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NEWS CONFERENCE

#330

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 11:35 A.M. EDT

SEPTEMBER 26, 1975

FRIDAY

MR. NESSEN: The President met this morning from 8:35 to 10:14 with Congressman Pike, Congressman McClory, Speaker Albert, Congressman Rhodes, Dr. Kissinger, Jack Marsh, Don Rumsfeld, Philip Buchen and Director Colby.

It was a general review of the situation involving matters before the House Select Committee. The President felt it was most constructive and useful. I understand that further meetings at the staff level are likely in the next few days to continue the discussion.

The purpose of today's meeting was to discuss the needs of the Committee and ways information might be made available to the Committee and to the public.

Q Who asked for this meeting?

MR. NESSEN: I don't really have any other information on the meeting.

Q Why wasn't the meeting announced?

MR. NESSEN: It wasn't arranged until late last evening.

Q Are we to assume that nothing was really settled at this meeting?

MR. NESSEN: Bob, I did not attend the meeting, as you see, and I just really think that it wouldn't be useful for me to try to answer questions at a meeting that I didn't attend.

Q Is the President hopeful some type of solution can be arrived at short of Congressional --

MR. NESSEN: I think what I am going to do is stand on this for the moment.

Q What is the problem? Do you have a hold on giving any further material to the Pike Committee unless they agree not to make them public?

MR. NESSEN: Whatever the situation is, you know, before the meeting.

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Q What is it?

MR. NESSEN: I have to check with Phil Buchen's office, I don't know what the precise situation is.

Q Was Buchen there?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Was Mr. Hills at the meeting?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Why wasn't he? Isn't this his domain?

MR. NESSEN: These were the people that attended.

Q Are you going to post the list?

MR. NESSEN: I can post it or give it orally, whatever.

Q Why don't you give it again?

MR. NESSEN: Speaker Albert, Congressman Rhodes, Congressman Pike and Congressman McClory. The President was there and Secretary Kissinger and Director Colby, Don Rumsfeld, Jack Marsh, Phil Buchen.

Q How long did it last?

MR. NESSEN: From 8:35 until 10:14.

Q Would you say the contempt citation has been refused now?

MR. NESSEN: Bill, I was not there and simply can't answer any questions about it.

Q Can you get us someone who can answer questions about this?

MR. NESSEN: Probably not.

Q Was not the meeting called because Pike has threatened to get a contempt citation in the House?

MR. NESSEN: I think we will just have to stand on the statements for a moment, Peter.

The only other thing I have to point out is that some folks yesterday requested to know what the President intended to do in terms of expressing appreciation to various people who were involved on the protective side in San Francisco.

He has written a letter to Mr. Sipple, a copy of which I have and you can have any Xerox copies you need or want. He is also sending a letter to the San Francisco Police Department. It is taking a bit of time to pull the names together, that is why that hasn't been written yet.

Q One letter or individual letters?

MR. NESSEN: Individual names, that is why he is waiting.

Q You mean individual police?

MR. NESSEN: Right.

Q Such as the officers who were there?

MR. NESSEN: Specifically the officers who were across the street there, as you recall.

Q To each one of them?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have the complete list but whoever was involved.

Q Could you read the letter?

MR. NESSEN: "Dear Mr. Sipple, I want you to know how much I appreciated your selfless actions last Monday. The events were a shock to us all but you acted quickly without fear for your own safety. By doing so, you helped to avert danger to me and others in the crowd. You have my heartfelt appreciation. Sincerely, Jerry Ford," addressed to Mr. Oliver W. Sipple, of 334 Leavenworth Street, San Francisco.

Q What apartment?

MR. NESSEN: He didn't have the apartment number on there.

Q Leavenworth? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: Street.

That is about it.

Q Are they going to give Buendorf an award of the Secret Service?

MR. NESSEN: Let me check on that.

Q On what?

MR. NESSEN: Whether Buendorf is getting an award for the previous episode in Sacramento.

Q Governor Milliken of Michigan said that he got a telephone call yesterday from Rumsfeld sounding him out whether or not -- what the reaction of Michigan would be if the President cancelled tentative plans to attend the Michigan State football game. So the Governor said that he believes that the thing is being called off.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know how you call off something that has never been announced as a Presidential trip, Dick.

Q Called off or cancelled?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think called off or cancelled or curtailed are the right words to use.

Q What would you use?

MR. NESSEN: There was no announced trip to Michigan. The only announced trips were Chicago and Omaha.

Q Well, consideration then?

MR. NESSEN: I will stick to what we decided yesterday. I do think, to give you a little background and to try to clear up some of the questions yesterday, let me, if you will, go through a little bit how Presidential trips are put together.

As you know, he gets something like 300 invitations a day. The invitations are weighed and trips are put together. It is on the basis of weighing various factors -- does he have the time? After he has accepted one event in a city, for instance, then decisions are made about should he accept other events and, if so, how many? If he decides to go to an event, what should his participation be like? Should it be a speech, only handshaking, a drop-by or what? All sorts of factors go into those decisions and it is, of course, true that security is one of the factors that is weighed when the Presidential schedule is made up. It is one factor.

I think it would be fair to say that for the immediate future security will be a larger factor in preparing the President's schedule.

Don Rumsfeld is the guy who here, in his role as the chief coordinator, is in charge of the offices that do weigh these factors in making up the President's schedule.

I think it would be a fair statement for me to say as far as I know at this point, no firm commitments made by the President have been cancelled.

Q What are the firm commitments?

MR. NESSEN: To go to Chicago for a fund raiser, to go to Omaha for a White House Conference, and to go to Knoxville for a White House Conference.

Q Those California fund raisers were not firm commitments?

MR. NESSEN: The only three trips we have announced are the three I have just mentioned.

Q On this Tuesday-Wednesday trip, are there any other stops under consideration?

MR. NESSEN: Chicago and Omaha are the only two we have announced.

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Q Yesterday you said some have been cancelled. I am looking for the exact words.

MR. NESSEN: I think you should look for the exact words, because I saw the exact words badly mangled in some of the places where I read them.

The exact quotes were that "the President probably will not go to some of the places you thought he would go." That is the quote and it is literally true.

Q Ron, would Knoxville be considered a firm commitment today had Baroody not announced it, or would it be an unfirm commitment?

MR. NESSEN: No, it is a firm commitment.

Q How does something become a firm commitment?

MR. NESSEN: When the President decides he is going there and all the arrangements are made.

Q What changed the President's mind from his Monday night statement?

MR. NESSEN: That is one thing I really want to clear up. There is no change in the President's mind from what he said Monday. As I told you, these are matters that Don Rumsfeld and other people on the staff deal with, weighing and juggling schedules and seeing what fits in and what doesn't fit in, and weighing these various factors, including security.

The President certainly stands by, completely, what he said Monday night.

Q Who decided security should have greater weight in evaluating these things?

MR. NESSEN: Don Rumsfeld.

Q How can you say he is standing by what he said Monday night when he obviously is not?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know, at this point, no firm commitment has been cancelled by the President.

Q You have not been told, according to your own account, of all of the changes in his schedule?

MR. NESSEN: There have been no changes in firm commitments, as far as I know, Fran.

Q Has Don Rumsfeld or anybody else --

MR. NESSEN: Let me give you an example to hopefully convince you of what I am saying. A lot of people believed he was going to Northwestern to meet with some students, and I think some people in the Press Office and other people in the White House were responsible for that idea getting around.

The fact is, in that particular block of time there were about three events that were being weighed and juggled. The decision was made. The President to this day has no idea that anybody on the staff ever talked about him going to Northwestern.

When it was weighed against one or two other possibilities for his time, it lost. It never got near the President. He has no idea that that was one of the ideas being juggled.

Q The President is not going to the Michigan-Michigan State football game, is he?

MR. NESSEN: The three trips that we have announced are Chicago, Omaha and Knoxville.

Q I know what you have announced. I asked you a question. Are you declining to answer it?

MR. NESSEN: No firm commitments, as far as I know, have been cancelled.

Q I would like to get back to my question.

MR. NESSEN: Bob, do you remember yesterday's briefing where I said from now on the Press Office and others in the White House will talk only about firm commitments made by the President, and these are things that he is going to or is not going to do.

Q If I said the President is going to the North Pole, you would say, "I can't answer that question." Is that right?

MR. NESSEN: It is not a firm commitment. (Laughter)

Q Do you really think that helps the situation one way or the other?

MR. NESSEN: I think if we could ever get through this little transition period, it is going to help enormously because then you won't have any problem and I won't have any problem, with events that are --

Q You are making us say every day that security is the problem, and it is the problem and everybody knows it is. Why doesn't the White House say so?

MR. NESSEN: Helen, I am telling you that various factors go into making up the President's schedule, including security, and in the future, in the immediate future, I suspect security will be a larger factor in making decisions. Why would I be bashful about explaining where we stand?

Q Did Rumsfeld call Governor Milliken because there were no plans under consideration for going to the Michigan State-Michigan game?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't hear myself say that, Peter.

Q That is, in effect, what you are trying to have us believe, Ron.

MR. NESSEN: Peter, I don't want you to believe anything. I don't want to try to make you believe anything that does not lead you to the correct conclusion. I am told Governor Milliken called Don. Governor Milliken initiated the call. Peter, I don't want you to believe anything other than the truth and I don't want to tell you anything other than the truth.

Now, what I am saying is as far as I know on firm commitments by the President, none have been cancelled. The example of Northwestern I used as an example of the kind of things people think he is going to do and are considered for that matter.

Q You were the one who brought that up.

MR. NESSEN: I told you yesterday I am the worst culprit.

Q You are using Michigan as the kind of example that people think he is going to do?

MR. NESSEN: A lot of people did think he was going there.

Q Ron, as far as you know, in the discussions Mr. Rumsfeld has had, does this mean the President as a former football player and a great football fan, football is -- there is very little chance of his going to any football games because he has to be seated in a big stadium and so forth?

MR. NESSEN: I have no idea. But I would--as I say, in considering whether to go to a football game or to go to anything, various factors are weighed, one of which is security. In the immediate future, security is going to weigh heavier than it has.



Q How does one football game differ from another, except the Army-Navy where most of the people there are in the service?

MR. NESSEN: Look, let's move on. We have so many things to talk about.

Q Ron, one other thing on this --

MR. NESSEN: You know, Bob, ask away but I am trying to be truly as open and --

Q Ron --

MR. NESSEN: Wait a minute now. I am trying to be as open as I can. There is nothing to hide and no reason to hide anything. We are going to have a transition period now while we get away from the way we used to do business, and it will be a little difficult.

Q Ron, is it the crowd appearances that are being curtailed? Could you go that far?

MR. NESSEN: I don't accept the use of the word "curtail."

Q Whatever word you want to put in there -- but is it the appearance before crowds pre-positioned that has become a security problem and therefore is a bigger factor?

MR. NESSEN: Let me put it this way: As I say, security will be in the immediate future a larger factor in weighing appearances.

There is no question that there has always been an awareness of security problems in this White House and I think what I am saying today is there is an increased need in view of, I don't know, the particular circumstances that we are in.

Q Ron, I can understand why you don't want to announce these trips in advance, but I can't quite understand why you can't tell us where he is not going.

MR. NESSEN: What I am saying is that any place he has been firmly committed to go, as far as I know there has been no cancellation, curtailment, or wash-out.

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Q Are you afraid of offending areas that have been under consideration unless they think that the White House thinks they are some kind of kook capital of the world? Is that the reason why you are not saying --

MR. NESSEN: I never thought of it until you mentioned it, Mort. (Laughter)

Q Is Don Rumsfeld or any other White House official going to testify before the Montoya Committee next week?

MR. NESSEN: I haven't heard that they have called any.

Q Yes, they have.

MR. NESSEN: Have they? Who have they called from the White House?

Q They have asked for a White House representative to testify there.

Q Wouldn't Rumsfeld be the one? You mentioned he was the security --

MR. NESSEN: He and the people who serve in his particular branch of the White House are the ones who would deal with this.

Q He always has had the position of being in charge of the office that deals with security?

MR. NESSEN: Sure, the advance people, the scheduling people --

Q All have responsibility?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Do you expect him to travel a lot in October?

MR. NESSEN: I think we have announced, well, he will be in Omaha on the 1st and Knoxville on the 17th.

Q I don't want to belabor the Michigan-Michigan State game but I was in Detroit yesterday and at all levels expect the President to be there for the game. Are those people in error?

MR. NESSEN: We haven't announced any trip to a football game in Michigan.

Q There have been a number of public comments by you.

MR. NESSEN: There have been public comments about going to Northwestern and I explained to you where that got cut off in the system and why it got cut off in the system. I know that a lot of people think -- wait a second, Dick, I am trying to respond to Bob and others who want me to expand on this.

There are a lot of people who think that he is going to Abilene, Kansas. A trip to Abilene, Kansas, was considered at one time and three weeks ago was dropped.

There are a lot of people in Grand Rapids who think the President is coming to Grand Rapids, that was scratched a month ago.

A lot of people think he is going a lot of places, and from now on to prevent people from having those thoughts we are going to announce trips officially when we are ready to go.

Q Most of these spots originate in the cities where he may go?

MR. NESSEN: I am aware of that. I certainly am aware of that.

Q Do you think keeping quiet here will help the matter?

MR. NESSEN: I think it will.

Q People in Dothan, Alabama, are all excited about him coming there, too, and that wasn't generated from here, Ron.

MR. NESSEN: I don't say that.

Q Ron, you were so good about telling us about Abilene and Grand Rapids, why don't you just tell us about Ann Harbor?

MR. NESSEN: I have read in the paper, and you tell me and I know for a fact people out there think he is coming to a football game.

Q Can you tell us whether it is firm or not whether people in Peking are going to be disappointed here? (Laughter)

Q Ron, you said earlier in this news briefing in regard to the football game, you said, "a lot of people did think he was going."

MR. NESSEN: You see some significance in my choice of tense, do you?

Q Yes. in conjunction with your statements about Abilene and Grand Rapids it gives the indication that he definitely ain't going to be there?

MR. NESSEN: No. At this moment the only announced trips are the ones I have given you.

Q Will he go to the Southwest Conference game?

Q Are those the only confirmed trips?

MR. NESSEN: I have announced all the trips to which he is firmly committed to go.

Q Ron, Phil Shabecoff asked you about the California trip and you said nothing has been announced but, in all due respect, you did announce to the pool --

MR. NESSEN: I didn't announce, I told some people in the pool he had been invited and was considering it.

Q You said he was going.

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Q He did say, "I will be back for these," but these will be political meetings.

MR. NESSEN: He has to learn the new rules, that is all there is to it. (Laughter)

Q How about Baroody?

MR. NESSEN: He is not my responsibility.

Q We gather the White House Conferences are in and everything else is just about out except maybe a fund raiser?

MR. NESSEN: I wouldn't leap to that conclusion if I were you.

Q What was put into the slot in which North-western lost out?

MR. NESSEN: We have not announced anything, which means it is not firm yet.

Q Can you be more specific on the Chicago trip now? Under past procedures you used to give us a fairly detailed outline at this stage of the game on what the President would do on the Chicago and Omaha trip in terms of appearances. Can you be that specific on that trip now?

MR. NESSEN: I would look for him to leave Washington mid-afternoon next Tuesday, go to Chicago and attend the fund raising dinner.

Q Where will that be? Downtown?

MR. NESSEN: I have not seen what the name of the hotel is.

Q The Conrad Hilton.

MR. NESSEN: I guess they have announced it out there.

Then I would expect -- that would be the only event that day and then I would expect some event in the morning, which is not locked up, as Ann asked about. Then I would expect him to fly to Omaha about mid-day on Wednesday and do a local TV interview, and then go to the White House Conference.

Q Is it possible, according to the old Gerry Ford routine when you announce one thing in the morning by the time we get there it is apt to be three or four? Before it was one thing in the evening on an initial announcement and then he would sandwich three or four more things in. This looks very scant and there is a distinct change in the Gerry Ford we all know and love.

MR. NESSEN: Any other events are not firm yet and when the schedule is put together, why don't you take a look at it and see if you have the same view?

Q So he overnights in Chicago? He overnights in Chicago and then has one more event in the morning?

MR. NESSEN: In the Chicago area, that is right.

Q Ron, is security a factor in where the President will overnight?

MR. NESSEN: Security and other factors. Security is one of the factors in almost every decision made about aspects of Presidential travel. In this case, though, the answer is no.

Q Security is not a factor in whether he will stay in the loop or out in the suburbs?

MR. NESSEN: That is right.

Q You said he would overnight in the Chicago area?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q That doesn't mean Northwestern, does it?

Q Will we overnight in the same place?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know.

Q Will you make public a detailed schedule of the Tuesday and Wednesday events prior to Tuesday or Wednesday?

MR. NESSEN: As soon as we get all the details we will. You know, we have been running late on those anyhow.

Q Ron, what is the President's feeling, or what has he said about security being a large factor in weighing his travel plans?

MR. NESSEN: You know the President is personally aware of the dangers as he goes around the country, and I made that point the other day, I think. He certainly is not insensitive to it. But these kinds of nitty-gritty security factors are handled by Don Rumsfeld and the people who work for him, and the Secret Service. These kinds of decisions are not Presidential decisions.

Q Since you are taking a harder look at various invitations which the President otherwise might be tempted to accept, how does he feel about this?

MR. NESSEN: He said Monday night why he is going to continue to travel, why he thinks it is necessary. I elaborated at some length on that the other day and that is precisely his feeling and precisely his intention.

Q Has the President had a detailed discussion about the security problem and given Rumsfeld instructions about what he is and he is not to do?

MR. NESSEN: This does not come from the President.

Q Security is weighed in as an extra factor, that does not come from -- you mean, nothing has been said in the past three days that has influenced the President in any way? He told Roberta Peters last night he is going to be more careful.

MR. NESSEN: I hope he is. I think we all hope he is.

Q But obviously, some of this is weighing in on him.

MR. NESSEN: The President has said publicly he is going to be careful and so on and so forth, but these kinds of decisions do not get made by the President. Of course, security has always been a consideration. What I am saying is now it will weigh more heavily.

Q But in view of what the President said about his willingness to travel, Don Rumsfeld has by himself and without consulting the President determined that --

MR. NESSEN: The President signs off on every single stop on every single trip. He makes the decisions.

Q But what you are suggesting is Rumsfeld is going to weed out some of the invitations on the basis of his own judgment of security --

MR. NESSEN: And the other factors, like does he have the time for this, or should he go to this for one reason or another.

Q He doesn't get the options, Rumsfeld does?

MR. NESSEN: No, when the President gets the sheet to sign off on, there is a little explanation of each event, why he should go or not go.

Q But what about the 300 per day he gets? Who winnows those down and how many does he get to choose from?

MR. NESSEN: Well, all of us get -- you know, if it is an invitation to do an interview, I would put in my recommendation. If it is an invitation to meet a Congressman, Jack Marsh would put in his recommendation. If it is an invitation to meet a political group, Bob Hartmann would put in his recommendation.

Q The President looks at all 300 and then makes up his mind based on these recommendations?

MR. NESSEN: No, there is obviously a winnowing out process before it gets to the President.

Q 300, does that include requests for appointment here?

MR. NESSEN: 300 invitations -- I think those do include events in Washington but I will check, Frank.

Q What we are trying to get at is what kind of an option does the President have out of the 300?

MR. NESSEN: He gets a schedule of proposals almost every night to work his way through and indicate whether he wants to go or not to go.

Q How many, though?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. I have to check. It varies, obviously.

Q So Rumsfeld is the final channel and he makes the decisions that are then presented to the President as the options?

MR. NESSEN: No, that is not right, Bob. The President gets a choice of things that have been proposed.

Q You know darned well he doesn't look at all 300 of them.

MR. NESSEN: He doesn't. I am saying he doesn't get to look at all 300.

Q Of that 300, Bob wants to know, how many get winnowed out?

MR. NESSEN: I will need to look and find out.

Q You just said Northwestern had been winnowed out and you also said the President was totally ignorant that anybody --

MR. NESSEN: That was one example of an event --



Q Then Rumsfeld makes the decision?

MR. NESSEN: I said Rumsfeld and the people who work for Rumsfeld who put Presidential schedule option papers together.

Q Ron, whatever the morning's event is, can you say whether or not it will be outdoors or enclosed? Has that kind of thing been ruled out?

MR. NESSEN: It hasn't been selected yet.

Q I mean the principle of avoiding outdoor uncontrolled crowds.

MR. NESSEN: Look, there are going to be adjustments made in security procedures. But as we have said before, I just don't think we can go beyond saying that. I mean by their very nature you don't talk very much about what adjustments have been made.

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Q Ron, it has been said one of the least secure places, one of the most risky places the President can go is to church.

MR. NESSEN: Why is that? Do you think a bolt of lightening will come down and strike him?

Q Those are your words. Seriously, you know they don't keep people out and it is a bit risky, and so forth. Now I am just wondering, the President hasn't been going recently and I just wondered has this anything to do with security?

MR. NESSEN: I am not aware that security is a factor.

Q What is he going to do this weekend?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have any plans for the President to announce this weekend.

The answer is that, as far as I know, security considerations are not the major factor in whether he goes to church or not.

Q He is not planning any White House services?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q This being Friday, can you give us a weekend schedule?

MR. NESSEN: No. He has some appointments here in the office.

Q Is he going to see some Chinese scientists tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, he is going to see some Chinese scientists tomorrow, in the morning. Do you know about that?

Q No, it was announced in Peking but we haven't gotten it here yet. (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: Ron, is Baroody in Peking now? (Laughter)

Q How about sending that letter out with the names on it so we can have it?

MR. NESSEN: It was sent out a long time ago.

It is called the Chinese Scientific and Technical Association and they are making a courtesy call at 9:45.

Q Which Chinese are these, PRC or the other ones?

MR. NESSEN: PRC. They will be on a tour of the White House in the morning and he will see them for a courtesy call as a way of expressing his interest in relations with the Peoples Republic.

Q Could you give us a list of the individuals in that group?

MR. NESSEN: There are 14 people in the group. The head of the group for the Chinese experts is Chou Pei-Yuan.

Q Do you think he will announce his China trip date tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think so.

Q Is Kissinger going on an advance trip in October to China?

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

Q Which question don't you have anything on?

MR. NESSEN: On Fran's question.

Q What was Fran's question?

MR. NESSEN: Is Kissinger going to China in October.

Q Do you know whether he is seeing the French Foreign Minister tomorrow morning?

MR. NESSEN: I have not seen it on the schedule but I have not looked at the schedule carefully.

Q Ron, now that Portugal has taken a turn toward democracy, does the United States -- has the President considered increasing the amount of open aid that the United States gives to Portugal?

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

Q The L.A. Times -- two questions -- the L.A. Times says that there has been secret agreements to give Egypt military assistance, and, two, that the understandings with Israel concerning security --

MR. NESSEN: I don't think that is quite right, that paraphrase of the L.A. Times story, but I know what you are talking about, so go on.

Q The second was that the understanding with Israel amounts to an international binding agreement.

MR. NESSEN: On the last point I think you are referring to the letter from Monroe Lee at the State Department and I would like to refer that question to the State Department because they have all the information on whether there are any new binding agreements with Israel.

Q On that subject, has the President decided if he will go along with the disclosure by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee of the addendum to the --

MR. NESSEN: I don't think the situation has changed from yesterday, which is that every scrap of paper that came out of the Kissinger talks in the Middle East has been given to the appropriate committees of Congress. All the agreements have not only been given but have been published.

The other items that they have, there are negotiations going on as to whether to make them public.

Q Why?

MR. NESSEN: The French Foreign Minister will be seeing the President at 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

Q Who is the French Foreign Minister?

MR. NESSEN: Jean Sauvagnargues, he is meeting the President at 10 o'clock.

Q Why does the President not want the people to know what is in the agreements?

MR. NESSEN: Helen, every agreement has been made public, therefore, the people know what is in the agreements.

Q What do you mean every agreement has been made public?

MR. NESSEN: Every agreement has been made public.

Q Then what are the negotiations?

MR. NESSEN: To use the Secretary's own words, every scrap of paper has been given to the appropriate committees.

Q Then what are the negotiations going on?

MR. NESSEN: Some of the papers involved are direct communications between heads of State, or heads of Governments, and, as you know, these are not normally made public. That is one of the matters.

Q Do they commit the U.S. to anything in these letters?

MR. NESSEN: Dr. Kissinger has said himself that the appropriate committees of Congress will know everything that was agreed to in those talks.

Q The question boils down to, does the President object to the American people knowing every commitment that has been made in these private letters?

MR. NESSEN: Why do you assume there have been commitments made in these private letters?

Q If there have been.

MR. NESSEN: The appropriate committees have every scrap of paper.

Q That is not the answer to the question.

MR. NESSEN: It is the answer to the question.

Q The question is does the President?

MR. NESSEN: I think the President himself has spoken on this in interviews and in public and you know his views.

Q Is Monroe wrong then?

MR. NESSEN: I just don't know enough about the Monroe Lee thing and that is why I suggest that you talk to the State Department.

Q Ron, isn't it a truism that even these communications that you are talking about between heads of State are, in effect, binding on the Government?

MR. NESSEN: I just don't know enough about that, Gaylord, and that is why I urge you to talk to the State Department about it.

Q Ron, what do you know about the reported compromise between the President and Senate Democrats on energy?

Q You didn't answer Helen's question about --

MR. NESSEN: Helen's first question which had to do with arms to Egypt, is that the one you are referring to?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: There is no specific commitment to meet the request from Egypt for arms. For two years now, I think, just to give you a little background on this, Egypt has sought to broaden its relationships with various countries around the world, both in the economic and diplomatic sphere, and, in addition, President Sadat has said publicly and he said this -- maybe publicly is the wrong word but he has certainly said it to members of Congress who have visited Egypt that he wants to widen his sources of military supplies, to include the United States among the suppliers as well as others.

The United States has said, or indicated clearly to him, that this would be a difficult relationship to undertake so long as a state of war exists in the Middle East. We have said, and I think the President has said it publicly, that we want to be as responsive as we can be to raising Egypt's standard of living and also to be as helpful as we can in moving towards peace in that area.

And we consider that as part of that effort to move towards peace that we consider Sadat's desire to diversify his sources of arms and to increase Egypt's confidence in the course that it is following.

So, since we are --

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Q And we consider Sadat's desire to widen his source of arms, as what, or we will consider?

MR. NESSEN: We are committed publicly to helping the countries of the Middle East move towards peace, and as part of our efforts to move toward peace we will consider his desire to diversify his sources of supply and also to increase Egypt's confidence in its course.

So I think if you look at it against that background you see the commitment we have to Egypt -- if you want to use that word -- is to give consideration to military supply needs. But we have made no commitment to supply anything specifically and, as the President said to somebody out in Los Angeles, I guess, it is a matter that we are going to discuss.

Q Will you go through this business again? We will consider Sadat's desire to widen his source of arms and what?

MR. NESSEN: And to increase Egypt's confidence in the course that it is following.

Q Does that include the Pershing missile?

Q Have there been any specific requests for arms by Egypt so far?

MR. NESSEN: I need to check and find out. I think that goes to Helen's question, too.

Q With whom is it going to be discussed?

MR. NESSEN: I have to find out the precise procedure to be followed.

Q You said we gave the commitment. Is this the only commitment?

MR. NESSEN: No; well, I mean that is my own sort of paraphrase of words.

Q I would like to point out, in reference to your comment that what the committee wants is communication between -- there are communications between heads of State --

MR. NESSEN: Among the items.

Q There was a letter from President Nixon at one point to former President Thieu of Vietnam which seemed to encourage President Thieu to accept the Paris Accords. In light of that precedent, don't you think it is a bit appropriate that all such commitments be made public in this instance as well so that two years down the road this thing isn't thrown in your face?

MR. NESSEN: Both the President and Dr. Kissinger said that any sort of agreements or anything that could be called a commitment, the appropriate committees of Congress have already been made aware of those.

Q That does not include all understandings as well?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, all understandings, too.

Q All understandings?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know.

Q The public hasn't been made aware.

MR. NESSEN: That is what is being negotiated now, Fran.

Q The President is convinced then that by building up arms on both sides that it is an effort to move towards peace?

MR. NESSEN: I think, Aldo -- I know what you want to do and I don't think I can help you with it.

Q The statement seems to mean that arms aid to Egypt is somehow contingent on Egypt's moving towards a state of non-belligerency, a formal state of non-belligerency with the Israelis; is that correct?

MR. NESSEN: I think the statement stands for itself, Mort.

Q Did the President appoint Ambassador Dean to take up the post of Ambassador to Denmark yesterday?

MR. NESSEN: I guess we did announce that.

Q Can we get to my question on energy?

MR. NESSEN: Peter, the --

Q May I ask one more question on disclosure?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q On this disclosure question, you say the President remains that communications between heads of government normally should not be made public?

MR. NESSEN: Right.

Q Yet, you say there are negotiations going on between the Administration and the Congress. What is the topic?



MR. NESSEN: Some of the other documents, if there are any, to see which of those should be made public.

Q In other words, you are not foreclosing the possibility that some of the various agreements, as long as they do not involve private communications, could be made public?

MR. NESSEN: I am not foreclosing that, that is right.

Q Kissinger said there were no commitments made to Thieu and then suddenly there are commitments made to Thieu in these private letters. I think there is a concern.

MR. NESSEN: It is your assessment that there were.

But, Peter, on your question, the President has agreed to an extension of oil price controls which would -- actually, I ought to really turn that around because I think it more accurately reflects the situation.

Congress has agreed to pass an extension of the oil price controls retroactive to September 1 and expiring on November 15, during which time Congress has really a choice of doing two things: One, to pass the phased decontrol which the President has asked for from the very beginning; or if not, to approve the legislation which the President has sent there to take care of and soften the economic impact of what would then become immediate decontrol.

Those pieces of legislation have to do with propane supplies, independent gas stations, independent refineries, and airlines.

Q Ron, did the President agree not to send up take-it-or-leave-it legislation in this interim period?

MR. NESSEN: The President will not send up an administrative phased decontrol plan unless the last 15 days of the period -- that is, from November 1 he would then be able to send up an administrative proposal --

Q Would that be part of the compromise?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Is he now willing to go beyond the 39-month phased decontrol period?

MR. NESSEN: You know, what Frank has said every time is that the length of months has never been a factor. There has never been a leaning on the Hill whether it should be 39, or 41 or 48.

The fact is that what the President has set is a goal of how much energy imports be reduced and how much domestic energy production be increased, and the 39-month plan as it is written now gets to that goal. Longer periods do not get to that goal.

Q Did you know all this yesterday?

MR. NESSEN: There was no --

Q Was this part of the meeting when you said 48 months was unacceptable and you didn't even tell us what this compromise was?

MR. NESSEN: At that point there was no compromise, Helen, because it required that the Democrats who were at the meeting go to the Hill and, I believe, have their caucus, and it was at their caucus that they decided to accept this. But the President wants you to know that this is the last extension.

Q Ron, in following Helen's question, you said that is your assessment; that there was a commitment made in the letter to Thieu. What is your assessment, Ron? What other assessment could anyone logically conclude from that letter?

MR. NESSEN: I think I will pass on that one, Les.

Q Ron, do I understand correctly that the 39-month decontrol was designed to achieve the energy independence goal that the President has talked about? In other words, to decrease consumption and decrease production such that by 1985 we would be energy independent?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q If that is the case, why, as the Washington Post asked this morning, do we need the Energy Independence Authority?

MR. NESSEN: That is the whole aspect of it, Mort. It is complimentary, too. It is not an either/or proposition. That has to do with developing exotic fuels and new sources of energy -- solar energy, geothermal and nuclear, and so forth -- but this program is specifically designed -- do we have people going to file?

Q No, they are going out to play in the sun.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

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