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NEWS CONFERENCE

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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 12:08 P.M. EDT

MAY 27, 1975

TUESDAY

MR. NESSEN: I want to move right along so we can get to this 12:45 Rose Garden ceremony.

The President came into the office at 7:30 this morning and held his usual staff meetings first thing.

His other meetings today include right now at noon a regular meeting with Vice President Rockefeller, which he has periodically.

At 12:30, Lt. Commander Steven Todd will go in to see the President. I think some of you know Steve. He is coming in so the President can bid him farewell and express his appreciation for Commander Todd's service as the Naval Aide to the President.

Commander Todd is being reassigned by the Navy after two years of service here at the White House. The President will present Commander Todd with a Legion of Merit as he leaves the White House to go to other Navy duties.

Q Do you have the name of his successor?

MR. NESSEN: There is not going to be an exact successor. As you know, the new Military Assistant to the President, Captain Kollmorgan, is a Navy man. There will be a Navy man of lower rank assigned as an aide.

At 12:45, the President is going out to the Rose Garden to participate in the swearing in of Lowell W. Perry, of Detroit, as a Member and Chairman of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. I think you will remember we announced the nomination on May 12th, and the Senate confirmed him on May 21st. There is open coverage of that. We will try and wind up by then.

I think we already have biographic information available in the Press Office for you to pick up.

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At 2:15, the President is meeting in the Cabinet Room with Richard Velde, the Administrator of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, also other staff members from the LEAA and also from the White House.

The purpose of this is to discuss future programs and plans of the LEAA.

Under the law, the authorization for the LEAA runs out at the end of this fiscal year and under the law, the President is required to prepare future plans to carry the agency on through the future years.

At 8:30 this evening, the President will make a statement in the Oval Office in regard to decisions on his energy program. This, I understand, will be broadcast on the three television networks. I think we are in good shape on an advance text and I hope to have it for you in the area of 4 o'clock, or thereabouts. There will also be a fact sheet with the advance text.

Then, tomorrow, the President leaves for Europe, you know, first thing in the morning, and he will have remarks briefly at Andrews Air Force Base. Before taking off at approximately 7:40, he will speak there. We will also have an advance text of those remarks available this afternoon.

The text of his statement tonight will be embargoed for 8:30 and the advance for tomorrow morning, I think, we will put it out for 6:00 a.m.

Q Are a lot of Cabinet officers, and so forth, going to be there?

MR. NESSEN: No. It is a very low-key departure. Nobody has been invited.

Q He is just going to make a farewell statement?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, for those gathered there, families of people going along, a few people, but no big ceremony.

Q What time will that be ready?

MR. NESSEN: Sometime later this afternoon, I think.

Q What are the chances for getting the 7:40 statement for release in the a.m.?

MR. NESSEN: No, I don't think we can do a.m.'s. That is 6:00 tonight. I think we will make it 6:00 a.m.

I think you have a little packet of material that we have handed out. You have the announcement of the appointment of Caroline Freeland, of Bethesda, Maryland, and David Childs, of Washington, D. C., to be members of the National Capital Planning Commission.

You have the appointment of Rogers C. B. Morton to be a member of the National Commission on Productivity and Work Quality.

Also, you have the appointment of four persons to the United Services Organization, Inc.

Also, you have the intention to nominate Wallace Bennett, of Salt Lake City, Utah, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation.

And you also have the transmittal to the Congress of the Annual Report of the Administration on Aging; and the transmittal to the Congress of the Final Report pursuant to the Jackson-Nunn amendment. That is an amendment that has to do with European countries helping to defray expenses of American troops in Europe.

Also, the President is accepting the resignation of the Honorable John D. J. Moore as Ambassador to Ireland, effective June 30. We have an exchange of letters available in the Press Office which we will post after this briefing.

Essentially, the Ambassador is quitting for personal reasons.

Now, about the trip. First of all, those of you who are on Air Force One pool tomorrow, I think you know who you are, if you would, turn in your passports to Joy this afternoon, please.

Now, I think you have basically the logistics detail that you need for the trip, the baggage and plane times. I will run over it one more time. Bags in Room 87 of the EOB until 6:00 tonight, or tomorrow morning by 5:45 for the TWA flight and 6:00 for the Pan Am flight, at Andrews.

If you leave your bags here tonight, then you should check in at Andrews at 6:00 in the morning for the TWA flight and 6:15 for the Pan Am flight.

As I said, for the Air Force One pool, give your passports to Joy today and then check in at 7:15 at Andrews tomorrow on the assumption you have left your bags here today.

Q I didn't quite understand the Pan Am part. Bags and check-in for Pan Am at 6:00 a.m.?

MR. NESSEN: 6:00 a.m. for the bags, 6:15 if you are coming without bags.

Now, we will have the detailed press schedule for the first stop on the trip, which is Brussels, later this afternoon. If you want to, I can run through the highlights for you now.

As you know, the President will leave the White House South Lawn at 7:25, no ceremony. He will depart Andrews at 7:50 after making the brief remarks there, and also no ceremony.

The arrival time in Brussels is 8:00 p.m., Brussels time. As you know, that is 3:00 in the afternoon, Washington time.

Q That is the President's arrival, or the press?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, the President and Mrs. Ford.

Q 3:00 p.m. tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: 3:00 p.m. Washington time. The King and Queen will be there for an arrival ceremony. There will be brief remarks.

Q Do you have their names, by chance?

MR. NESSEN: King Baudouin, the King of the Belgians, and Queen Fabiola.

There will be an arrival ceremony, as I say, with brief remarks. Then they will all go to the Royal Palace for a courtesy call on the King and Queen and at the same time, the President will have a meeting there with the Belgian Prime Minister, Leo Tindemans, and the Belgian Foreign Minister, Renaat Vanelsande.

As you know, Dr. Kissinger is in Paris today. He will come over to Brussels tomorrow and be there for the arrival and, of course, will sit in on the meetings with the Belgian Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. That is about it for the events tomorrow.

Q Will he be meeting with Giscard the first day?

MR. NESSEN: I am just giving you what we have firm, Walt.

On Thursday, the NATO meetings begin at 4:30 in the afternoon.

Q All these are local times?

MR. NESSEN: 4:30 Brussels time, right.

On Thursday, the NATO meetings don't begin until 4:30 in the afternoon, Brussels time. Until the time he goes to the NATO headquarters, the President will hold meetings with European leaders at his residence.

The President will be staying while he is in Brussels at the U.S. Embassy residence, and that is normally occupied by the Ambassador and Mrs. Leonard K. Firestone.

Q Do you know how many meetings with leaders in Brussels, private meetings?

MR. NESSEN: I am going to give you some right now. The President will have a working breakfast with Prime Minister Thorn, of Luxemborg.

After the breakfast with the Prime Minister of Luxemborg, he will meet in the morning with the Prime Minister of Greece, Mr. Karamanlis, and the Prime Minister of Turkey, Demirel.

Q Not together?

MR. NESSEN: No, separate meetings.

Q Do you have first names?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have first names on here.

Then, the President will have a working lunch with Chancellor -- we are talking about Thursday now -- working lunch with Chancellor Schmidt of West Germany, of the Federal Republic of West Germany.

Then, in the afternoon, you will have the first NATO session. The President, before he goes to the NATO session, will meet with Prime Minister Jorgensen, of Denmark, and Prime Minister Goncalves, of Portugal.

Now, at the moment, those are all the meetings I have to give you. We hope to have more for you tomorrow and Thursday.

Q Can we have their full names on the bible, if possible, when we get it?

Q I have heard he is going to meet with heads of State of the NATO Alliance except Iceland and the Netherlands, with whom he recently met, and Aldo Moro, of Italy, with whom he will presumably meet in Rome. Is that the case?

MR. NESSEN: I think what I will do is just give them to you as their plans are firmed up, Walt.

As I say, we will be giving more information as we go along. I think it is fair to say there will be other meetings with other foreign leaders when he is there, but I just don't have the firm people, places and times on those.

Q When will he make his first formal remarks?

MR. NESSEN: I think it is good to be aware of the fact that the NATO meeting he will attend twice, Thursday beginning at 4:30 and then pretty much all day on Friday. Those are closed meetings with a very small delegation from each country, no press. He will speak there but the speech is a private speech.

Q Why is that?

MR. NESSEN: It is just the way NATO does business.

This is a working NATO meeting. Now, we have laid on a very full schedule of briefings for you several times a day and you will be able to keep up fully with what is going on.

Q Ron, can you say definitely whether President Ford will meet privately -- apart from the dinner with the King -- with President Giscard d'Estaing? There have been reports from Paris that he will not.

MR. NESSEN: I think if you attended Secretary Kissinger's briefing on the trip on Saturday, he said the President looks forward to meeting the French President.

Q I know, but there have been reports from Paris to the contrary.

MR. NESSEN: I don't have anything further to give you on any further meetings.

Q Informationally, will reporters from European papers be able to get in on those briefings the same as the reporters from the White House?

MR. NESSEN: It all depends. The way we put things together, some of the briefings will be done, especially on Thursday when these foreign leaders are coming to his residence, we might give a fill on the meetings at the pool there at the residence, and also phone it down to the Press Office. Other times, we will have big, full briefings at the press center. It will be done in a variety of ways.

Q So, our people overseas will get the news?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, if we don't have a formal briefing at the press center, it will be given to the pools and posted at the press center.

Q When will the President first make his formal remarks to the NATO group?

MR. NESSEN: You are talking about other than the arrival statement?

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Q I am talking about the plenary session of the NATO heads of Government.

MR. NESSEN: I've got you. The President goes to the first NATO meeting at 4:30. There are various ceremonial arrivals and so forth. The opening session is open at 4:30, but the President will not speak at that.

The remarks will be by Karamanlis, who is the honorary President of this session, and by Prime Minister Tindemans of Belgium, who is obviously the host, and NATO Secretary General Luns. That is the opening ceremony. The President does not speak.

Then the actual working session begins in another room at 5:20, and the President will speak at 5:50. We are talking about Thursday now. That will be his first formal speech, Peter, but as I say, it will be closed. It is expected to run about 20 minutes, according to this schedule.

As you know, later that night there will be a dinner by the King, and it is also not expected that the President will take part in the toasts at that dinner.

Q Is there coverage of that dinner?

MR. NESSEN: Official photo. The King goes into the dinner and there is no pool coverage in that dinner.

There is press pool coverage of the arrival, and then it says "official photo coverage." That is official photographers, but no press coverage of the dinner.

Q Will you be present when the President addresses NATO at 5:50 on Thursday?

MR. NESSEN: I have to see if I am one of those limited members. I don't think so. It really is a very small working group.

Q Who else will be there from the American delegation?

MR. NESSEN: Secretary Kissinger, Ambassador Bruce, Don Rumsfeld, Mr. Sonnenfeldt and General Scowcroft are the American delegation to that working session.



Q The answer is you will not be present?

MR. NESSEN: That appears to be the case at the moment.

Q Ron, do you know why there is no press coverage of that dinner?

MR. NESSEN: As you know, that is a dinner given by the King, and the President is one of the invited guests. I would think you would have to take it up with the Palace in Brussels.

Q Ron, we can assume the President in his opening remarks at the closed meeting, that those will be prepared remarks?

MR. NESSEN: Oh, yes, certainly so.

Q Ron, are you through now?

MR. NESSEN: I can't think of anything else to give out here.

Q Shall we get through Thursday and all of Friday?

MR. NESSEN: I will run through all of this. You will have this late in the afternoon.

The NATO meeting begins early on Friday. The President will arrive at the NATO headquarters at 9:56 in the morning, and there will be a long morning session.

There will be a long morning session, then there will be a lunch beginning at 1 o'clock, and that will end at 2:15. The sessions will resume again at 2:20 and will go on until 4:35.

The President will go back to his residence. The President has no scheduled events that evening.

Q These Friday sessions are closed working sessions, as well?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, they are. That will take you up through Friday night.

Q Ron, are you through now?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, ma'am.

Q Has the President decided whether he is going to give any relief for taking those refugees off Phu Quoc Island in Vietnam, and has he considered an answer to Senator Helms on that and is he considering the fact that 200 of those children are supposed to be half American?

MR. NESSEN: I am not familiar with Senator Helms --

Q He is supposed to have sent a letter here Friday, and the President was supposed to answer today, this morning. Anyway, the situation has been kicking around here for days.

MR. NESSEN: I know, and I have an answer for you.

I don't, as I say, know about Senator Helms' letter.

Q Anyway, is he going to try to get the refugees off or not?

MR. NESSEN: Phu Quoc Island is part of the Vietnamese territory. The evacuation of Americans and Vietnamese has been completed. We picked up, in addition to the helicopter and airplane evacuation, thousands of Vietnamese who sailed out to ships and also who flew out on their own planes and an effort is being made to resettle those refugees.

But in answer to your specific question, Sarah, the people who are on that island are subject to the control of the South Vietnamese territories.

Q Ron, may I ask a question relative to the bilateral --

MR. NESSEN: May I say those who want to go to the Rose Garden with cameras and sound equipment should leave now and follow Bill out through this door here.

Q Does that mean that the 200 she is referring to will remain on the island, that there is no way to get them out?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know how many are on the island. As I say, the evacuation is completed, and the island is under the control of the South Vietnamese authority.

Q Can you please give us some idea of the nature of the discussions the President will have in his bilateral head-to-head meetings with the various leaders of the Alliance and particularly his meeting with the Belgium Prime Minister Tindemans? Will the F-16 be on that agenda for that meeting?

MR. NESSEN: I have not seen the agenda for these private meetings, Walt. Obviously, each will deal with the questions that interest that country. When I get through briefing myself thoroughly on each of the meetings, I will let you know.

Q I would like to know specifically on the F-16 on Belgium.

MR. NESSEN: All right.

Q What is the President doing about the pending amnesty applications that have not been signed and so on? Why is it so delayed?

MR. NESSEN: At this moment, there are none here at the White House awaiting the President's action. Eighty cases were signed yesterday by the President.

Q They were not announced, were they?

MR. NESSEN: No, they were not.

Q What was the question?

MR. NESSEN: Fran was wondering, she had some feeling that there were a whole bunch of amnesty applications or rulings here awaiting signature, and the fact is there aren't any here at the moment awaiting signature. Eighty were signed yesterday, and there are no more here.

Q Can you explain the delay in getting them signed before yesterday? They have been here for a couple of months.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that they have been here for a couple of months.

Q How long were they here?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know, but I don't think they were here a couple of months. I think all of you know that there is some need for additional help by the Clemency Board, and there are lawyers being transferred over there for duty to help clean up the applications.

Q How many, and where from?

MR. NESSEN: The latest figures I have here are from May 7. The Board had considered 511 cases, the Clemency Board. We have not updated this. Just before I came out here I checked with Phil Buchen's office and he says he has no cases on his desk at the moment.

Q How many has the President acted on?

MR. NESSEN: That is what Bill is checking. Those figures were as of May 7, and I think you would rather have updated figures.

Q Did the President get some recommendations from the Clemency Council on actions on discharges?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what you mean by actions on discharges. Do you mean upgrading discharges and so forth?

Q Yes, some recommendations from the Board over there which would be a little extra work, a little extra thing, not just in the category you have given us.

MR. NESSEN: Bill is checking all the figures. I have a breakdown, and he wants to update those.

Q That won't be in the figures. Did he get a recommendation from the Board? I understand he did. I mean, from the Clemency lawyers that he should take further action on discharges of veterans?

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard that, but I will check it.

Q Ron, is the President informing any Congressional leaders in advance of his speech tonight on energy?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, he is, beginning about 5 o'clock.

Q Personally by phone?

MR. NESSEN: Some by phone and some people in the legislative office will do the others.

Q Can you tell us who and which ones he has talked to personally?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have a list.

Q Will you give us a list?

MR. NESSEN: I will try.

Q Ron, some weeks ago Mayor McClory asked the President to reconsider opening up the amnesty program. Was any consideration given to that, and did that proceed anywhere?

MR. NESSEN: It has not.

Q Ron, also on the President's speech tonight, he has left little doubt that he is going to announce the second dollar increase and in his conversation Friday with the European correspondents, he virtually said as much, but he didn't say anything about announcing anything further on his decontrol plan.

Could you give us further guidance on whether that will be included in the speech?

MR. NESSEN: I think the speech will answer all your questions or both your questions.

Q Ron, the Associated Press carried a story over the weekend quoting some Marines who took part in the landing on Koh Tang. They said even before they left Thailand they knew the crew of the MAYAGUEZ was not on the island of Koh Tang. If this was the case --

MR. NESSEN: It is not the case, so you might as well stop there.

Q Can you tell me how it is you know it is not the case?

MR. NESSEN: The case was that nobody was sure where the crew was. There was no evidence that they had been moved anywhere, no firm evidence other than one pilot who thought he saw some American faces on the deck of the one ship that got into Kompong Som.

Other than that, there was no firm evidence of where they were, but there was no firm evidence they left either the ship or the island.

Q Were radio sweeps carried out of the island and, if so, by which branch of the service?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know the answer to that.

Q Can you find out?

MR. NESSEN: I will try.

Q Ron, I thought on Friday we had a pretty clear statement from the President as to where he stood on the negotiations in the Middle East.

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Yet, on Saturday after Secretary Kissinger held his briefing, it seemed to me that the thing became very cloudy again. As the President stated to the five European correspondents, as I understand it, he was going to have statements to make on the U.S. policy after he sees the Israeli and Egyptian leaders.

But, according to what the Secretary said, he is going to tell Sadat, "Well, we will have to make a decision and then we will take it up with the Congress and then we will go on further," without any clear notion as to what is in it.

Furthermore, the Secretary spoke about the need of a definition of defensible borders for Israel. This has been in the UN Resolution 242 for almost more than six years.

Why is there a need now to go about defining it?

MR. NESSEN: Is that the question, why is there a need to define it?

Q Are there any second thoughts by the Administration as to what the President said on Friday, or does the President's statement stand?

MR. NESSEN: The President's statement stands.

Q All right, how about these other things?

MR. NESSEN: I think Secretary Kissinger stated rather clearly on the question of defensible borders he was talking about definitions. I don't think that I can take it much further than that.

Q Is the Rogers plan dead? The Rogers plan spoke about insubstantial changes. Is that dead?

MR. NESSEN: I think you should probably check with the State Department for that degree of detail.

Q Does the President back the Rogers plan, or does he not back the Rogers plan? Where is it?

MR. NESSEN: I can't help you on that.

Q Has the President seen or talked to the Secretary of Interior-designate Hathaway since he was confirmed by the Senate Interior Committee on May 1?

MR. NESSEN: I am not sure. I will have to check. I can't keep up with all his phone calls.

Q Why do we need Rogers C. B. Morton to be on the National Commission on Productivity and Work Quality? This is about the fourth appointment he has had this year from the President. Don't we have any other people in the United States that can work?

MR. NESSEN: Sarah, as the Secretary of Commerce, dealing with problems of business and so forth, it seemed like an appropriate appointment.

Q You know he won't have time to do it. He will just name some little flunkie to do it.

MR. NESSEN: I didn't know that.

Q Does the President now have any cases of pardon before him?

MR. NESSEN: Do you mean you are not talking about Vietnam-related cases?

Q Nonrelated.

MR. NESSEN: I would have to check with the legal counsel's office. I don't know.

Q Can you tell us why he pardoned Mr. Beck?

MR. NESSEN: The Justice Department made the recommendation and gave the reasons,

Q What were the reasons? They were not made public.

MR. NESSEN: I thought the Justice Department did make those public. I thought I read that in the paper.

Q Surely you know what the President thought and whether he had some views on it, too, as he did it. Surely he didn't do it just as a public --

MR. NESSEN: Hardly, Sarah. You know what the procedure for pardons is.

Q I know what it is, but I also know it is up to the President to have the last word. Sometimes he takes away or adds views on the subject.

MR. NESSEN: He didn't add or take away.

Q Do you have anything else on what the President intends to discuss with the Pope?

MR. NESSEN: That portion of the schedule is not ready yet, and when it is and I have had a chance to brief myself, I will be ready to answer your questions.

Q When will that be ready? Will you have a description of what the President intends or is it just a courtesy call?

MR. NESSEN: I believe on Saturday, Les--I don't know if you attended Secretary Kissinger's briefing--but the purpose of Secretary Kissinger's briefing as it was announced was to provide all the information to people who are interested in the European trip and details of each stop on the trip. He did cover in that -- you missed that, didn't you?

Q I am sorry. I had to be out of town.

MR. NESSEN: He did mention there were two subjects that he would talk to the Pope about. One was the Pope's interest in humanitarian efforts around the world, and the second subject of discussion with the Pope would be the Pope's continuing interest and statements and efforts in the interest of world peace around the world.

I don't know whether that is satisfactory, but that is what Secretary Kissinger outlined.

Q It is. Thank you.

Q Did Phil Buchen play any role in the apparent Justice Department decision not to defend portions of the Federal Election Campaign Act from Constitutional challenge?

MR. NESSEN: Why don't you check with us after the briefing? I know we looked into that.



Q One technical question, Ron. Will the texts of the statements being made by the President in the meetings with the foreign leaders be made available here pretty quickly after they are delivered?

MR. NESSEN: There will be some delay, but they will be available eventually at the White House.

END (AT 12:42 P.M. EDT)