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NEWS CONFERENCE

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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 12:08 P.M. EST

NOVEMBER 8, 1974

FRIDAY

MR. NESSEN: The President came to his office before eight o'clock this morning. He has met with staff members, including Don Rumsfeld, General Scowcroft, Jack Marsh, Bob Hartmann, Bill Timmons, and myself.

About 10:30 the President and Mrs. Ford went out to the Rose Garden to receive donations to the American Cancer Society from about a hundred children from Fox Hill Elementary School in Bowie, Maryland. I think some of you probably saw that.

At 12:45 the President will meet with Ambassador Kenneth Rush, who will be going to Paris soon to take up his post as Ambassador to France. The meeting will be an opportunity for the President to provide guidance and instruction to Ambassador Rush as he prepares to depart for his post. I think he will probably be leaving for his new job toward the end of the month.

At 3:30 the President will meet with Roy Ash and Allen Greenspan to discuss the economy and budgetary matters.

How was the Ash briefing today? Was it what you expected?

I guess you have to say mixed reviews.

Q It was a good review. You should have had a mini-review to lead us up to it. Some of us couldn't understand it.

MR. NESSEN: I am glad to hear it went so well.

Q It was very useful, Ron.

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MR. NESSEN: Some time late today or early this evening the President and Mrs. Ford plan to go to Camp David for the weekend. I think they will probably stay there until Sunday morning. Susan and Steve and their children plan to accompany them.

One brief announcement on the trip to Japan, sort of a little technical matter. The Japanese Government has requested a list of all cameras and sound equipment, including tripods, lenses, cameras, whatever else you take with you.

Q Personal equipment as well?

MR. NESSEN: I think based on my trips to Japan, I think the answer is yes.

Q Do they want this list coming in or going out? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: To guard against that very problem they want the serial numbers of each piece of equipment, the manufacturer, and the quantity of all such equipment you take in.

Q Are they interested if it is a German camera?

MR. NESSEN: You should turn this information in to Ray Zook by next Wednesday, November 13.

Q What was that, serial numbers, manufacturer, and what else?

MR. NESSEN: Quantity.

Q Tape recorders, too?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Is there a form of some kind for that?

MR. NESSEN: Check with Thym after the briefing and see if there is. I think probably an original and a couple of copies on plain paper or on your company letterhead would do it.

Q Did I hear you say tape recorders?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Give them to Zook?

MR. NESSEN: Give them to Ray Zook next Wednesday.

Basically that is about it.

Q Ron, what is the status of the Gibson nomination?

Q Are there forms?

MR. NESSEN: No, there are no forms. So, as I say, the letterhead from your company ought to be sufficient.

Q Ron, do you have a time on Camp David?

MR. NESSEN: Late today or early this evening.

Q What is the status of the Gibson nomination?

MR. NESSEN: The FBI checks on Mr. Gibson are going ahead. The matter is being reviewed diligently. It is receiving serious consideration. We hope to be able to resolve the matter in the near future and will tell you when it is.

Q Did anyone here talk to Mr. Gibson personally, say from Mr. Buchen's office, or perhaps the President?

MR. NESSEN: I can't go beyond this, Walt.

Q You were going a trifle fast. Could you run through this again? The matter is being diligently --

MR. NESSEN: Diligently reviewed. It is being given serious consideration.

Q How do you mean that, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: We hope to be able to resolve the matter in the near future --

Q Ron, I asked you a couple of questions --

MR. NESSEN: And tell you about it.

Q Ron, you know Mr. Gibson says that he had furnished the White House with all the information concerning his severance arrangements. Is that true? Did the White House indeed have that prior to his appointment as he says?

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to be able to say any more than this, Marty.

Q Ron, what do you mean by given consideration? You mean consideration to withdraw?

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to be able to say any more about the matter, Steve.

Q Ron, may I ask you, does the President, or does the White House, now consider the accusation, or the allegations, serious?

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to be able to say any more about it, Walt.

Q Can you comment on this Washington staff story today that a decision has been made to withdraw the nomination?

MR. NESSEN: I can't say any more about it, Ralph.

Q Can you tell us where Mr. Gibson is today? We have a report the White House has not been able to locate him. (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: That report is not true.

Q Have you been in contact with Mr. Gibson then? By you, I mean the White House, the White House staff, the President, or anybody?

MR. NESSEN: I can't say any more about it, Jim.

Q Ron, can I ask you two questions arising out of the Food Conference in Rome? Has the President received a recommendation from Secretary Butz that the United States should increase its food aid, and the second question, please, is, if that is correct and the President agrees, will there be export rationing or control on commercial exports?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I think Secretary Kissinger indicated in his speech that American food aid would be increased. The question -- what was it, controls on exports?

Q Commercial exports in order to fill the extra or additional food aid shipments.

MR. NESSEN: I don't have any details on that.

Q I should have asked you, Ron, I believe the report was that Mr. Butz has recommended a doubling. I know Kissinger did indicate what we said before, but the key thing is a doubling of American food aid.

MR. NESSEN: Well, I think I would say that obviously Secretary Kissinger did say that there would be an increase in American food aid. Until there is further information on the total American crop production this year, we can't discuss the amounts more specifically.

Q And the second question about controls on commercial exports?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have anything on that, Ralph.

Q Ron, on another subject, a question based on a report last month by the Knight Newspapers that told of a secret multi-billion dollar tripling of arms shipments including F-5G Fighters to Saudi Arabia in order to enlist Faisal's help in keeping oil prices down -- I have a two-part question, Ron -- the first part is, since the President sets foreign policy, could you either confirm or deny this report of the Knight Newspapers?

MR. NESSEN: What is the second part?

Q I would like to know by which specific law or authority can the Administration provide weapons to Saudi Arabia or Egypt or any other country, and are we doing this for the Ugandan Government?

MR. NESSEN: You have been spending some time at the State Department, Les, so I know you probably heard them talk about this same matter.

Q I know they always say, "Well, will you consult the White House?"

MR. NESSEN: Do they really?

Q Yes, it is kind of ping-pong diplomacy.

MR. NESSEN: The United States has an ongoing military supply relationship with Saudi Arabia.

Q Has it been increased?

MR. NESSEN: The Saudis have asked the United States to do an extensive survey of their defense needs. Ambassador Elsworth and George Vest of the State Department will be going to Saudi Arabia for further consultations on the continuing military supply relationship. For more details go to the State Department.

Q Thank you. That is more than I expected.

MR. NESSEN: Every day is a surprise here, Les.

Q Are we giving any military aid or otherwise to Uganda?

MR. NESSEN: I will have to check it for you.

Q Ron, is the United States considering military action against the Arab oil producers to bring down the price and keep the oil flowing?

MR. NESSEN: Norm, if you are basing your question on the Jack Anderson column --

Q I am.

MR. NESSEN: -- it is our policy, I think it is a wise policy, not to respond to every column.

Q Could you have that question repeated, please?

MR. NESSEN: Norm?

Q Is the United States contemplating military action against the Arab oil producers?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think that kind of speculation ought to be dignified with even a serious answer.

I will tell you that I know of no such consideration for that kind of action.

Q Is there any concern here that some of our NATO allies might be considering military action?

MR. NESSEN: I have no way of knowing whether they are or not.

Q Ron, you know that is kind of a weak denial as denials go. You are saying you know of no such action. In the past when spokesmen couched their answers in this way, it often has turned out that they really wanted to make sure they themselves didn't know so they wouldn't have to deny something that was true. Can you broaden it out at all? Can you say that the Government flatly is not contemplating any such action?

MR. NESSEN: I don't even want to talk about the issue, because I think the speculation is irresponsible, that kind of speculation, totally irresponsible.

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Q But can you narrow the answer is what I am saying.

MR. NESSEN: I don't think the issue deserves to be explored to any great length because I have just heard nothing to indicate that that kind of consideration is going on.

Bob.

Q Let me, on the unlikely assumption that you didn't understand or hear my question earlier, where is Mr. Gibson?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think I need to be a spokesman for Mr. Gibson at this point, Bob.

Q I am not asking you to be a spokesman.

MR. NESSEN: You asked me, does the White House know where he was, and I said the White House does know where he is.

Q But we are trying to get to him, and in an open Administration it would seem to me this is a reasonable request to simply ask where he is.

MR. NESSEN: I don't think so. He is a private citizen.

Q He has been in that office at FEA for the last several days.

MR. NESSEN: I am told he has dropped in there to lookover the operation, but that he is not in any way running the FEA, and that, as I understand it, he will not be going back to the FEA for this kind of familiarization process that he spent a couple of days over there doing.

Q You mean it is not necessary for him to go back and familiarize himself?

Q Ron, does the Administration view with any concern the possible rapprochement between Peking and Moscow in view of the suggestion from Peking yesterday of a possible nonaggression treaty between those two countries?

MR. NESSEN: I saw the report, and we don't have any comment on it.

Q Were you able to determine yesterday whether former Secretary Stans was in the White House and, if so, what was he doing here?

MR. NESSEN: I am told that Mr. Stans paid a visit on Dean Burch.

Q Ron, did the White House suggest that Mr. Gibson not go back to the FEA office?

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to go beyond what I said in my statement, Carroll.

Q You said he is not there now.

MR. NESSEN: No, he is not.

Q Do you have any details on the Dean Burch conversation?

MR. NESSEN: You will have to check with Dean Burch.

Q Ron, are you flatly saying that no decision has been made on whether or not Mr. Gibson's nomination will have to be resubmitted? In looking at your statement, I see you said you hope to resolve the matter. That could simply mean you will make an announcement later, but that the decision has been made already.

Yesterday you said there are no plans to withdraw the nomination. Does yesterday's statement still hold?

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to go beyond my statement, John.

Q Can you tell me if yesterday's statement holds?

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to go beyond my statement.

Q Let me check what you said a moment ago. Did you say he is not going to be going back to the FEA to learn the ropes?

MR. NESSEN: That is my understanding.

Q Is that definite, that he will never be going back? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: Never say never.

Q As long as you were asked about the Jack Anderson column on the possibility of military action against the Arabs, let me ask you about the story in the New York Times this morning to the effect that American officials believe unless they can pull off a miracle of some sort, that there will be renewed war in the Middle East in six to 12 months.

Is this an assessment that the White House agrees with?

Q What was the question?

MR. NESSEN: The question was, does the White House agree with an assessment in the New York Times this morning that a new war in the Middle East is inevitable in six months? Is that the thrust of your question?

Q Six to 12 months unless we pull off a miracle.

MR. NESSEN: I don't think I will comment on that report, Jim.

Q Ron, will there be a group of Governors here next week that the President will meet with?

MR. NESSEN: For what purpose?

Q I think there is going to be a couple of days conference. I forgot the subject, but there was a possibility Secretary Kissinger would brief them.

Q Coastal land, isn't it?

Q Right, offshore oil.

MR. NESSEN: There is some possibility there will be a meeting here next week, but it is still being worked out. I don't know precisely what it is about or who is coming.

Q Did he say offshore oil?

MR. NESSEN: I don't believe he said that. Somebody said it.

Q It is offshore oil.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what the details are, yet, Sarah.

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Q You mean when you are talking about Governors and their calendars, you don't know what the purpose of the meeting is?

MR. NESSEN: I personally don't, but I am sure somebody in the building does. Coastal Governors to discuss leasing on the outer continental shelf known as the OCS.

Q Speaking of Governors, the President has been asked to make an appearance at the Republican Governors Conference in St. Louis on December 2, I think, or December 3. Has he decided yet whether he will?

MR. NESSEN: I hadn't heard about the proposal until you mentioned it. I will have to check the schedule and see whether he is or not.

Q Ron, have you announced yet that Jerry Warren is going to be one of your deputies?

MR. NESSEN: I have not announced the reorganization in the Press Office yet.

Q When do you expect to do that? You said within a couple of days earlier this week.

MR. NESSEN: As soon as everybody's FBI check is completed, Ralph. (Laughter) That is not a joke.

Q Will Jerry Warren be conducting any of the press briefings?

MR. NESSEN: I think I would like to save my entire reorganization announcement for one time, Les.

Q When are you going to announce Bill Walker's appointment?

MR. NESSEN: When his FBI checks are completed.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END (AT 12:27 P.M. EST)