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

#258

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 11:50 A.M. EDT

JUNE 30, 1975

MONDAY

MR. NESSEN: The President came in this morning at 7:30 and he met, as usual, with various members of the staff.

At 10:15, the President met with Robert Seamans, the Administrator of the Energy Research and Development Administration; Bob Fri, his deputy; and Frank Zarb of the FEA.

He got a copy of ERDA's overall research and development plan which ERDA is submitting to Congress today.

There was a briefing here at 10:30, and also you have received, I think, the packet of material that is being sent to Congress today.

At noon, the President is going to be seeing three members of the White House staff who are leaving for various reasons.

Mr. and Mrs. Michael Needham -- Pam Needham is a member of the Domestic Council staff. Her husband has accepted a job in Chicago and so they are leaving.

Mr. and Mrs. Preston Bruce -- Mr. Bruce is a doorman who is retiring after 21 years at the White House.

And Mr. and Mrs. Don Webster -- Don is Deputy Director of the Office of Public Liaison. He is leaving to join private industry here in Washington.

At 12:30, the President will participate in the swearing-in ceremony for Pat Moynihan, and it looks like the weather is going to be all right so it will be out in the Rose Garden.

MORE

#258

If you recall, Ambassador Moynihan was nominated on the 22nd of May by the President, and confirmed on the 9th of June. Justice Byron White will administer the oath.

The President will speak briefly, although there is no prepared text of what he is going to say. So that is at 12:30.

I guess Bill will take care of getting the cameras out and so forth, out to the Rose Garden.

Q What happened to Scali?

MR. NESSEN: Scali is, as I understand it, considering another job in the Administration that has been offered to him.

Q Diplomatic?

MR. NESSEN: It is a diplomatic job, that is correct.

Q What is it? (Laughter)

Q Is it Ambassadorship?

Q Is it bigger than a breadbox?

MR. NESSEN: I think we ought to let Mr. Scali make up his mind first before we talk about it too much.

Q Does he have a deadline for it?

MR. NESSEN: No.

At 2:00, the President is going to meet with Dr. Daniel Boorstin, who is, I think you know, the new nominee for Librarian of Congress. He was nominated for that post on June 20 and has not been confirmed yet.

The President wanted to talk to Dr. Boorstin about his plans for the Library and also some ideas that the President has for the Library.

Q Is the President aware of the criticism that has been expressed of that nomination?

MR. NESSEN: He is, Jim. I am not sure I would describe it as criticism. I think there have been some questions raised, but Dr. Boorstin will have to go through the confirmation process where I am sure he will have an opportunity to answer the questions that have been raised.

Q Does he have any reaction to those questions?

MR. NESSEN: No, he picked Dr. Boorstin because of the thought he was the best man for the job, and he still believes so.

Q What kind of ideas does the President have for the Library of Congress?

MR. NESSEN: Well, for one thing, the President, when he was a Member of the House, found that the Legislative Reference Service that is run by the Library of Congress for Members of Congress was very helpful to the President when he was in the House, and he wants to talk to Dr. Boorstin about improving the Legislative Reference Service for Members of Congress.

The Dr. Borstin meeting is at 2:00.

Let me give you a couple of schedule items for tomorrow. At 10:30, the President is going to be addressing the 66th annual meeting of the NAACP. That is at 10:30.

Q Tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Where?

MR. NESSEN: Let me tell you what the two events are and then go back and give you details.

10:30 is the NAACP speech.

At 11:30, the President is going to participate in the swearing-in of the new Director of the NIH at NIH.

Let's go back and get the details. There will be one travel pool that will go to both places; in other words, follow him from here to the speech and then from the speech out to NIH, and then back here. The President and the pool will leave here at 9:55 so you should be here and ready to go, if you are in the pool, at about 9:45.

The NAACP speech is at the Sheraton Park, and the President's remarks are about 10:30, as I said, and we will plan to have the remarks piped back here to the briefing room so you can hear them here if you don't want to go.

MORE

#258

Q Ron, will there be an advance text?

MR. NESSEN: The advance text outlook is cloudy at the moment. I just don't have a time when I can suggest it is going to be ready, if it is going to be ready. It may not be ready, frankly, this evening.

Q Ron, in connection with NIH, I wonder if the President ever expressed any thoughts to you about dollars being spent for the National Cancer Group at NIH because twice he has asked them to cut back on dollars on their research.

Q Will he visit the Cancer Group there?

MR. NESSEN: Let me just run down what his plans are at NIH.

After the speech at the Sheraton Park, he will go directly to the NIH in Bethesda. The new Director of the NIH is Dr. Donald Fredrickson, and also Mr. Ted Cooper, who is the new Assistant Secretary of HEW, for Health, they were nominated on April 21 and confirmed on May 8, and both will be sworn-in to their new jobs tomorrow.

The swearing-in will take place in the Clinical Center Auditorium, which is on Wisconsin Avenue, across from the Navy Medical Center. The President will speak there at about 11:30. Again, we hope to have the remarks there piped back here to the briefing room.

Again, I cannot give you an advance word on the text. I just don't know when it is going to be ready. Obviously, there is open coverage at both events, and you should have your cameras in place for both events by 9:00.

Q Will we know by the end of the day whether a text will be available at any point?

MR. NESSEN: I should have a little clearer idea by the end of the day whether they will be available and, if so, when.

After all of this, the President should get back here at 12:30. That means we probably would brief here at 1:00. I think that would be enough time. Would that be time enough for people to get back?

Q Do you want to take my question?

MR. NESSEN: To answer your question, there are no plans tomorrow to visit cancer research facilities out there. It is a subject that the President has an interest in, and I can't give you any specific answer on your question, but he is making sure that the money is being spent properly.

Q If I may pursue that, since he is supposed to meet with Dr. Rauscher, the head of the National Cancer Institute, regularly, do you know if he plans to meet with him, and since in the past, in meeting with Dr. Rauscher, he asked him to cut back on dollars? Would you have anything on that?

MR. NESSEN: I do not expect him to meet Dr. Rauscher tomorrow.

As I understand it, your question is, does he favor cutting back dollars for cancer research?

Q No, we know he favors cutting back because he has already asked for that. I was wondering since he is going to NIH whether he might have said anything to you about the cancer part of the NIH?

MR. NESSEN: No, not specifically.

You already have in your hands a couple of announcements. One is the President's intention to nominate George S. Ives, of Bethesda, for reappointment to be a member of the National Mediation Board, and the acceptance by the President of the resignation of Norris Cotton as a member of the National Cancer Advisory Board.

We had a full weekend of meetings at Camp David, lasting about 10 or 11 hours altogether in three sessions. We covered a lot of ground as to our own operation inside the Press Office and our relationship with other offices in the White House. We did talk somewhat about the briefing and ways to improve the briefing.

One thing that we are going to do is this: Every morning at 10:00 we are going to post all the announcements that are ready at that time, and also a detailed rundown of the President's schedule. Then, the briefing will begin promptly at 11:30 every day.

Q Is today an example of that? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: No, it is not an example of that. This all starts tomorrow, I should say. (Laughter) It was supposed to start tomorrow.

We are all going to begin our day a half hour earlier around here, which should help us get ready for the 11:30 briefing. Whether I am completely ready or not, somebody is going to come out here at 11:30 and start briefing, either Bill or Jack or myself.

I think things will be speeded up a little bit because we won't have to go through the President's schedule and the routine announcements because they will have been posted at 10:00.

Q Why did you decide to eliminate the staff who usually hang by the door there?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. Maybe they are trying to get away. (Laughter)

At 3:30 in the afternoon, there will be another posting of all the information and announcements, and so forth, that have accumulated since the 11:30 briefing. At the end of the day, there will be a summary of all the releases we have put out that day, a check list, so you can make sure you didn't miss anything.

Q Will this also be on the telephone thing?

MR. NESSEN: Yes. For the TV people, it was decided that from now on you can go ahead and do your stand-uppers on the lawn in the designated area without bothering to check and get permission from the Press Office. Whenever you want to do the stand-uppers, just go ahead and do them.

Q Ron, do you plan to release a fuller appointment list?

MR. NESSEN: That was not discussed, actually, this weekend, but I do expect the procedure to be followed is there will be times when the President sees people privately without any announcement on his schedule. I think there is some thought being given to doing less of that.

In reality, this President will do what other Presidents have done from time to time; that is, see people privately for various reasons.

Q Will we be told about it afterwards?

MR. NESSEN: That will happen on some occasions.

Q Was any discussion given to the possibility of returning to the two-a-day briefings? And if it was discussed, why was that abandoned?

MR. NESSEN: I think the way it was left was that on those days when it seems that we really need to have an afternoon briefing, we will have an afternoon briefing. There is the option there for an afternoon briefing or some other format of coming down here and talking more informally in the afternoon, or coming back with answers that we did not have at 11:30. So, that was left as a possibility.

Q That will be at 3:30, if it happens?

MR. NESSEN: It might come at various times. It could come earlier, if necessary, or later.

Q Ron, you said a minute ago that somebody would come out every day at 11:30 and brief, that it might be Hushen and it might be -- I don't know who you mentioned ---

MR. NESSEN: Greener.

Q --- but the implication was it might be some days when you yourself would not be doing the briefing.

MR. NESSEN: No, what I meant was, Jim, there might be some days when I am late getting to the briefing. Today, for instance, I was late because I was in talking to Brent. If I was not able to get out of Brent's office by 11:30, Greener would come and start, and then I would come in and bring whatever late information I have been out gathering.

Q So you have not decided to cut down your role in the briefing?

MR. NESSEN: Absolutely not.

Q Have you talked to the President about your new ideas per se on this operation?

MR. NESSEN: No, I thought that these were Press Office details that really did not need the President's concurrence.

Q Do you have anything else there?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have anything in the way of any announcements, no.

Q What were you talking to Brent about?

MR. NESSEN: Just my daily questions on foreign policy that I thought might come up.

Q Do you have anything to announce on the European Security Conference?

MR. NESSEN: No, it is not possible to announce a date because there are still some issues that remain to be resolved, and it is not possible to set a date until they are resolved.

Q Are you fairly certain it will be held on a summit level, with the President attending?

MR. NESSEN: I think it is fair to say that it appears now that it is moving in a direction that gives some optimism that it can be concluded at a summit level.

Q When? Next month, July?

MR. NESSEN: Ralph, it is not possible to set a time yet because there are issues that remain to be resolved. It is just not possible to set a date yet because they are not resolved.

Q I was wondering if in your last answer there was any particular time involved?

MR. NESSEN: There isn't any.

Q Ron, on a number of occasions, such as when you were asked what is the President's feeling about this takeover in India, you said it is not policy to comment on internal matters. The State Department has done the same thing when that Greek gunman drove out the Archbishop and also on several other occasions they have refused to comment on internal matters.

Here is a letter that the President wrote to Congressman Rangel of New York who says we believe South Africa must take concrete actions to resolve the immediate issue and adopt a more constructive policy for black South Africans.

I am just wondering, why would he suggest how South Africa should run their government and yet not comment on India?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that I can give you a very good answer to that, Les. That is an issue that I think the President has spoken on publicly before and that the United States has a policy on it.

Q In other words, in some cases he feels it justified to comment on internal, but in other words he just thinks ---

MR. NESSEN: I think as a general rule the United States does not comment on the internal affairs of ---

Q As a general rule. I see.

Q Ron, is the President going to sign the unemployment insurance bill today?

MR. NESSEN: He is going to sign it, of course. The exact timing has not been worked out, but I would suggest that you check with the Press Office.

We will put a lid on here after this, probably, or after the Moynihan ceremony, but I would check back because there is a possibility he will sign it this afternoon.

Q Then, it is extended for a certain number of weeks; is that right?

MR. NESSEN: That is right. Without this legislation, the extension period would have been cancelled and it would have dropped back to a ---

Q Ron, there was a subjective area from last Thursday's briefing you were going to check on. Can the White House now affirm that the United States still disavows any first strike intent for strategic weapons?

MR. NESSEN: Let me answer it this way: The purpose of having a nuclear force at all is for two reasons, really. One is its actual role in the defense. Secondly, there is a deterrent purpose for having the nuclear force and to talk in too much specific detail or to answer too many specific questions about how and when you would use it would tend to undermine its deterrent effect. I think I will have to answer your question that way.

Q The last defense posture statement did specifically say while discussing the retargeting, the counterforce proposal, that the United States disavows any intent of developing a first strike capability.

What you are saying now would then change that policy. At least, it does not reaffirm that policy.

MR. NESSEN: Marty, I don't know that the policy has to be reaffirmed every day from this platform. I was answering something more general about the discussion we have had here for some days about nuclear policy. Obviously, the posture statement is the statement, but I am just explaining why I have not gone into very much detail about nuclear strategy.

Q You are reaffirming the posture statement?

Q My question was specific. I did not want to get into all these general questions, just that one specific one. Does the White House still reaffirm the policy as stated in that posture statement, or does it not?

MR. NESSEN: Why would it need restating every day from here, Marty?

Q It does not need it every day. There just has been some confusion because the White House has refused now for a number of days to restate it, so I am asking now, can you say that that policy is still the United States' policy?

MR. NESSEN: I just don't think I ought to get into reaffirming or not reaffirming what is in a posture statement or what the President said in his news conference last week.

Q Ron, does the President think there is a crisis now between American-Israeli relations?

MR. NESSEN: No. I don't think so.

Q What is his assessment of everything that has been happening this weekend, the Cabinet action and the so-called hysteria of the Israeli people?

MR. NESSEN: I did not know about any hysteria of the Israeli people. He has met with Rabin and, as you know, he met with Ambassador Dinitz the other day. He is in the process of reassessing American policy in the Middle East. I think you know the President's position in terms of the need for some progress; that the lack of progress in the past has always raised tensions, in some cases raised tensions to the point where they resulted in war.

So he believes there needs to be progress, but the United States is still in the position of exploring with the various parties how to make progress and I don't know that I can go much beyond that.

Q Specifically on this, Ron, two questions. The various Israeli newspapers are reporting in one way or another that the meeting between the President and Ambassador Dinitz on Friday resulted in an ultimatum of one sort or another, or amounted to an ultimatum, and according to the UPI the Israeli National Radio said more specifically that the President told the Ambassador that unless Israel accepted the Egyptian proposals the United States might not support Israel at a Geneva Conference if there is one.

According to Israeli National Radio, the way the President put this was unless Israel accepted the Egyptian proposals the United States and Israeli might have to go separate ways at a Geneva Conference. Is this version that is being put out by the Israeli national radio correct or incorrect?

MR. NESSEN: I think I have to do it piece-by-piece, Jim. There was no ultimatum delivered during the meeting with Ambassador Dinitz. As we said then and as I reconfirmed this morning, it was a review of the situation in the Middle East.

As for the speculation about what might or might not happen in the future, I just think at this stage, where the United States is exploring with the various sides methods of progress, I just don't think I ought to respond to speculative stories in Israeli newspapers.

Q You say first there was no ultimatum delivered, but then by saying that you don't want to comment on the content of the meeting, or what might happen in the future, you seem to be leaving open the possibility that the President did say to Dinitz that the United States might go a separate way from Israel in the Geneva Conference.

Do you mean to leave that open as a possibility?

MR. NESSEN: No, I don't, Jim, I really don't.

MORE

Q Then in order not to leave it open, if you don't want to leave it open, would you tell us a little bit more about what was indeed said?

MR. NESSEN: Without, on the one hand, leaving open that possibility, I do want to say that I think at this stage it is not helpful to anybody to discuss in detail what the President and the Ambassador talked about.

Q Has the President ever considered that he is increasing the tension by some of his statements or by some of the pressure --

MR. NESSEN: I would not accept your characterization of the President as putting pressure on anyone. And certainly I think if you view all of his public statements and all the meetings he has had with people involved, I don't think you can say that the President is contributing to the rising of tensions.

The purpose of the American role in this is to avoid stalemate and to reach a conclusion.

Let me correct one thing I said earlier. For those who are taking cameras to the Sheraton Park for the NAACP speech tomorrow, they should be there at eight o'clock rather than nine o'clock, as I said before.

I am troubled with the answer I gave to Marty because I sense that there is some feeling that I have changed something or declined to go along with something.

There is no change in American nuclear policy. I said that the other day, and I just want to repeat it here. The reason I hesitate to reaffirm or not reaffirm is that there has been no change, and by anything that I say here I don't want to give the impression that there has been a change. That is why I took that position.

Q If there has not been a change, I think what we are puzzled about is why you won't go ahead and reaffirm the previous policy.

MR. NESSEN: Why do I need to reaffirm it, Jim?

Q Ron, could I get at it this way. When the President was preparing for his news conference, was he made aware of the statement of posture regarding first strike that Marty referred to?

MR. NESSEN: Ted, of course. He knows that.

Q Did he mean to change that policy in any way?

MR. NESSEN: No, I said that on Friday, that the President did not intend to, and as far as I could see did not make any change in American policy, nor have I, nor do I want to. There has not been any change in American policy.

Q So American policy has been stated in that statement. Is that correct? Just to wind this up. Then that is American policy?

MR. NESSEN: I can accept that.

Q Ron, the reason that the question was posed again was that America's nuclear policy contains a number of points and for one reason or another, one of them was not mentioned at the press conference and then in the subsequent briefings it also was not reaffirmed.

You said at that time that you would check it when asked so therefore I asked if that one point that was omitted still stands.

MR. NESSEN: There has been no change as stated.

Q So the answer is it does still stand?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Ron, to get back to this Israeli question There were stories on the wire saying that the President told Ambassador Dinitz that if the Israelis did not make concessions, the United States would have to go a separate way at a Geneva Conference.

These are not speculative stories. This is an account of the conversation between the two men. Is this correct or isn't it?

MR. NESSEN: I just intend to leave the discussion of that meeting where it stands. There was a brief meeting, remember, and it was to discuss the situation in the Middle East.

There was a review of the negotiations at that meeting, and there was a discussion of how to proceed.

Q You don't deny that this account is correct?

MR. NESSEN: I just say there was a discussion of the negotiations and how best to proceed, and I don't think any more details will help the process right now.

Q Did the President hand over the latest interim proposals by Egypt to be passed to Israel?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I have heard of.

Q Ron, the President, on one occasion for sure, has mentioned that if step-by-step does not resume that he will have his own ideas for a comprehensive plan for the Middle East to be presented at Geneva or somewhere else.

Has the President begun working on a comprehensive plan?

MR. NESSEN: You are quite right, that if it turns out that it is not possible to resume the step-by-step negotiations, then there would be two other alternatives. One would be to go to Geneva for an overall settlement. The other would be to go to Geneva in a way that would permit continued step-by-step negotiations under the umbrella of Geneva and that the United States would make known its ideas for settlement.

I think it would be fair to say the President does have some ideas now of what the American plan would be if it reached that point.

Q Did he communicate those ideas to Mr. Dinitz?

MR. NESSEN: Lou, I just don't think I ought to go into any more detail on that.

Q Ron, wait. When he talked about that it was not merely ideas. He referred in a press conference to comprehensive plan.

MR. NESSEN: That is right.

Q A comprehensive plan can be understood to include final Israeli borders, in other words, the shape of a final peace settlement to be arrived at at Geneva, which presumably would include borders. Is that the kind of plan you mean he is now working on?

MR. NESSEN: He has some ideas on a comprehensive plan, but at the moment the option is still open to resume step-by-step negotiations.

Q Do the ideas call for Israel's returning to substantially the 1967 borders?

MR. NESSEN: Mort, I am not going to -- really, at this point I don't think -- discuss in detail what the President's ideas are.

Q Does he have a deadline, like two weeks, in which he hopes to reach some sort of idea of --

MR. NESSEN: No. You mean to reach some sort of idea on whether step-by-step can be resumed?

Q Whatever is going to happen.

MR. NESSEN: There is no deadline.

Q Ron, the Egyptian Foreign Minister, Mr. Fahmy, has stated that even if Israel does go back to its 1967 borders, that is not going to be enough (a), and he has endorsed the re-election of President Ford.

What is the President's reaction to these two things? This is in an interview with a Viennese paper.

MR. NESSEN: I did not read that as an endorsement of the President.

Q He said, "I hope that he will be re-elected as President of the United States." What is the President's reaction to this and what concessions has the President got in mind for Egypt? Does he suggest that Egypt concede anything like travel through the Suez Canal for Israeli ships or anything of that nature or is it all directed towards Israel?

MR. NESSEN: I think at this stage in the process, in a public forum like this, to talk about what one side should do and what the other side should do is just not proper or helpful.

Q Ron, is it still the President's intention to decontrol all oil by August 31, and does that plan include vetoing any extension or legislation that they Congress may pose when it returns from its recess?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know why you say it is still his plan to decontrol all oil by August 31 because I am not aware that was the plan. The President does plan to send to Congress a decontrol program, and we have said that before, and that is his plan.

I don't have a timetable for you and there does need to be other parts of this. The President I think favors a phased decontrol program and decontrol would require, as he said before, a windfall profits tax. But, he does plan to go ahead with a proposed decontrol plan. I can't tell you when.

Q Ron, what is holding that decontrol plan up? The President, said if I recall correctly, that he would send that to Congress soon after they returned from their recess. That was the previous recess.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that I would say it is being held up, Jim. I think the FEA did have to hold hearings. There are various ways to do it, various timetables and various periods of phasing in and he has just not concluded how he wants to do it.

Q Is it a three-year phase-in?

MR. NESSEN: I say he has not concluded yet how he wants to do it. FEA proposed two years, but what specific proposal the President will send to Congress and when, I can't give you the details on.

Q Ron, would you answer the second part of John's question?

MR. NESSEN: Which one?

Q Which was the decontrol legislation expiration on August 31 and there have been some indications that Congress will merely extend it without implementing any suggestion the President has made. If they do that, is it the President's intention to veto it?

MR. NESSEN: The President will have his own decontrol program before the Congress, I would think, before August 31, and to talk about something that Congress has not done yet and how he will react to something it has not done yet I don't think we ought to do.

Q Ron, when will the orime legislation that was promised for last Wednesday get sent up?

MR. NESSEN: It should be this week, I am told.

Q Will the President be prepared to submit that proposal when Congress comes back. It will only be a period of several weeks before they go on recess again.

MR. NESSEN: Three weeks between. That is right. Well, the whole decontrol matter is going to have to be dealt with, it seems to me, in that three-week period between the end of the 4th of July vacation of Congress and the beginning of its August vacation, so it will have to be done in that period.

Q Will the President's plan be ready to go up when the Congress comes back?

MR. NESSEN: It will have to be within that three-week period. I don't know if it will be ready the day that they come back.

Q You are saying you are not willing to talk in theoretical terms about what the President will do, but the fact is, there has been this veiled threat put out that if Congress does not go along with his gradual decontrol plan there is the prospect of his vetoing an extension of controls.

That means all the controls end instantly August 31. You're not willing, are you, to rule out that he might do that? Veto an extension?

MR. NESSEN: They have not done anything yet. I don't see how we can comment on something they have not done.

Q Ron, a couple of weeks ago you said, although acknowledging that such a course -- a veto and a sudden end of decontrols would have problems for the economy -- you said that is a possibility. That has not changed, has it?

MR. NESSEN: No, that has not changed.

Q You said he has that option.

MR. NESSEN: That is right, he does.

The photographers and cameramen who want to go to the Rose Garden for the Pat Moynihan swearing in should go with Bill Roberts now.

Q Can you rule out a political, a Presidential declaration or President Ford's declaration this week that he will run?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q How about a press conference either here or one of the Ohio stops?

Q Question?

MR. NESSEN: Helen asked if I could rule out the President announcing his candidacy this week, and I said I could.

Q What about the following week when he is in Michigan? Can you rule it out then?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, I could.

Q You can?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q So, he is not going to announce this week or next week?

MR. NESSEN: And then the other question --

Q Does that mean you know when he is going to? When is he going to?

MR. NESSEN: The questions were, would I rule out this week, and I said yes. Would I rule it out in Michigan, and I said yes.

Q Would you rule it out next week?

MR. NESSEN: The day has not been pinned down, but I know it will not be this week and it will not be in Michigan.

Q I keep asking, and maybe you are not answering on purpose. If he is not going to announce it next week, you can rule out this week and next week?

MR. NESSEN: I can't say he will not do it next week because the date has not been set for him to do it.

Q Ron, since it is not on the schedule, I gather the President has not accepted the invitation to the Solzhenitsyn dinner tonight?

MR. NESSEN: I did not even know there was a Solzhenitsyn dinner. Where is it?

MORE

Q AFL-CIO is having a dinner and the President was invited, and I am wondering why he is not going.

MR. NESSEN: We will check while we are all here.

The other question was about a news conference this week, was it?

Q Here or in Ohio, either of the Ohio stops?

MR. NESSEN: No, there will not be a news conference either here or in Ohio this week.

Q Ron, does the National Security Council Agency monitor telephone calls for Americans?

MR. NESSEN: Bob, that is the same question you asked last week, and my answer is the same.

Q And your answer was that you gave no answer.

MR. NESSEN: No, I did give the answer that the President gave, which is that he has confidence in the intelligence forces and the counter-intelligence forces to deal with any such eavesdropping by foreign countries.

Q You cannot answer the question, does the National Security Agency monitor telephone calls for Americans? You are not prepared to answer that?

MR. NESSEN: I can only answer it in the way I did answer it.

Q Ron, is what you are saying there that if the NSC is monitoring the telephone calls of Americans, it is being done as part of a counter-intelligence effort to know what other countries are doing? In other words, are you in effect offering an explanation of why the NSC is doing this without directly admitting that they are doing it?

MR. NESSEN: No, not really. As I understand it, the question of, is NSC monitoring phone calls, grows out of the blue.

Q The question grows out of nothing. I asked you flatly does the National Security Agency monitor the telephone calls of Americans? That is the question.

MR. NESSEN: And I am not able to answer that question, Bob.

Q Ron, is the President giving any reconsideration to his plans to visit India this year?

MR. NESSEN: Did he have any plans to visit India this year?

Q Wasn't it on the schedule to visit India this year?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think so. I think there was an invitation and a formal acceptance in principle with the date unset.

Q Are you sure of that? Wasn't it on the schedule for this year?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I know of.

Q Ron, you said events moving toward the European Security Conference -- is that in the time frame of July or no time framework, or what?

MR. NESSEN: There is no time framework because first of all the treaty needs to be concluded. The remaining issues need to be resolved and when that is done the date will be set.

Q Last week you were asked whether you could tell us any of the topics or details, whatever, of conversations between the President and the Vice President, going back five or six weeks, and I think you said you would.

MR. NESSEN: I did say I would, and I have not checked on it yet.

Q Ron, to go back to the Middle East war one minute, I want to be sure whether I heard you correctly or incorrectly.

When you were talking about the possibility of a Geneva Conference either as a Geneva Conference itself or return to step-by-step under the general aegis of the Geneva Conference, I thought I heard you say that it is still hoped -- or something like this -- it is still hoped that step-by-step will be the method used or something like that.

MR. NESSEN: No, I don't think the United States has taken a position of one option over another. I think what I said was that it is still one of the three options. It has not been ruled out as an option.

Q You said it was still the hope.

MR. NESSEN: What I meant to say was there are three options that the President has outlined, and that option remains alive. It has not been ruled out. The United States has not taken a position of one over the other, although I think the President and Secretary Kissinger have said before there seems to be a slackening of interest in an overall Geneva settlement by some of the parties which had originally been the strongest supporters of the Geneva Conference.

Q Ron, you said there was no ultimatum during the Dinitz visit but rather a review of the situation in the Middle East.

MR. NESSEN: And a discussion of the negotiations and a discussion of how best to proceed with the negotiations.

Q And all of this occurred in 11 minutes?

MR. NESSEN: Right.

Q Do you know of any other such rapid discussion and review? I can't recall any. Eleven minutes to review the whole Middle East situation and all the discussion and the negotiations, Ron, it must have been a rapid ---

Q Ron, will the President sign that scaled-down housing bill that they passed just before they adjourned?

MR. NESSEN: I anticipate he will sign it, yes.

Q Today?

MR. NESSEN: Not today.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END

(AT 12:30 P.M. EDT)