

This Copy For _____

NEWS CONFERENCE

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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 12:25 P.M. EDT

APRIL 15, 1975

TUESDAY

MR. NESSEN: I think most of you had a chance to either hear or go over and see the President's speech to the DAR Continental Congress. We will have the as delivered transcript here for you as soon as we can get it done.

At 12:45, the President will be having a meeting with Attorney General Levi.

Q On what?

MR. NESSEN: The meeting was requested by the Attorney General. You know, the President is available to meet with Cabinet members whenever they request, and he requested. I don't have the subject.

Q Is there an agenda on that?

MR. NESSEN: If there is, I don't know. In fact, he didn't indicate ahead of time what it was he wanted to discuss.

Between 2:00 and 3:00 this afternoon, the President is having another Congressional hour. We have posted a list of those who are coming in. I think you are familiar with that. It is a period of time set aside to hold a number of short meetings with Members of Congress who have requested time to come in and see the President.

At 5:00 this afternoon, the President will speak to about 300 Government officials and Presidential appointees in the East Room. Periodically, these meetings have been held for top Government, sub-Cabinet officials to keep them posted on what the Administration is doing in various areas other than the area they are immediately involved with. These are private meetings, and there is no coverage.

Q What is the subject, do you know?

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MR. NESSEN: Since Secretary Kissinger will be there and someone from the Defense Department, it is on the Southeast Asian situation.

This evening, the President is attending the Republican Senate-House Dinner at the Washington Hilton. The President will leave the White House at about 8:00. There will be a travel pool going over there. He is scheduled to speak at about 10:00 and we hope to have at least part of the speech in advance. The speech is not completed yet, which is the reason we don't have it for you right now.

Q Is there a time as to availability?

MR. NESSEN: It really depends on when it is finished, Frank. I hope sometime this afternoon.

Q Is there any indication what the subject is?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Is he going to stop in at a 4-H meeting tonight? He is supposed to get an award.

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard that, Fran.

Aside from those who go over in the protective pool, anybody else can go and cover the speech at the hotel.

Q When you said part of it will be available, is he going to have some bombshell announcement he is going to spring?

MR. NESSEN: No. If some of it can get done in its final form in time to put out, we will.

As for tomorrow, I think I already mentioned that the President is going to go to the luncheon of the 52nd Annual Convention of the American Society of Newspaper Editors at the Shoreham Hotel. He will leave here at about 12:30, again with a protective travel pool. He will attend the luncheon, and then at 1:25, he will make probably some brief remarks, probably off-the-cuff, and then have questions from a panel selected by the newspaper editors.

There will be no briefing here tomorrow because of that.

Q Will it be telecast, maybe?

MR. NESSEN: That is really up to the networks to decide.

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Q Do you know whether they are?

MR. NESSEN: I haven't asked, actually.

Q Open coverage?

MR. NESSEN: Oh, yes.

Tomorrow evening, the President is going to be attending the 54th annual awards dinner of the White House News Photographers Association at the Sheraton Park Hotel. The President will speak briefly during that, and that portion of the evening would be available for coverage.

Q Are you still having that reception at 5:00?

MR. NESSEN: For the ASNE members? As far as I know.

Q Is there any coverage on that?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what the plans are yet, Bill.

For tomorrow night for the photographers'dinner, the President will probably leave the White House at about 8:45 or 9:00 and speak over there at 9:30. That means that the President will not be attending the dinner portion of the evening, but probably will stay for the entertainment portion.

On Friday, the President is going to Concord, New Hampshire, to address a Joint Session of the New Hampshire Legislature, and also to deliver a speech at the closing of a White House Conference on Domestic Affairs and the Economy. That would be in Concord, New Hampshire.

Also, while in Concord, he will have a meeting with regional news executives and broadcast executives, as he has had in other places.

Q Do you have times on those Friday events?

MR. NESSEN: Let me give you, first of all, a rough outline of the day, and then let me go back and give you some more details, if you want to.

He has the speech to the joint session of the legislature; he will close the White House Conference; the regional news executives, and then in the evening, he will go to Boston for the 200th anniversary services for the lantern lighting at the Old North Church.

The President will speak at the services. That commemorates Paul Revere's ride. I could read from the poem if you care to hear it.

Q He has been invited to deliver a sermon. Is this going to be a speech?

Q That is in the evening. What time, do you know?

MR. NESSEN: I am going to get to that.

There actually will be lanterns lit at that service.

The President will overnight at the Colonnade Hotel in Boston.

On Saturday, he will participate in Patriot's Day activities in the Concord and Lexington area. That is commemorating the battle of Concord and Lexington.

Q That is Massachusetts?

MR. NESSEN: Yes. The shot heard around the world. I can read that poem to you, too, if you want to hear it.

Q Just tell us the author.

MR. NESSEN: The author is Emerson.

Q What time does he come back?

MR. NESSEN: Here is a more detailed schedule.

The baggage check-in at the Transportation Office is at 7:30 Friday morning, and there will be no bus to Andrews. If you want to go straight on to Andrews, you should check in there with your baggage at 9:15. If you have already left your bags or don't have any bags, come to Andrews at 9:30. The press plane leaves at 10:00.

The President leaves the South Lawn at 10:20, and Air Force One leaves Andrews at 10:40.

The press plane arrives in Manchester, New Hampshire, at 11:05 and Air Force One arrives at Manchester, New Hampshire at 11:45. There will be a motorcade from Manchester to Concord.

The President will speak to a Joint Session of the New Hampshire Legislature in the State Capitol at 1:10. The White House Conference is at the Highway Hotel in Concord, and the President will speak there at 4:35.

Q What is that conference about, again?

MR. NESSEN: It is one of the regular White House Conferences on Domestic Affairs and the Economy. There will be other Administration officials going up and speaking to the Conference during the day.

There will be a reception for executives of newspapers and broadcast stations in the region from 5:30 to 6:30 at the Highway Hotel. Then, the President goes to Boston, and at the Old North Church the services begin at 8:00, and the President speaks at 8:30.

I am told that some local TV stations are broadcasting that service live. The President is staying overnight at the Colonnade Hotel in Boston, and the press is staying at the Copley Plaza Hotel, which is a short distance away. The phone number at the Copley Plaza is area code 617-267-5300. The press room is located in the foyer of the ball room of the hotel.

The President will have some activities on Saturday morning, details of which I don't have at the moment, other than to say that it will be in connection with Patriot's Day at Concord and Lexington.

The President does need to return to the White House at about 12:30 on Saturday because he has a meeting that afternoon with the President of Zambia, Kenneth Kuanda. That begins at 3:00 and then he will have a state dinner that night for the Zambian President, beginning at 8:00.

So, as we get closer to Saturday, I will give you more details of the Saturday events and of the whole trip.

At 4:00 this afternoon in the Roosevelt Room, the four new members of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission will be sworn in. That will be open for coverage, if you would like. You should meet Bill here at about 3:50 to go in there.

The names of the commissioners are William T. Bagley, who is the Chairman --

O Do you know where he is from?

MR. NESSEN: We will get that. I don't have it here.

-- Read Dunn, John Rainbolt and Gary Seevers.

Q Is the President not going to be there, or is he? Who is doing the swearing in?

MR. NESSEN: Swearing in will be Judge George McKinnon of the U.S. Court of Appeals. Secretary Butz will be there as the representative of the President.

We have some personnel announcements today. Some of them have been handed out to you.

The President intends to nominate William N. Walker and Clayton Yeutter to be Deputy Special Trade Representatives under Fred Dent. Bill Walker, as some of you know, is Director now of the President's Personnel Office. In his new post, he will be stationed in Geneva. Clayton Yeutter is now the Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, and he will be in his new job here in Washington. These two jobs were created by the trade bill.

Q Do we have a new White House Personnel chief?

MR. NESSEN: No, not to announce today.

Also, the President is appointing William I. Greener, Jr., to be Deputy Press Secretary to the President. I think most of you know Bill, and I think you will share my feeling that we are grateful to have him here. He has a great deal of experience and ability, and I think it will be a great addition to the Press Office staff.

Bill has, over the years, been an information officer with the Air Force, the Internal Revenue Service, the Cost of Living Council, the Department of Treasury and the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

In January, he was nominated to be Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. When Jim Lynn came over here to the OMB, Bill Greener came with him to be Assistant Director of OMB for Public Affairs. Now, he is going to join my office as Deputy Press Secretary to the President.

Jack Hushen's duties will stay the same. He will take on some added responsibilities. He will continue to work down here in the lower Press Office and handle the day-to-day and minute-by-minute press queries.

As you know, the load on the Press Office, I think, has increased considerably under President Ford, and that is why we are expanding a little.

Q What are you comparing that to?

MR. NESSEN: To previous Administrations.

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Q On what basis do you say that?

MR. NESSEN: On the fact that the President is traveling a good deal, and I think we are putting out more information from here. I spend a lot of my time attending meetings so I can come out and give you a briefing on the meetings, which I don't think was done before, for instance.

One of the things I do want Jack to add to his duties is paying special attention to press arrangements on the trips. I don't know that we screw up the sunsets so much anymore, but I do want Jack to pay special attention to the trips and make sure that they go smoothly.

Jerry Warren will also continue doing what he is doing across the way in the EOB, which is to stay in touch with out of town newspapers and broadcasters, editorial writers and columnists and specialty writers, overseeing the news summary and other duties.

Q Ron, I think I read in the Post that Mr. Greener was a Rumsfeld aide. Is that the case? I don't see it reflected in here. Had he worked for Mr. Rumsfeld before?

MR. NESSEN: I think Don at one time was head of the Cost of Living Council when Bill was over there.

For people who have not seen Bill, here he is.

Q Where were you before?

MR. GREENER: In the United States Air Force.

MR. NESSEN: Under the White House organization the way it is now, deputies and advisers are totally interchangeable, and I hope when I am not available to answer a phone call or to see you in person, you will see Bill, who will have the exact same information and knowledge that I have. He will be doing the briefings from time to time, also, on that basis.

Q How many people do you have on your staff, do you know?

MR. NESSEN: I haven't counted them up, Helen. It is smaller than when I came here, though.

Q Is Lou Thompson leaving?

MR. NESSEN: Lou Thompson is leaving, yes.

Q When?

MR. NESSEN: He will be leaving in about a month or so.

Q You have three Deputy Press Secretaries.

MR. NESSEN: Bill is the principal deputy, and I have not thought about the other titles.

Q Why is Lou Thompson leaving?

MR. NESSEN: Lou came here -- and I think most of you know and wrote about it at that time -- because of his great administrative experience. We did need to put a Press Office together that would run smoothly. There were a lot of administrative details, a lot of new people joined the staff, a lot of paper work had to be done, plus setting up an organization and administrative machinery, and that has been done now.

Q Are you implying that you may change the titles of the other two Deputy Press Secretaries; that is, Hushen and Jerry Warren?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't have any plan to, Jim. I haven't even thought about it, actually.

The President is nominating Rex E. Lee of Provo, Utah, to be Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Civil Division. He will be succeeding Carla A. Hills, who, as you know, has gone over and become the HUD Secretary.

The President will nominate Lawrence S. Eagleburger to be a Deputy Under Secretary of State for Management. He succeeds L. Dean Brown, who has retired from the Foreign Service.

The President is appointing Jim Cannon to the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations. Obviously, this is in addition to his duties as Assistant to the President for Domestic Affairs and Executive Director of the Domestic Council. There is no pay involved in the service on that Commission.

The President also will nominate John T. Murphy of Cincinnati to be a member of the Board for International Broadcasting for the remainder of a term which expires on April 28, 1976.

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Q Ron, back on the Thompson matter, was he fired?

MR. NESSEN: No, he is still working here. He is taking a leave for a while.

Q He is on a leave of absence now?

MR. NESSEN: No, he is on regular leave.

Q From his other job?

MR. NESSEN: What job?

Q What is he on leave from?

MR. NESSEN: He is on leave from his job as Assistant Press Secretary.

Q Why?

MR. NESSEN: He is leaving, and he is using this time to make some arrangements for a new job.

Q There is some speculation that he was fired because he had leaked stories about Secretary Kissinger's tenure as head of the National Security Council. Is that true or not?

MR. NESSEN: I think I explained why he is leaving, Tom.

Q No, you haven't. You haven't said why at all.

MR. NESSEN: I think I can go through it again, if you like. When he came here, the Press Office badly needed his talents as an administrator and as an organizer, and he has now done that.

Q So, he was fired? You are saying he was no longer needed. He did not leave on his own accord. You let him go.

MR. NESSEN: He and I had a long talk and decided that this was the best way.

Q Let me put it another way. When Lou Thompson came here, when you fired him, did he come with the expectation he would be coming on for a few months, six months, to organize and then he would be leaving?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that we talked about that specifically, Tommy.

Q Ron, are you denying that he is leaving because he leaked information about Dr. Kissinger?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, I am.

Q What is the salary of Mr. Greener?

MR. NESSEN: \$39,000 a year.

Q He replaces Thompson?

MR. NESSEN: Vastly overpaid. (Laughter)

Q Do all deputies get \$39,000?

MR. NESSEN: No, they don't.

Q Why does he get more money?

MR. NESSEN: He is the principal deputy. He made a better deal than Jim Lynn, who took a pay cut to come over here. (Laughter)

Q On the Thompson matter, you are denying he was let go or fired because of leaking any information in regard to Dr. Kissinger?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Do you personally feel he was not involved in any of that story, any of that controversy?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know.

Q You are convinced, personally, that he is perfectly clean on that?

MR. NESSEN: I don't even know what controversy you are talking about, Phil.

Q I am talking about the controversy of Dr. Kissinger and his status with the Administration.

MR. NESSEN: I am not aware there is a controversy.

Q Really?

MR. NESSEN: I am aware of stories, which is one thing. Facts are another thing.

Q There is no controversy at all?

MR. NESSEN: As I say, there are stories and then there is what I know to not be happening.

Q What is not happening? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: Whatever the stories say is happening is not happening.

Q You are saying from that platform that you are totally convinced in your mind that Lou Thompson had nothing to do with any of the stories regarding Henry Kissinger's status?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know, Phil.

Q Are you abolishing his job, or is Bill taking his job or what?

MR. NESSEN: As I say, Lou's initial six months or so of getting the Press Office organized is pretty much concluded now, and the remainder of the administrative duties, day-to-day administrative duties, will be spread around among several people.

Q Was he not qualified to carry on duties beyond administration?

MR. NESSEN: I just felt that Lou was too good -- and told him so -- to continue on with the reduced administrative work load that we have.

Q Is there any feeling in the White House, in your Press Office, that legitimate information that doesn't come from you is a leak and, therefore, should be hounded out of existence? You know, it is kind of a shade of the old Administration, that every time there is a story it is called a leak. There is a legitimacy to getting stories in the White House, is there not, that don't come from you necessarily?

MR. NESSEN: The answer to your first question is no and to your second question is yes.

Q Okay. So, you are not tracking down what you call leaks every time there is a story in the newspaper that you haven't given out or that you have?

MR. NESSEN: The answer to that is no, I am not.

Q Your feeling is there is no controversy within the Administration now over Dr. Kissinger's role?

MR. NESSEN: There are stories, and then there is what I know to be going on, and it is sharply different.

Q What is going on?

MR. NESSEN: Nothing.

Q Was there any recommendation made at all that Dr. Kissinger give up his second hat here in the NSC?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q No one in the Administration made such a recommendation?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Is there any disagreement between any senior White House advisers and Dr. Kissinger about what was going into the speech or what the tone of the speech would be?

MR. NESSEN: The speech was written like all the speeches are written, Bob, as the energy speech was, as the economic speech was, as this one was, which is people put in ideas and the President decides what he wants to say. It was done precisely the same way this time as it has been done on all previous speeches.

Q Has there ever been a feeling among senior White House advisers other than Dr. Kissinger that perhaps the President should somehow divorce himself to some extent from Dr. Kissinger's foreign policy and put his own stamp on the foreign policy?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think I can accurately reflect the personal views of all the White House staff.

Q You know of no dissention on the White House staff?

MR. NESSEN: I know of no dissention on the White House staff like that.

Q The President has asked Dr. Kissinger to stay on as Secretary of State until the end of his term.

MR. NESSEN: At least to the end of his term.

Q Has he also asked Dr. Kissinger to stay on as director of the National Security Council at least to the end of his term?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know.

Q Would you know if he had?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Does the President have any assurance from Dr. Kissinger as to how long he plans to stay?

MR. NESSEN: That was the meaning of what we said at the time, which was -- I think the way it was worded -- that the President had expressed his desire to have Dr. Kissinger stay until the end of the term, at least, and Dr. Kissinger said that was also his desire.

Q Ron, early in the President's Administration a number of people on Capitol Hill were sort of taking shots at him, and the President was so disturbed about it that he addressed it in a news conference and said Henry Kissinger was an asset to this Administration and so forth. He gave him a big build-up.

Is the President concerned right now, unhappy, over these stories that appeared last week regarding Henry Kissinger's future in this Administration?

MR. NESSEN: I have never heard him mention it, Phil.

Q Have you heard Kissinger mention it?

MR. NESSEN: The stories?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: I have heard Kissinger talk -- actually, no. I have not heard Dr. Kissinger mention these stories.

Q You have heard him refer to these stories, haven't you?

MR. NESSEN: Let me think. You heard a senior American official refer to the stories at a briefing last week, I think.

Q Can you explain why the President always has to reaffirm Secretary Kissinger's position in the Cabinet? I mean, what prompted him to have to make a public statement about Kissinger? This comes up every two weeks, you know.

Q He hasn't made any statements about Earl Butz lately. (Laughter)

Q Does the Secretary keep coming in and threatening to resign? Is that the story?

MR. NESSEN: That is not the story, Helen.

Q Speaking of Earl Butz, can you explain the process by which Earl Butz was apparently advanced as the chief delegate to Chiang Kai-shek's funeral and then was displaced by Vice President Rockefeller?

MR. NESSEN: Was Earl Butz advanced as the chief delegate to the funeral from here?

Q Barry Goldwater says so.

MR. NESSEN: I mean, was he advanced from here?

Q You announced that he was going to head the delegation, Ron.

MR. NESSEN: I don't believe so, Les.

Q Am I wrong? I am almost sure you announced it.

Q Was the President considering Earl Butz to head the delegation?

MR. NESSEN: A number of people were discussed, and it was discussed with a number of people, and this was the delegation the President decided on.

Q Ron, back to Kissinger. You said no recommendation had been made to the President that Kissinger be relieved of his NSC position?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know.

Q Has that subject ever been discussed with the President by either Don Rumsfeld or Bob Hartmann?

MR. NESSEN: As I say, as far as I know. I obviously don't sit in on every meeting, but as far as I know, the answer is no.

Q No discussion of it at all?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q You said you inform us of meetings that go on and you come out here and tell us. What can you tell us about yesterday's meeting? We were very confused on the different statements coming out.

MR. NESSEN: What was the confusion? You had 17 Senators to talk to and I read the stories, and they gave an accurate report.

Q Did they give an accurate report?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Ron, I wanted to ask a question about two UPI stories, if I may. They both concern Ed Daly, the President of World Airways. One is Daly's statement that an Air Force Colonel ordered the South Vietnamese to shoot his plane out of the sky if he took off. The other is a telegram which the Press Office says was received last night, a very serious telegram from this man who flew so many orphans out of Vietnam.

Why is it that there has been absolutely no comment when they got the telegram last night at 6:15?

MR. NESSEN: I thought it would be better to take a moment to track down what the episode was all about, and I have.

World Airways had a plane under contract to AID. It was a DC-8, and its contract called for it to fly rice and ammunition to Cambodia, along with several other airlines. On April 11, the flights to Cambodia of ammunition and rice stopped because the airport was closed and so on April 14 the State Department, which runs this program, directed that the airlift contracts be terminated, except for one company, called Bird Air, which drops supplies by parachute.

World Airways was paid by the AID fund and under the terms of the contract, when the contract was terminated, as it was because flights could no longer go into Phnom Penh, the terms of the contract, first of all, gave the airline several hours to move its planes to safety.

Secondly, the American Government was required to pay for any loss or damage incurred to the airplane until the time it returned safely to its place of origin, which in the case of World Airways is Oakland.

The DC-8 is not yet back at Oakland, so as far as I can tell, the contract to pay for the loss or damage is still in force. The other three airlines, whose contracts were cancelled at the same time because the air field in Phnom Penh is no longer open, are Airlift International, Seaboard-World, and Flying Tiger.

Q Ron, are you through with that?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Does the Administration intend to make available to any Congressional committees copies of the correspondence from President Nixon to South Vietnamese officials?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know, the Sparkman letter requesting certain documents is being studied and a reply will be sent.

Q Today?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know whether it will be today or not, Bob.

Q Will the reply be in the affirmative or negative?

MR. NESSEN: It is still being studied.

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Q If Congress tied the appropriation for Vietnam to an evacuation only of Americans, would the President sign it?

MR. NESSEN: Let me say a word generally on the question of evacuation. The President made his position on his three-part Vietnam request clear when he spoke to Congress last week.

There are discussions taking place; for instance, the Foreign Relations Committee meeting yesterday. There is a rather full schedule of testimony on the Hill today from the people, top people in the Administration who deal in these areas.

At 2:00 this afternoon, Secretary Schlesinger and General Weyand will testify in open session before the Senate Armed Services Committee. Dr. Kissinger testified in open session before the Senate Appropriations Committee this morning.

The Commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service and the Under Secretary of State both testified today in open session before the Judiciary Committee.

Schlesinger and Weyand will testify before the House Armed Services Committee, or did this morning, and the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, and the Special Assistant to the Secretary of State for Refugee and Migration are testifying this afternoon at a House committee.

There is plenty of opportunity today to hear the views of the top people in these areas.

Because of the sensitivity of the subject of any possible evacuation and the importance of the safety of the individuals involved, I think it would be best to leave the specific aspects to the various witnesses on the Hill today unless I have something specific to announce.

Q Can you say this, did the President tell the Senators yesterday that he would be willing to compromise on the whole evacuation process?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what decisions were made along that line, Helen. I will say, though, that the Congress is moving on this matter with the urgency that the President requested in his speech.

Q Ron, is the pace of evacuation of Americans out of Saigon being left to Ambassador Martin or have any new instructions been given to him to escalate it so we could get more of them out sooner?

MR. NESSEN: There has been a steady thinning out of the Americans there that we have talked about here for a week or so, and that continues. It is people who, as we mentioned, whose jobs -- they are no longer needed because of the reduction in the area of the South Vietnamese government.

Q Did he authorize 5,000 people?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have a fresh number for you.

As I say, the State Department and the Defense Department really can provide you with more details on that.

Q Does the President stand by his request in his speech for 150,000 to 200,000 South Vietnamese to come out of South Vietnam?

MR. NESSEN: He stands by what he said in his speech.

Q In the President's speech at the DAR today he said, "We may need to increase our already considerable ability to airlift troops and supplies long distances." Is this in reference to Israel?

MR. NESSEN: I would have to look at the context, Dick. I am not familiar with that quote.

Q Ron, in yesterday's press briefing, I believe you said Senator Sparkman's letter requesting documents for the Foreign Relations Committee, you said the letter is being studied. I understand the letter is no longer than two pages. I wonder how long will the letter be studied before there will be some answer?

MR. NESSEN: I can't tell you, Les.

Q Ron, there was a report on one of the networks today that the Pentagon has some \$700 million that has been authorized, appropriated and obligated, and is available for Southeast Asia. Is that true?

MR. NESSEN: I heard that same thing, or somebody told me about it, anyhow. I am told the Pentagon is looking into it and you ought to check with them.

Q Ron, to digress for a minute, New York magazine, in its current issue, strongly suggests that the President may have been present at some meeting of Nixon aides where the whole subject of hush money was described and it may indeed be the "G" referred to in one of the transcripts of those meetings. Do you have a comment on that?

MR. NESSEN: Did you read the New York article yourself?

Q Yes, I am aware of it.

MR. NESSEN: Have you read it?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: The whole thing all the way through?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: Is that what you got out of it?

Q What can you tell us?

MR. NESSEN: I want to ask you whether, based on that article, you believe that is in any way a charge, that they have any evidence at all, to make?

Q It is not what I think about it. The article strongly suggests the President was there. I am asking, was the President there?

MR. NESSEN: I think it weakly implies at best. The President was questioned about this thoroughly at his Hungate committee hearing and as far as I know, he was not at that meeting. The article never said he was there.

Q Has he said he was not?

MR. NESSEN: The article never said he was there.

Q Would you agree the article leaves that impression, at least?

MR. NESSEN: I certainly agree with that.

Q Then, don't you think it is legitimate for us to ask you about it?

MR. NESSEN: I won't make any judgments on your sources of questions.

Q Have you asked the President if he was there?

Q That doesn't make any difference. We decide what the legitimacy of the questions are. You are welcome to ask any question you want to here, as I understand it. I am just saying, what is the White House response to that? You are saying, as far as you know, the President was never at one of those meetings, right?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know, he was not at the meeting they suggest he was.

Q Was he ever at a meeting where hush money was discussed?

MR. NESSEN: Not as far as I know. I thought he testified to that at the Hungate committee hearings.

Q He testified he was not at that meeting.

MR. NESSEN: He was asked about that whole period.

Q Wasn't it at the Hungate meeting where he said the American people will never stand for it?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think so.

Q These "as far as I know" responses, of which you have made several at this briefing, and I detect an increasing tendency on your part to say "as far as I know." That is a response, of course, that doesn't really answer a question. Could you undertake in this specific instance, to ask the President whether he was at that meeting and whether anything of that nature took place?

MR. NESSEN: All right.

Q And as a general practice, could you undertake to check with the source directly involved, the President or whoever it may be, so you don't have to give us these "as far as I know" answers?

MR. NESSEN: I always do check with the people that have the information you request if I don't have it myself.

Q All right. Then, in this specific case, could I ask, and I am sure others will join me, that you ask the President whether or not he was at that meeting and whether anything of that nature took place?

MR. NESSEN: I will.

Q Did you ever ask the President how Israel could be more flexible, as you said you would? You said, "I always ask," when we ask, and I have asked that four times. I think it is a very important question, Ron, dealing with the whole structure in the Middle East. How could Israel be more flexible? Did you ever ask the President or did you not?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have an answer at the moment, Les.

Q Ron, back to the press set-up for one minute. You said you don't have as many as the Ziegler operation. Do you know what the figures are in terms of numbers of people?

MR. NESSEN: I know what the numbers were when I came here. It was 58.

Q Fifty-eight on the whole press staff?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q What do you have now?

MR. NESSEN: It is down to about 45 now.

Q How many are hired for the job as press assistant or deputy?

MR. NESSEN: I would have to run through it for you, Fran. I think you know who the people are working in the Press Office.

Q When you described Jerry Warren's duties, you said he would oversee preparation of the news summary. What happened to Phil Warden?

MR. NESSEN: Phil Warden was the editor of the news summary and Paul Miltich had the overall supervision of it. Paul took his job at the Postal Rate Commission and Jerry then took over the overall supervision of the news summary.

Q But there is someone else involved? I mean, Jerry Warren doesn't come in every night at midnight and put this thing together, does he?

MR. NESSEN: No. The editor of the news summary is now a young man named Jim Shuman.

Q Did Shuman used to work for the UPI?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, he did work for the UPI.

Q Was Warden fired?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q But you dismissed him?

MR. NESSEN: He is leaving or has left, I guess.

Q Why?

Q Could he have stayed had he wanted to?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know, Phil, that we need to go into the intricate details of the Press Office personnel. We will announce the new people if we have any new people, or the departure.

Q You haven't.

MR. NESSEN: I announced a new editor for the news summary, a new deputy, the departure of some people.

Q Why not? This has raised questions from about ten different people. Why do you say we don't have to go into details when we have a long biography of this new gentleman. The last time when we got on the question of what happened to Thompson, this is of great concern to the working press, it would appear to me. Why do you say we don't have to? I guess you don't have to, but do you determine what is of interest to the press?

MR. NESSEN: I determine what is proper operation for my office, Les.

Q Why was Warden dismissed?

MR. NESSEN: We have a new editor for the news summary now.

Q That is not an answer, Ron. I think that is not very nice to say this to a lady. (Laughter)

Q Ron, yesterday the Senate Budget Committee -- I forget the exact figure -- but they recommended a deficit somewhere between \$67 billion and \$68 billion. Does the White House have any reaction to what they have been up to in the last couple of days?

MR. NESSEN: I have not had a chance to look specifically into that bill but as we said before, the President is pleased that Congress is moving in this direction of setting an overall ceiling on Government spending.

Q If I could follow that up. Also, people up there on the Hill say the accounting methods they are using are different from those the White House is using, that actually, the two of you are a lot closer together on the spending figures than it appears.

MR. NESSEN: I have to look at the specific bill. I didn't have a chance to do it this morning.

Q Has Phil Buchen completed his inquiry into the Howe case, and do you have a report on that?

MR. NESSEN: As I mentioned last week, Fran, as a general rule we won't have anything to say about matters falling into that general area until there is a conclusion.

Q So, there is not yet a conclusion?

MR. NESSEN: I think I will just stick with what I said.

Q In the interest of my friends over there, are you planning any other changes in your staff?

MR. NESSEN: If we are, we will announce them.

Q You didn't announce Thompson's, and he was fired Saturday.

MR. NESSEN: He is here for at least another month, Helen.

Q On a leave of absence?

MR. NESSEN: He is on leave for another month or so.

Q He will not be working every day in the White House?

MR. NESSEN: That is probably true.

Q Is the White House trying to find him a job or recommending him to other agencies?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Has there been any follow-up on those reports that some of the orphans airlifted from Vietnam were in fact not orphans?

MR. NESSEN: You need to check with Mr. Parker at the AID agency.

Now, I have some announcements I would like to put out, if you would like to hear them. They are items that didn't get asked about today.

Some of you who have asked in the past about material being transmitted to the Church committee -- and I think some of you have kept up with material that has been going over there over the past few weeks. The Colby report has been sent to the Church committee.

Some of you have asked, from time to time, about reaction to the President's speech --

Q Can you take questions as you go along?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q What about all the other requests that he made?

MR. NESSEN: Some of those have already been complied with, Mort. Some of the material has already gone up.

Q Can you tell us which? I mean, there were four large categories of items. Can you say what?

Q Can you say when the Colby report was sent up?

MR. NESSEN: I believe it was yesterday.

Q Have they been turned down on anything?

MR. NESSEN: No.

The Colby report went yesterday.

Q The full text?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q There were no deletions?

MR. NESSEN: No, there were no deletions.

Q What about verbal addenda?

MR. NESSEN: That was sent, too.

Q Was there any summary of what Colby told the President personally or verbally, but did not include in the written report?

MR. NESSEN: There was some printed addenda to the Colby report, but I don't know about a summary of any. First, I don't know whether there was any verbal addition to the Colby report and if there was, I don't know whether a summary was sent.

The Counsel's Office -- in answer to Mort's question about what other material has gone up there -- the Counsel's Office has met regularly with the staff director and the legal counsel of the committee, and the committee has been supplied with copies of all Executive Orders relating to the structure of the intelligence community and the legal foundation for particular intelligence activities which was one of the requests, as I recall it.

The committee has also been supplied with copies of organizational materials relating to the National Security Council, which was another of the requests.

The committee was also provided with access to a number of highly classified NSC intelligence directives and related materials.

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Q A number or all?

MR. NESSEN: To a number.

Q How many?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have the number.

Right now, the Counsel's Office at the White House and the committee are continuing their discussions -- which are going well and cooperatively -- of the appropriate procedures with respect to other categories of very sensitive information.

Q Ron, these directives you mention, are they what are commonly referred to as CIA secret charter?

MR. NESSEN: If you recall the items that were requested by the Church committee, item number one, of course, was the Colby report, which has been sent. Item two was all Executive Orders, national security decision memoranda or intelligence directives and other White House directives pertaining to the charter, structure and guidelines for any overt and covert foreign or domestic intelligence agencies or activities.

Another item was all Executive Orders, National Security Council memoranda and directives and other White House instructions pertaining to the structure, functions and organizations of intelligence policy organizations within the office of the President.

The fourth item requested was organization charts and staffing patterns back to 1947 for all intelligence-related organizations within the White House.

So, the point I am making is that some things have gone and other things are still under discussion.

Q The President has the ultimate decision on this?

MR. NESSEN: It is all worked out in such a cooperative and easy way that I am not sure he needed to get involved in this.

Q Do you know whether all NSC directives relating to the CIA's charter have been transmitted to the committee or whether some of them were withheld?

MR. NESSEN: I think at this point it is working so well -- as far as I know, nothing has been denied. Some things are under discussion.

Q In answer to a question at a recent press conference, the President gave a very curious answer when asked about his beliefs about the results of the Warren Commission, and he said that the Church committee and the Rockefeller Commission would take up that subject.

The question did not go to whether the CIA was in any way involved in the Kennedy assassination or anything. The President offered that on his own volition. Does the President --

MR. NESSEN: It was in response to a question.

Q It was a question about the Kennedy assassination, but the questioner did not link the CIA to the Kennedy assassination in any way, and the President answered the question by saying the Rockefeller Commission and the committees in Congress investigating intelligence might take up the matter.

There was a story in the paper today which said that the Rockefeller Commission was satisfied that the CIA was not involved in the Kennedy assassination.

Does the President feel there is something here that one of the CIA investigating commissions should take up? Why did he make that remark?

MR. NESSEN: I think he said what he intended to say, and if the Rockefeller Commission is saying that -- he never passed a judgment. He just said it was something -- I would like to see his exact words of what he did say.

Q As a member of that Commission, Ron, did the President have access to some of the materials that are now still classified pertaining to that investigation?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know.

Q I think in his answer he did say he had seen no evidence yet to dispute the findings of the Warren Commission.

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Does he hope that the Church Commission and the Rockefeller Commission will thoroughly re-examine the Warren Commission report?

MR. NESSEN: I think whatever he said in that answer is what he believes.

Q Are these same materials being made available to the House committee, the Nedzi committee?

MR. NESSEN: I am not sure they have asked for these materials. Have they? I will have to check on that.

Q One more question about the CIA matter and the President's response at the press conference. This really is following up on Mort's question.

The President said he had seen no evidence to dispute the Warren Commission's findings, but he also said in the same answer that the Warren Commission proceeded on the basis of the evidence that was available at that time. Why did he say that?

MR. NESSEN: I guess because it was the truth.

Q In other words, why did he make a point of saying the Warren Commission acted on the basis of the evidence that was available at that time? What was the basis for his phrase "at that time"?

MR. NESSEN: I think he was just stating a fact, Jim. He went on to say he had seen nothing, whatever the wording was. I hate to deal with this without having the wording in front of me.

Q I understand, that is correct, but I wondered why he would make two statements in answer that in a sense appear contradictory, one that the Warren Commission acted on the basis of evidence available to it at that time, which implies there might be other evidence, and at the same time and in almost the same breath say that he had seen no other evidence.

Why would he make two statements that appear to be contradictory?

MR. NESSEN: I don't see that they are contradictory. I think they are just two sets of facts that are not contradictory.

Q Has any consideration been given to making public the Colby report or portions of it, as originally was suggested by the President?

MR. NESSEN: I think what he said before in response to that question was that one of the recommendations of the Rockefeller Commission was whether to make it public or what portions of it.

Q Have you anything else to volunteer?

MR. NESSEN: Some of you have asked from time to time how the reaction to the President's speech is going. We have some updated figures as of 9:30 this morning.

The favorable phone calls have overtaken the unfavorable phone calls by a small margin. The phone calls that now express support for the speech in general, not any particular part of it, are 593, and the phone calls which express opposition to the speech are 578. Nine other people called with various comments.

On the telegrams, the telegrams that voice opposition to the speech still outnumber those which support the speech. There are 1,671 telegrams which oppose the speech, criticize the speech, and 1,114 which are favorable to the speech, and other various, assorted comments and telegrams are 455.

Q That is a relatively high turnout. Does the President read anything in that in terms of the public interest?

MR. NESSEN: I haven't heard him read anything into that, Tom.

Q Does that include letters?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think we have a letter count yet.

Q Are these phone calls just from outside the DC area, or is it all telephone calls?

MR. NESSEN: These are all the phone calls that have been taken by the so-called Comment Office, where the calls are referred to.

Q Does that include people in the current Administration or did they screen those? I am not suggesting any hanky panky. I didn't have that in mind. They are screened.

Q Do you have anything else?

MR. NESSEN: Some of you have asked from time to time about what is the status of possible Vietnamese evacuation, if it ever came to that, the status of orphans and the status of people who were evacuated from Cambodia.

You have asked specifically -- maybe Les, the other day -- about the parole authorities of the Attorney General.

The parole authority of the Attorney General gives him the right to allow any class of alien to enter the United States outside the normal immigration quotas. This parole authority also has a provision to provide haven in the United States specifically for people fleeing Communism.

The quota for people fleeing Communism is 10,200, and that has already been filled from other countries this year, but this parole authority also gives the Attorney General the ability to cut through red tape that would normally delay the arrival of immigrants in the United States.

So, it has been used twice. The parole authority has been used twice recently by Attorney General Levi in connection with the Vietnamese situation.

Q Does that include Cambodia, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: Just a second and I will go through it. He also has one other request to use his parole authority pending from the State Department. He used the parole authority first on April 2 when he authorized the entry into the United States of approximately 2,000 South Vietnamese orphans who already were in the process of being adopted and had adoptive parents waiting here for them.

So, the use of this authority in that case was to eliminate the red tape and speed up the procedure.

Last Sunday the Attorney General used his parole authority again to permit the entry of the 3,000 Vietnamese into the United States who fall into one of the following three categories: Category one, Vietnamese who are the lawful spouse or children of American citizens. Category two, the Vietnamese mother and father of people who have become U.S. citizens, or the mother and father of the Vietnamese wife or husband of an American citizen. Category three, the third category allowed in this 3,000, the minor or unmarried brothers and sisters of Vietnamese husbands and wives of American citizens.

Most of these people listed in those three categories are the relatives of American citizens who are in Vietnam who do not work for the American Government.

Q How many of those, do you know?

MR. NESSEN: I said this particular invocation of the parole authority involved 3,000 Vietnamese.

The one request for parole authority that is pending comes from the State Department. The Department has asked the Attorney General to add two additional categories of people. They are refugees from Cambodia who are now in Thailand, some of those who had left Cambodia before last weekend's evacuation, and others who came out on the Marine helicopters. That is one additional class that the State Department has asked the Attorney General to deal with.

Q How many?

MR. NESSEN: There is no number on that. Actually the Justice Department can give you more details.

The other category is relatives of persons who are now in the United States as citizens. That means relatives of Vietnamese who are now in the United States as nationalized Americans.

Q Is that Vietnamese or Cambodians?

MR. NESSEN: Vietnamese and Cambodians.

Q How many of those?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have a number on that either.

The parole authority by the Attorney General has been used in the past to allow Russian citizens to enter the United States and that is where that quota got filled up, among other places.

The largest invocation of the parole authority occurred in 1965 when 675,000 Cubans came to the United States after the Castro government took over there.

Q Ron, is the President disposed to grant political asylum in the United States to any South Vietnamese citizen who requests it?

MR. NESSEN: At the moment it is being done through this parole authority, Dave.

Q Is that possibly a subject for this afternoon in the President's meeting with Levi?

MR. NESSEN: As I said, Levi asked for the meeting and he didn't list the subjects that he wanted to talk about.

Q Ron, the American Labor Movement, apparently -- according to reports -- is making its feelings known to Congressmen and others in opposition to any mass sanctuary in this country for South Vietnamese -- I am talking on the order of 200,00, that kind of thing -- on the ground that these people would compete with American workers for jobs.

Has the White House received word to this effect from organized labor, or not?

MR. NESSEN: I haven't heard of it, Jim, if they have.

Q Does the White House have any position on whether the United States Embassy in Saigon should assist American companies trying to get Vietnamese employees and families out or whether they should resist for fear it might undermine confidence further in that country?

MR. NESSEN: I would like to go back to my statement, Steve, that it is a very sensitive subject and I think it is probably better to leave it to the testimony -- the considerable testimony on the Hill today where I am sure the subject will come up.

Q Ron, the President and also various other high-ranking officials have talked about a special obligation to 150,000 to 200,00 Vietnamese. The implication was to evacuate them from Vietnam and to bring at least some of them to the United States.

I don't think these people fit into any of those categories. Would this preclude bringing them to the United States?

MR. NESSEN: Again, I think this is a sensitive subject which I would prefer to let be discussed on the Hill today.

Q The prospect of bringing Vietnamese evacuees into the United States, you don't have a position you can tell us on that?

MR. NESSEN: Other than what the President said and what Administration officials have said to you, I don't.

Q What else do you have for us?

MR. NESSEN: Some of you have asked this morning -- I can cut it off if that is all you want.

Q No, keep going.

MR. NESSEN: Some of you have asked this morning about the story that was in the Washington Post concerning the Voice of America broadcasts and I had not been able to get back to you personally with your answers so I thought I would tell you now.

It is somewhat related to what I just said, Steve, but the question of reports on possible evacuation and so forth is a sensitive and difficult subject. It seemed to me it doesn't have anything to do with censorship but it has to do with responsibility.

The Voice of America is trying to be responsible in a very difficult situation. It is the official voice of the United States Government overseas and so its broadcasts carry special weight with the people who listen to it, and so it must operate, I think, with some constraints on occasion.

Reports that involve speculation about evacuation could very well substantially add to the problem and I don't think anybody, either reporters or officials of the Government, would want to endanger lives.

I know that it is not very good or popular to ask reporters to avoid a subject but there are occasions as now and reporters have in the past, in dealing with such sensitive subjects, cooperated.

Q Those were national security matters, Ron.

Before you go any further, I would personally like to interject my complete disagreement with virtually everything you have said there. Our job is to ask questions. Your job is to take care of policy and the question of lives falls in your category, not ours.

MR. NESSEN: In this particular case, it is a question of speculation about evacuation that could very well lead to putting lives in jeopardy. So it is for that reason that the VOA policy has been established in this very narrow and particular area.

Q You are talking about American lives?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Ron, as I understand, they have deleted such quotas -- some of the quotas, for example, of Senator Jackson. Have you looked into the specifics of what has been deleted?

MR. NESSEN: I was trying to give you some of the considerations that went into the policy. I have not, frankly, looked into the specifics. The State Department does set overall policy for the VOA.

I see where Andy Falkiewicz has been giving some considerable detail about how the programs are being handled. I just wanted to give you some thoughts about the general policy that led to this.

Q You are not saying that we should not write about evacuation, are you, the American press? I mean the White House is not putting out any caveat to us, is it?

MR. NESSEN: No, I was doing this in response to a question about why had the VOA adopted a somewhat restrictive policy on what it is reporting.

Q I gather you wouldn't be unhappy if we all followed this?

MR. NESSEN: As Jim says, your business is to write stories and mine is not. For my own part, as I said earlier in this briefing, it is a very sensitive matter and, since high officials are talking on the Hill today, I preferred not to talk about it here today.

Q How about Armed Forces Radio and TV, is this being applied to their broadcasts, for example?

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard that, Steve, but I could look into that if you would like.

Q Could you find out?

MR. NESSEN: You could check either with the Pentagon or I could check for you.

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Q Anything else?

MR. NESSEN: Some of you, this morning before I came out here, put some queries in with the Press Office and again, we didn't have time to get back to you before the briefing on what does the Administration think of the bill passed yesterday by the House which would provide Government loans up to \$250 a month for up to two years to assist unemployed homeowners to pay their mortgages and prevent the loss of their houses if they were out of work.

The Administration opposes that bill because it believes it would not serve the purpose that is claimed for it and it would cause a great number of administrative problems and it would add about 1/2 billion dollars to the Federal deficit.

The foreclosure rate on houses right now is very low. If the economic conditions should bring about an increase in mortgage delinquencies -- even if it caused an increase in delinquencies -- this isn't thought to be likely to cause a major increase because lenders in such circumstances normally tend to be lenient and allow the homeowners to pass up a few payments until they are able to resume.

Now, if there should be an increase in foreclosures, the Government already has a number of existing laws to deal with this problem and, in fact, has already taken some steps in this direction.

The Federal Home Loan Bank Board has taken steps to encourage banks and savings and loans, and others who hold mortgages, to not foreclose if a homeowner misses a few payments.

The Housing and Urban Development Department has announced a program to take assignments of federally insured mortgages in order to prevent defaults.

Q HUD, was it?

MR. NESSEN: HUD, right.

If there were to be any increase significantly in the number of delinquent loans that would cause a problem to savings and loans which hold those mortgages. There are provisions to help the savings and loans out.

The reason I said it would defeat the purpose for which the authors of the legislation claim is that if there were a Government program to pay off mortgages, then lenders, which right now simply let the homeowners pass up a few payments, the incentive would be for those banks and savings and loans to foreclose because then they would get their money immediately from the Federal Government.

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Q Isn't that covered in the law, however, by requiring -- if I remember reading the stories on this bill -- that the delinquency payments would have to be something like two years before the payment would go into effect?

Q They don't get the full amount of the mortgage. They just get loans up to --

MR. CARLSON: After two months, they can apply for it.

Q Another question, if I might ask about it. If the delinquency and foreclosure rates are so low, how is it this would add half a billion dollars to the budget? I know what you are saying, that right now the delinquency and foreclosure rate is low, so how would that add half a billion dollars to the budget?

MR. CARLSON: They are not foreclosing right now. They are holding off.

Q Are you saying the President would veto this?

MR. NESSEN: It has not gotten here yet. It has only passed the House.

Q What is the foreclosure rate?

MR. NESSEN: Less than one-half of one percent.

Q You are making a projection or guess that the foreclosure rate would raise rapidly and cause \$500 million additional --

MR. NESSEN: There was the judgment made that this bill would encourage that kind of thing.

Q They don't get the full payment anyway. They only get loans to pay off the monthly payments for a period.

MR. NESSEN: The feeling is that the banks and savings and loans would foreclose in order to get their money all at one time.

Q Is the President going to Ford's Theater Thursday night?

MR. NESSEN: I think he will go, yes.

Q Are you covering tomorrow's briefing today?

MR. NESSEN: No, I just wanted to cover some of the things I had been asked about this morning and had not had time to get back to people on, and it didn't come up at the briefing.

I have one more little packet of answers. I can't find the others, so I will get back to the people who asked.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

(AT 1:42 P.M. EDT)