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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 11:45 A.M. EST

JANUARY 9, 1975

THURSDAY

MR. NESSEN: Before we start today, I wanted to introduce you to the newest member of the White House team, although many of you have known him for a long time, Hugh Morrow, who is Vice President Rockefeller's Press Secretary. His office and my office are working closely together.

As the President told the Cabinet yesterday, the Rockefeller staff and the White House staff do work together, and the Rockefeller staff is an integral part of the White House staff, so Hugh and I are working closely together.

Hugh says his phones are not working all that well.

MR. MORROW: I'll say they are not, and my apologies to everybody that I have not returned a call to.

Q What is your phone number?

MR. MORROW: It is 456-6404 and 05, right now, and they are in the process of being changed. We will send over a list as soon as we get a sensible setup in.

MR. NESSEN: Hugh's press releases will be put in the bin back here, so that will help you some.

Q Is he ready to answer some questions today?

MR. MORROW: If I can.

MR. NESSEN: Let me go through the announcements.

At 2:00 this afternoon, the President is going to sign an Executive Order establishing a National Commission on the Observance of International Women's Year, 1975. The paper on this is just being put together now, and by the end of the briefing, you will have it. You will have the text of the Executive Order. You will have the text of the

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President's remarks for the 2:00 signing ceremony, and you will have a fact sheet on what the International Women's Year is all about.

This signing ceremony is in the Cabinet Room at 2:00. It is open for full press coverage. Mrs. Ford will attend the ceremony, also.

For those interested in still further information, Pat Lindh will have a briefing this afternoon at 2:30 in Room 102 of the EOB, and if you will call Pat, she will clear you for the briefing.

At 2:30, the President will have the meeting that we told you about yesterday with the Sultan of Oman, and after the meeting, we will have, hopefully, a little information for you, which we will probably post. That will be an opportunity for cameramen and photographers, also.

This evening the President is going to appear briefly at the American Football Coaches' Association Coach of the Year Banquet at the Washington Hilton to receive the Tuss McLaughry Award. McLaughry was one of the founders of the American Football Coaches' Association in 1940. He died last year. The Award honors the highest distinction in service to others.

The protective travel pool to go there with the President should be here at 9:00. The departure is expected at about 9:20. Those of you who want to cover the dinner itself can go straight on over there. There will be open coverage, and the President will stay only briefly and be back here at 10:15.

I believe you have the announcement that the President today is announcing with special pleasure his intention to nominate Elliot Richardson to be Ambassador to Great Britain. I think you have the President's statement saying that he has known and worked with Mr. Richardson ever since the early days of the Eisenhower Administration and praising his public record and pointing out that it has been the practice of the United States to consult with the United Kingdom on a broad range of matters and that, as Ambassador there, Elliot Richardson will continue this practice. The President says that both he and Secretary Kissinger will seek Ambassador Richardson's counsel on many subjects.

The President has signed the last two bills into law from the 93rd Congress, that is, the conveyance of land in Georgia and the reimbursement of military personnel for memorial services.

For you box score fans, President Ford signed 313 bills from the 93rd Congress. He vetoed 27 bills. Of those, 15 were pocket vetoes and 12 were regular vetoes, and of the 12 regular vetoes, three were overridden by Congress.

Incidentally, I know that some stories say that four vetoes were overridden. I think there is some confusion on the vocational rehabilitation bill, which was not an override of a veto but simply a passage of the entire bill.

That is everything I have.

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Q Ron, can you tell us just when the President will deliver the State of the Union?

MR. NESSEN: It has not been decided yet, Carroll.

Q Can we try to get straightened out what was unstraightened out yesterday, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: Did we leave anything unstraightened out?

Q Yes. Is the State of the Union Message going to be the first public presentation of the President's program to the Congress?

MR. NESSEN: It will be the first public presentation to the Congress of the details of the President's economic and energy message.

Q There are reports that there will be an energy message that may go up before the State of the Union Message. Is that possible, probable?

MR. NESSEN: You mean a written energy message to Congress?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: No, that is not correct.

Q Ron, you added the words "public presentation to Congress." Will there be a public --

MR. NESSEN: I didn't add that, Peter did.

Q Let me ask it this way: Will he make a public presentation before his State of the Union?

MR. NESSEN: The timetable for presenting his proposals has not been decided yet, Gaylord.

Q So, it is possible then?

MR. NESSEN: I am saying it has not been decided.

Q Ron, is it really necessary to play games with us on this? Can't you just tell us whether the President is in fact considering something before his State of the Union meeting?

MR. NESSEN: Bob, I am truly not playing games with you. There have been a whole series of meetings here this week to discuss both the substance and the presentation of the President's State of the Union speech.

The meetings are not concluded, and probably won't be until tomorrow, and until they are concluded, it simply is not decided, and that is not playing games.

Q I asked you what he is considering.

MR. NESSEN: He is considering various dates for presenting his State of the Union Message.

Q And only that?

MR. NESSEN: What do you mean by that?

Q Well, what we are trying to get at is, is there a possibility that he will make a speech to the public or issue some kind of a public statement on energy or the economy before his State of the Union? It is that simple.

MR. NESSEN: What I am saying, which is quite simple, is that the timetable for presenting his proposals has not been decided.

Q Can we conclude there is a significant amount of disagreement within the President's camp here in the White House among his advisers as to timing?

MR. NESSEN: Oh, no. How would you conclude that?

Q My question didn't go so much to timing as to the form of it, Ron. What we are trying to find out is whether he is going to do it in two stages.

MR. NESSEN: I think there is some decision on the form of it which is that the President will present the details of both his energy and economic messages in his State of the Union Message to Congress. Subsequent to that, as I told Norm, I think, yesterday, there will be separate, detailed legislation sent up on those and other matters after the State of the Union.

Q But is it possible that the essence of the program will be spelled out in some message prior to the furnishing of details to Congress?

MR. NESSEN: No, I would not expect any message to Congress on energy or economics before the State of the Union.

Q What about a message to the public?

MR. NESSEN: As I say, the timetable for presenting his proposals has not been decided.

Q Ron, is the President considering a public speech or broadcast on television, radio or public somewhere outlining the program to the people other than the State of the Union Message to Congress.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know how many times I can say it. The timetable for presenting the proposals has not been decided.

Q We asked if it was being considered.

MR. NESSEN: There are lots of ideas for presenting his proposals, and it has not been decided.

Q The National Press Club says that Bob Hartmann will speak there on the 16th and will offer a preview of what will be in the President's State of the Union speech. Is there any validity to that?

MR. NESSEN: He probably wrote it from the New York Times and Washington Post. They seem to know what is going to be in it. If Bob has arranged a speech and plans to give a preview, I suppose he will.

Q Ron, on another subject, as you requested, I asked the Department of Defense how we could continue sending jets to Saudi Arabia in view of Dr. Kissinger's reference to possible use of force, and they replied, "That is a good question." That is all.

Now, in view of the fact that this came up in Buchwald's column this morning, can you tell us --

MR. NESSEN: Are you concerned with the fact that it came up in Buchwald's column?

Q Yes, it is the lead. The question is, are we to regard this means of force as a joke, which seems unlikely, or if it isn't a joke, could you tell us how we can morally send jets to a place where they may use them against us in this instance of force.

MR. NESSEN: Les, I can simply go back one more time to the Secretary's interview and ask that you read it extremely carefully and look at all the words and see that it is not a threat of force. He refers to it as a dangerous course. We should have learned from the Vietnam war that it is easier to get into a war than to get out of it.

He says that in no case would anything like this be considered if it had to do with the price of oil. He does not think it is a good thing to speculate about and so forth.

I don't know how you take his remarks and turn them into a threat to use force against Saudi Arabia.

Q Just on the Arab reaction throughout the world, the Arab press. I don't think I am alone in getting the impression that when he talks about force, it means military intervention. I don't think I am alone on that, Ron.

I appreciate your courtesy very much in this, but it looks like you just can't give us much by way of clarification.

MR. NESSEN: I don't think I can give you much by way of clarification, Les, if you take Secretary Kissinger's remarks in the way you have and don't read carefully what it is he is saying and the extremely hypothetical circumstances in which he made his carefully worded remarks.

Q Ron, while we are in that general area, the Shah of Iran this week, I think, agreed to turn over a squadron of jets which he has received from the United States to Jordan. That prompts me to ask, has President Ford ordered or conducted since he came into office a review of the U.S. policy of arming Middle East nations?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know the answer to that, but I could try to find it out.

Q If you would.

MR. NESSEN: Yes, Bob?

Q Ron, could you enlighten us at all on the State Department's indications that the President is trying to prepare some kind of a special request of Congress for speeded up or added aid to South Vietnam?

MR. NESSEN: As we told you the other day, or as I reminded you the other day, there was a reference by the President in his signing of the aid bill that he found the level of assistance to South Vietnam inadequate. I think it would be fair to say that the President is giving the matter of additional aid to South Vietnam intensive consideration, and I think it would be fair to say that the President is contemplating a supplemental request for aid to South Vietnam.

Q Just South Vietnam or Cambodia, too?

MR. NESSEN: I think it would be fair to say that he is contemplating a supplemental appropriation for aid to Cambodia and that likewise he finds the provision for assistance in the foreign aid bill to Cambodia inadequate.

Q Would it also be fair to say, Ron, that figure --

MR. NESSEN: The figures really have not been decided on yet, Bob. In fact, I might say that the matter of details and exact dollars have not come to his desk for a decision.

Q The stories today all said that \$300 million was being recommended by top officials, including Dr. Kissinger. Is that approximately correct for South Vietnam?

MR. NESSEN: It is difficult to say since whatever they decide to recommend has not reached the President yet. I think perhaps the way that figure was arrived at was by simple arithmetic, which is that the authorization was for \$1 billion and the appropriation was for \$700 million, but as I say, whatever figures they decide to recommend have not reached the President yet.

Q What about the timing on it, Ron? How fast does he feel this should be acted on?

MR. NESSEN: I don't get any sense of the timing yet, Bob. It has not come to him.

Q Ron, why is the President giving intensive consideration to this supplemental aid program to Vietnam?

MR. NESSEN: Because he feels that the amount appropriated by Congress was inadequate.

Q But why are they inadequate?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what you mean by that.

Q Simple. Why does he consider \$700 million inadequate? To be more specific, does it relate to the military situation in South Vietnam today?

MR. NESSEN: I would say it does not relate specifically to the fall of the province capital.

Q It does or does not?

MR. NESSEN: It does not. It relates, however, to what we feel is needed for the South Vietnamese to defend themselves against the violations by the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong.

Q Is the President aware that Senate Democratic Leader Mansfield has already said no to any increased assistance to South Vietnam?

MR. NESSEN: I am not aware of what Senator Mansfield has said.

Q Did they discuss that last night in their meeting--additional assistance?

MR. NESSEN: My understanding is they did not.

Q Speaking of that last night meeting, Ron, Senator Mansfield said that the Chinese were very enthusiastic about Mr. Ford's visit this year. Could you tell us whether there are any plans yet for that visit in terms of date or approximate date?

MR. NESSEN: No, there are not.

Q But you will not rule it out this year, will you?

MR. NESSEN: I think he is committed to this year. I don't think it is a question of --

Q No change?

MR. NESSEN: No, no change, certainly, but no date, either.

Q Has the President made a judgment on just how serious the loss of this province is for the future of the Thieu government?

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard him speak of where he places it on a scale of seriousness. We said the other day he was concerned.

Q There are stories this morning about reports out of the Pentagon that they have got to start a PR campaign that if they don't get more aid, that they are going down the tube, that they are going to run out of ammunition in thirty days.

Does he really see it as a really critical period over there, or does he think they could get by or how does that relate to these new developments?

MR. NESSEN: It is clear that he has said the aid levels are inadequate as voted by Congress, and he is contemplating more, but I would rather get something more authoritative on how he views the situation in terms of how critical it is before I say anything about it.

Q Is it your view or the President's view, however you want, that South Vietnam can fight off the Communists if it has increased aid without any troop support or without any help from American forces, even if it were allowed, which it evidently is not? Does he think that increased aid alone will do it?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know.

Q Ron, there is one possibility on the subject here. You said he was talking about an increased appropriation. Has he given any thought to an increased authorization as well?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I am aware of.

Q So that would not place a maximum figure on that?

MR. NESSEN: It is difficult to talk about figures, Walt, because the authorization would let you go to a billion.

Q Which would mean a maximum appropriation of \$300 million?

MR. NESSEN: That is right, and since there has been no decision on the figure yet, it is really difficult to say whether it would require an additional authorization or not.

Q Let me ask his question in reverse. Does the President feel that the South Vietnamese could not fight off the Communists without this additional money?

MR. NESSEN: I think I would just rather stick to the way the President phrases it, which is that he believes the current levels approved by Congress are inadequate.

Q Ron, today is Mr. Nixon's 62nd birthday. Has the President been in touch with San Clemente by phone or any other way by message?

MR. NESSEN: I will have to check on that.

Q Ron, while Hugh is here, maybe we could ask the question to both of you.

MR. NESSEN: I thought I was going to get off easy today.

Q Last week or last weekend you said the CIA Commission heads will be sending the President a name for Executive Director. First, has that been done and do you have the name to announce?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have a name to announce, but I would expect that we would have one soon.

Q How soon?

MR. NESSEN: I can't really pick a date because, as you know, all the --

Q In other words, the name has come to the President?

MR. NESSEN: There are some names that he is thinking about.

Q Do you expect it this week?

MR. NESSEN: I just can't give you a day. I think soon. Today is Thursday.

Les?

Q Ron, the White House perimeter has been penetrated recently a number of times by helicopter, a van, an automobile and almost by a Delta jet, if that guy had gotten it off the ground.

MR. NESSEN: I didn't know about that.

Q Well, when the helicopter landed in the Rose Garden last year. The question was raised, does the Secret Service have any better way to defend the White House from airborne attack than shotguns, and there was no answer. You go to the Secret Service and you get nothing.

I just wonder, without violating security details, could you give us some answer as to explain to the people that the White House is sufficiently protected from these series of invasions and so forth.

MR. NESSEN: I think probably quite by accident, Les, you probably stumbled onto the answer to your other question. The Secret Service is talking to the Saudis about their using the planes to protect the White House. (Laughter)

Obviously, the questions of security need to be addressed to the Secret Service, which has a press spokesman named Jack Warner.

Q Will you give us an indication that he will give us something specific?

MR. NESSEN: I have found in the past on every occasion he is extremely forthcoming, and I know he was during the Christmas Day episode. Jack Warner is the Secret Service PR man.

Q Ron, I would like to go back to Secretary Kissinger's interview in Business Week magazine for a minute. Recently it was said that the Secretary or his aides reviewed that interview, reviewed the text before it was printed. I would like to ask you, first, is that correct, did they do that? Then I have another question I would like to ask.

MR. NESSEN: Jim, I really think it is difficult for me to answer State Department questions. I just can't.

Q You don't know?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know, and I really think the proper place is the State Department.

So, does the second part hinge on getting an answer to the first part?

Q Yes.

Q On that same subject, has the President sent any indication to the Arab leaders to express some distress about that comment, explaining to them that it was a highly qualified answer to a highly critical question?

MR. NESSEN: I am not aware that he has sent a written communication of any kind to the Arab leaders.

Q How about other than written?

MR. NESSEN: I am not aware that he sent any communication to the Arab leaders because, I think, read in its full context and reading the words carefully and, also, putting it together with the Secretary's and the President's previous remarks about cooperation is the only way to solve the energy problem or oil problem -- you know, I am not sure that it needs a clarification.

Q Do those qualifiers translate neatly into Arabic?

MR. NESSEN: I am not that fluent in Arabic.

Q Ron, the figures coming out of the Labor Department show that the Public Service Jobs Program is not working, is really not getting off the ground as far back as the program in 1973. Has anyone in the White House sent out word to get those things moving?

There are some meetings by the Labor Department with the States and so forth to jack it up, but what is the feeling of the White House now? Do you have any sort of comment from the President or anyone in the White House?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have any, but I know that Secretary Brennan spoke on it about a week or so ago and is doing some things to hopefully get the States and cities to hire these people more quickly.

Q Is the President aware of this happening or not happening?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q What is his reaction to it?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I don't have any reaction to it. I mean, Secretary Brennan runs the program, and it seems to me his statement the other week indicated his concern about it.

Q Ron, in the President's statement on the appointment of Richardson as Ambassador to the United Kingdom, he says, "I warmly welcome Elliot Richardson back into the service of our country." Now, was former President Nixon informed previously of Mr. Richardson's receiving the appointment?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I am aware of, Dick.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END (AT 12:10 P.M. EST)

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