem is that the phrase, "No measures of this nature" is floating out in mid-air somewhere unrelated to what measures and what nature we are talking about.

MR. TER HORST: The news accounts, as I recall them, spoke of the things that Mort mentioned earlier, the so-called monitoring, and the so-called shortened lines of command, and that sort of thing. Those were in the news accounts.

Whether those things actually were taken, I think, are matters that you will have to ask the Pentagon about, Secretary Schlesinger's office, but the President has been assured that no measures of this nature were taken.

Q Jerry, then does that mean that the President believes the stories are incorrect?

MR. TER HORST: The President is certain or has been assured at least, by the Secretary of Defense, that no measures of this nature were actually undertaken, Fred. I can't push it beyond the President's words.

Q Would you be willing to deny the stories?

MR. TER HORST: I am not denying any accounts. I am suggesting to you that you take them up with the Secretary of Defense.

Q Can I ask, are you denying there was monitoring?

MR. TER HORST: I am not denying or confirming anything, Helen. I am not in a position to.

Q We don't know what you are saying.

Q Can you find out whether the President has consulted with the Speaker of the House about this whole situation of the Defense Department's involvement in the case succession?

MR. TER HORST: To my knowledge that has not been done.

Q Jerry, when the President was Vice President, was he ever informed by Secretary of Defense Schlesinger, Mr. Kissinger, or General Haig that any such efforts of this kind were underway or even contemplated? Was he involved in the process?

MR. TER HORST: He certainly was not.

Q Jerry, if it wasn't undertaken, why wasn't it? Given the fact that Mr. Connally suggested that the President defy the Supreme Court, that is one branch of Government, what would keep him -- and we were told by Mr. St. Clair, we were not told whether the President was going to defy it or not defy it.

In fact, Helen Thomas, Ted Knap and I raised this question with St. Clair, and we were told the question was unrealistic, and "unanswered" by Mr. St. Clair.

Does the President think that this question was unreasonable and unrealistic?

MR. TER HORST: The President has a Cabinet Secretary in place on whom he is relying to run the Department and since all these stories concern his jurisdiction over the department that the President has entrusted to him, I think in all fairness that these questions should be addressed to him.

Q Jerry, can you tell me when the President first learned that his staff was planning his transition into the White House?

MR. TER HORST: I think the first he learned about it was shortly after he received word from the former President that he was planning to resign and he would then move into the Oval Office, at which point President Ford -- then Vice President Ford -- actually reached out to people who were close to him and had been his advisers for some time and proceeded from there.

Q How about those who were planning since May? Did he not know any of that?

MR. TER HORST: The President has said that he instructed no one on his staff to deal with this question and they had not so advised him that they were.

Q Jerry, in the interest of semantic precision, could I go back to amnesty for a moment. If I remember correctly, the President said in his VFW speech that he opposed amnesty but that he does favor leniency and we have somehow gotten the word amnesty mixed up with leniency.

He still, I take it, opposes amnesty, but he does not oppose treating leniently those people who went abroad or went out of the country?

MR. TER HORST: Pete, his definition of amnesty is as follows: The President is opposed and remains opposed as he has always been to unconditional or blanket amnesty for those who evaded the draft or deserted from the military because of objections to a specific conflict.

On the other hand, he is being guided by the actions and the principles that guided President Lincoln and President Truman in dealing with the same grievous problem at the times of their Presidencies, and as he said in Chicago, he favors a system whereby these persons in those categories can work their way back into American society, and he has called it a form of earned entry.

Now that obviously is not unconditional amnesty.

Q Would limited amnesty or conditional amnesty be fair?

MR. TER HORST: I think you could call it a conditional amnesty, yes.

Q Jerry, on this economic summit meeting, these two days, is the President going to come and make an opening statement and go away and let them do their work?

MR. TER HORST: I think the President plans to chair those meetings.

Q You mean he is going to sit there all day long?

MR. TER HORST: I can't tell you how long he will be there each day. Obviously he has other matters that need tending as well as the high priority matter of the economy, but he intends to devote personally as much time as he can to being actually present and chairing those meetings.

I think the details will probably come out as we get closer to those summit days in late September.

Q Are these open for television coverage did you say at one time?

MR. TER HORST: The President talked about doing it in full view of the American people and full view, I think, includes not only the writing press but also the electronic media.

Q This five-point agenda, was that whipped up by this steering committee?

MR. TER HORST: The steering committee, as you know, met last week in their initial meeting here with Mr. Seidman and they formalized the goals of their project that they were undertaking jointly between the Administration and the Congress. And I think probably Mr. Seidman at three o'clock can give you much greater detail on that process than I can at this point.

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Q The Commerce Department reported today that the trade balance went another almost \$800 million in the hole in July. It is now almost \$1 billion in the red for the first seven months of the year. Does the President have any comment on that?

MR. TER HORST: I don't have any comment for you from the President, but I do know his economic advisers are deeply concerned about this, as has always been the case whenever the balance of payments or the trade balance showed a slide and gain, it just underscores the fact that this problem which has been with us so long is not going to go away overnight, and that it would not be realistic to expect President Ford to achieve a miracle.

Q On the China trip that you spoke of earlier, what is the purpose of the trip and does the President have any present plans to visit China himself?

MR. TER HORST: To take the second question first, the President has no immediate plans to visit the PRC just now. Obviously, when he does, we will so let you know.

The purpose of the trip, as with the previous trips, is to develop greater rapport and understanding between the people of the People's Republic of China and the people of the United States and the respective leaders of the two countries.

Q Jerry, to shift to another subject, this is the August 23 edition of "Common Wheel," I think you are familiar with it. It is a very respected Catholic periodical which notes the Boston Globe's report that Father John McLaughlin, who you know has vowed to poverty and chastity and obedience, has been holding frequent cocktail parties at the Watergate apartment and dating a girl from the Environmental Protection Agency named Ann Dore.

The question is: Is Father McLaughlin still provided by the White House, and if so, does President Ford, as McLaughlin's employer, approve of such a lifestyle for a vowed Jesuit priest as long as it is after hours?

Q Yes or no, Jerry. (Laughter)

Q Is he still employed? I will divide it in two parts, if you like.

MR. TER HORST: Father McLaughlin is one of the members of the former Administration who is in a transitional phase and will shortly be leaving the White House payroll.

Q How shortly?

MR. TER HORST: I cannot tell you that right now, but shortly, and the matters of his conduct I think should properly be addressed to the Jesuit order and not to me.

Q When you say it would be unrealistic for the President to achieve a miracle, you were talking about the trade balance, of course?

MR. TER HORST: I am talking about the whole range of the economy, yes.

Q Governor Rockefeller proposed over the weekend that mass transit fares nationwide be frozen and controlled. Would the President favor such an idea?

MR. TER HORST: Well, I think the President, as he has done many times in the past, would prefer for States and local communities to decide matters of transit fares rather than have them handled at the White House level.

Q The Presidential package, how will that emerge vis-a-vis the summit? Will the President come into the summit with something pretty well lined up except for some polishing or will he take the information developed at the summit and then go into retreat for some weeks or days before divulging the contents of the package?

MR. TER HORST: As it is shaping up now and in line with the information I was able to give you earlier, and which I hope Mr. Seidman will address even more fully at 3 o'clock, the goal of the whole process is to work up to a position at the summit whereby some recommendations can seriously be considered for decisions that obviously will have to follow right on the heels of the summit.

But the point of the President is that since this is a problem affecting every man and woman and child in the country, not only the Government, and the Congress, or business and labor, that he wants to approach this in a way that totally involves every part of America, so that when decisions are made, everybody will understand why they were made in that fashion.

And that is really his goal in wanting to undertake this economic summit. Believe me, the last thing he wants is a cosmetic treatment of this issue.

Q Jerry, did Governor Rockefeller's statements recommending against prosecution of former President Nixon reflect President Ford's views on the subject?

MR. TER HORST: Well, I think I would like to emphasize, as I did on several other issues that have come up to which Governor Rockefeller has addressed himself to, and that is Nelson Rockefeller has not been told by President Ford what to say or what not to say, and he is a man who has been an eminent public official and the Governor of a great State for many years and has been speaking for himself during all that time.

Q But the question was, did it reflect what the President feels about this matter?

MR. TER HORST: The President's view is as he has expressed it in his statement that he made to the Nation at the time of his swearing-in, and I might suggest you go back and read that for guidance. It is a very useful statement. At that time the President said that he hoped the former President, who had done so much to work for peace in the world, will now be able to find peace for himself, and he hoped that the American people would assist this process through their prayers.

Q Jerry, following that up, there is still the problem of the reported failure to deliver a subpoena. By saying he hopes that Mr. Nixon can live in peace, does that mean without subpoenas and is the Secret Service stopping the U.S. Marshal from serving the subpoena? What is happening out there, Jerry, do you know?

MR. TER HORST: I am not out there, so I can't help you, Les.

Q What have you heard?

MR. TER HORST: That whole matter of the legal aspects of the situation today between the former President and the Government of the United States has to be addressed by the Special Prosecutor's Office because he is the man who is performing that role, and I think he would be the man who would decide those things.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Jerry.

END (AT 2:01 P.M. EDT)