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NEWS CONFERENCE

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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 10:44 A.M. EDT

OCTOBER 28, 1975

TUESDAY

MR. NESSEN: All I want to do is make a short announcement. We will have the regular briefing at noon, including a report on the meeting of the two Presidents.

President Ford will be making a speech tomorrow at noon to the National Press Club. He has had a longstanding invitation from the Press Club and has decided to accept for tomorrow. The subject of the speech will be New York City. I think it would be fair to call it an important speech on an important subject.

This will necessitate some juggling of the press plans for departure for California. That is being worked on so everybody has sufficient filing time after the speech.

The President's departure for California will be on schedule and we will arrange it so you have filing time and also time to depart so you get to California ahead of the President.

Q Has the President changed his position on New York City?

MR. NESSEN: Helen, with the speech only about 25 hours --

Q I am asking a question. I know when the speech is, I want to know has he changed his position?

MR. NESSEN: I suggest you listen to the speech tomorrow.

Q Is there going to be a text of that speech. Are you going to have it beforehand?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, we will have an advance text of the speech.

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Q At noon?

MR. NESSEN: The speech is at noon. The President will deliver a speech tomorrow at noon on the subject of New York City to the National Press Club.

Q When will the text be available.

MR. NESSEN: In the morning.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

(AT 10:46 A.M. EDT)

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 12:03 P.M. EDT

OCTOBER 28, 1975

TUESDAY

MR. NESSEN: We have quite a few announcements of various kinds to make so let's push on.

First of all, let me give you a report on the meeting between the two Presidents today. President Ford and Egyptian President Anwar El-Sadat met in the Oval Office at 10:40 for one hour and one minute. Secretary Kissinger was there on the American side, and Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Fahmi on the Egyptian side.

Q Is this briefing for sound?

MR. NESSEN: No, I am sorry. We don't usually do this for sound. I will repeat it later if anybody would like to have it.

The talks today continued in the same atmosphere of openness and friendship that characterized the meetings yesterday. They covered the same general subjects, how best to maintain momentum towards an overall settlement in the Middle East and how to strengthen bilateral relations between the United States and Egypt.

During their second meeting both President Ford and President Sadat agreed to continue the wide-ranging talks between them. Accordingly, President Ford will travel to Jacksonville, Florida, this weekend for further discussions with President Sadat on many matters of common interest between the United States and Egypt.

President Ford noted with pleasure that President Sadat will start tomorrow a visit to other cities of the United States, including New York, Chicago, Houston and Jacksonville. He wishes President Sadat a rewarding journey and believes it will demonstrate the warmth and feeling of the people of the United States for the President and the people of Egypt.

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That is the statement on today's meeting.

Let me just, by way of additional guidance, tell you that a number of agreements in the fields of culture, health and P.L. 480 assistance will be signed at 3 o'clock this afternoon at the State Department. They will be signed by Secretary Kissinger and Foreign Minister Fahmi, some of the documents will, and a taxation agreement will also be signed by Secretary Simon and the Minister of Economy and Economic Cooperation for Egypt, Muhammad Zaki Shafi'i. The State Department has details of the signing ceremony.

I don't have all the details of the President's trip to Jacksonville other than to say that President Ford will depart here on Sunday morning and will return the same evening. Additionally, there may be another opportunity before President Sadat's departure from the United States for the two Presidents to meet. I don't have any additional details on that.

Q It will be in Washington?

Q Camp David?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q After Jacksonville?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q In Washington?

MR. NESSEN: Correct.

Q What is the 480?

MR. NESSEN: We will check that for you. Hold up on the figure until we can check it.

Q What is the purpose of a one-day trip to Florida for the President? What will they accomplish in one day?

MR. NESSEN: It is an opportunity to continue their talks.

Q Is he going to play golf and talk or is this a head-to-head talk?

MR. NESSEN: There will be two head-to-head meetings. There will be no golf that I have heard of, Phil.

Q Has the President expressed any views on Mayor Beame's refusal --

MR. NESSEN: If I may elaborate, I don't know where the golf story came from, Phil, but this is in keeping with the pattern that has been followed in meetings between leaders of these two countries before. If you recall when President Nixon visited Egypt, he conducted meetings in Cairo, and there was also a journey to Alexandria where there were additional meetings.

Q Why Jacksonville, Florida? I realize it is on his schedule, but why?

MR. NESSEN: Why not? (Laughter)

Q Ron, could I ask my question again, please?

MR. NESSEN: Ralph.

Q Do you have an answer for me, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: Ralph?

Q Has the President expressed any views on Mayor Beame's refusal to arrange an official greeting or welcome for President Sadat tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: President Sadat and Mrs. Sadat are guests of the President and the President deeply regrets the decision of Mayor Beame.

Q Can't you get an answer for me, too?

MR. NESSEN: President Sadat is going to be in Jacksonville on Sunday. The President did want to continue their discussions. It does fit a pattern of the previous meeting in Egypt between leaders of the two countries.

Q Did the President express this view to President Sadat? Did he express any regrets?

MR. NESSEN: Ralph is wondering whether President Ford expressed to President Sadat any regret over Mayor Beame's decision. I don't know, it never came up.

Q Where will the meeting be?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have the details of the visit. It will be in a private home.

Q Why does the President feel he should speak out on New York City's status since he has been very articulate, and so have you, for many weeks now?

MR. NESSEN: There has been some feeling here that we perhaps should finish our Sadat questions because I believe some people need to leave for some purpose.

Q So do we. We have deadlines.

Q One question on Sadat. Is there any reaction from the U.S. officials on his proposal that a Palestinian State should be formed?

MR. NESSEN: I think the views of the United States concerning the Palestinian issue are quite well-known and I don't have any particular reaction today.

Q Did the President raise the UN Commission Resolution on Zionism at the talks with President Sadat today?

MR. NESSEN: That matter didn't come up in today's talks.

Q Was any mention made of Mr. Sadat's reference to Jews and Zionists yesterday at the Press Club?

MR. NESSEN: As I said, the matter of Zionism did not come up at today's meeting.

Q Did it come up yesterday?

MR. NESSEN: It also did not come up at yesterday's meeting.

Q Is the President avoiding the subject?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Why didn't they bring it up?

MR. NESSEN: Any other questions?

Q Ron, if we could pursue that just a little bit, a number of senior American officials -- including the Secretary of State and the United States Ambassador to the United Nations -- have made some strong statements on the resolution in the United Nations.

Q So has Ford.

Q So it is a situation of obvious concern to the United States. We are wondering, in view of that, why the President didn't bring it up with President Sadat?

MR. NESSEN: Jim, the answer to that is the thrust of these meetings is directed toward primarily continuing the momentum in the Middle East toward additional steps towards peace and a permanent peace settlement. Additionally, the thrust of the meetings are related to the bilateral relations between the two countries. Today, for instance, a great deal of time was spent on economic matters. The view of the United States and the President are publicly known.

Q So long as you are talking about bilateral relations, Egypt is one of the sponsors of that Resolution in the United Nations and one of the chief backers of it in bilateral relations, and we are opposed to it. In bilateral relations between the two countries, that is one issue on which they don't agree. Why wouldn't it come up at some point? Why wouldn't the President relate to President Sadat our feelings on this Resolution?

MR. NESSEN: Both Presidents feel the purpose of this meeting is to deal with the issues in the Middle East, the permanent peace settlement, the next steps towards peace and their bilateral relations.

Q Was there a tacit agreement not to discuss it?

MR. NESSEN: I have no indication of that, Jim.

Q Ron, is it the U.S. feeling that the momentum of peace talks can be maintained if issues like the question on Zionism are ignored when the question of the Palestinians is brought up quite forthrightly?

MR. NESSEN: Your question contains a number of unrelated things as far as I can see, Marilyn.

Q I don't think so, Ron.

MR. NESSEN: The President is here and the meetings are being held, and they are being held in a friendly and warm and constructive atmosphere and additional talks have been scheduled because what they want to do is make progress or discuss the peace settlement in the Middle East and their bilateral relations. The position of the United States on the other matter is known. I don't know what further I can add to it.

Q President Sadat yesterday at the Press Club made Zionism an issue of the people.

MR. NESSEN: I didn't read it that way but I don't want to speak for him.

Q Does President Ford feel that Zionism is unrelated?

MR. NESSEN: Let's do one at a time.

Q Does the President feel President Sadat's remarks yesterday and the UN Resolution enhance the momentum he is trying to achieve?

MR. NESSEN: As I say, Tom, I have told you what the purpose of the meeting is and what they are discussing at their meetings. You know what the American position is and I don't know that we can beat this to death much further.

Q Does he feel the issue, as it has been raised, the issue of Zionism, has no effects on the prospects for peace in the Middle East? That is a simple question.

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard him link those two matters.

Q What have you heard the President say about Lebanon? Is there any idea of offering to mediate or use good offices? What is the evacuation situation?

MR. NESSEN: I wish you had asked me yesterday when I spent all morning digging around on Lebanon.

Q That is a legitimate Government move, and I don't know why you have to wait for us. You offer us information on municipal bonds every day to listen to.

MR. NESSEN: Let me take your question a piece at a time. The situation on the evacuation is that the situation is continuing to deteriorate in Beirut. The Embassy has evacuated from the building itself. The building is in an area where fighting is taking place. From the building itself have been evacuated all the non-essential personnel. They are staying home or in other areas of the city. In addition, the American Ambassador there has suggested two things. First of all, dependents and non-essential Government personnel should leave Beirut; secondly, that the private Americans who are there, the private citizens who don't work for the Embassy, also follow the same advice; that is, dependents and non-essential private Americans should leave Beirut at the suggestion of the American Ambassador.

Q Beirut or Lebanon?

MR. NESSEN: In some cases, the people have left Lebanon and in some cases they have merely left Beirut. It is their own choice. It is a suggestion by the Ambassador.

Q But you are saying leave Lebanon, aren't you?

MR. NESSEN: No, leave Beirut.

Q Just Beirut?

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MR. NESSEN: Yes.

On the other subject you asked about, the American role, if any, in the problems in Lebanon, the United States is following the event closely. We have been consulting with the Lebanese and other Governments in the area as to what the United States might do to help. Most of those discussions -- or, really, all of those discussions -- have related to humanitarian aid.

For instance, there has been a discussion of providing blood for the hospitals, and so forth. I believe the State Department probably has a fuller rundown of the contacts that have been made in Lebanon, the relationship to the Lebanon situation.

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Q Senators Church and Case have charged that the Department of Defense has been condoning unlawful hiring practices by acceding to Saudi Arabia's requirements for certificates of religious affiliation for visas. I would like to know, why does the Ford Administration tolerate this continuing discrimination against Jewish-American citizens?

MR. NESSEN: I guess the answer is the same as it always is when you ask it, Les. As far as I know, the Defense Department -- or whatever department is involved -- follows the policy that the United States will not discriminate against anyone in overseas assignments or any assignments on any basis.

Q Mr. Schlesinger said they couldn't do anything about it in a letter to Senators Case and Church.

MR. NESSEN: Let me say the United States does not discriminate against people.

Q You said we are consulting with other Governments of what we might do to help. Most of it deals with humanitarian efforts.

MR. NESSEN: All of it really deals with humanitarian efforts.

Q Ron, was the Lebanese situation discussed between Presidents Ford and Sadat?

MR. NESSEN: Very briefly it was discussed today as part of their review --

Q Question?

MR. NESSEN: Stan was wondering whether Lebanon was discussed between the two Presidents today. It was briefly, as part of the review of the Middle East area.

Q Did President Sadat give any of his own feelings about what was going on there that differed from ours?

MR. NESSEN: I really probably should not speak for President Sadat, and Mr. Bashir has gone over to the Blair House for a meeting with editors and so forth, so I would rather not speak for the Egyptian position.

Q Can you say how the President views the strife, the civil war in Lebanon, and does he think it contributes to instability in the Middle East, and have any other countries been warned not to intervene in that area?

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard of any warnings being given to other countries. The President's position on the fighting there is that we obviously hope that it will be resolved quickly and peacefully. We do have a strong friendship with the Lebanese people, and we also have a longstanding policy of supporting Lebanon's territorial integrity and independence, its unity and cohesion, and that is the American policy toward the fighting in Lebanon.

Q Last time a President was threatened with this sort of situation, President Eisenhower sent American troops at the request of the President of Lebanon. Has any request of that kind come from the Lebanese Government, and is this Government considering that?

MR. NESSEN: I have heard of no such request from the Lebanese Government.

Q What can you tell us today on the possibility of the President meeting with President Asad of Syria?

MR. NESSEN: I have nothing to announce on any meeting with President Asad of Syria.

Q Ron, has it been turned down or is it being considered?

MR. NESSEN: I think the President has expressed his interest in meeting the top officials of Syria.

Q My question is, then, has he received a response?

MR. NESSEN: To what? The general interest in a meeting?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: I think, Marilyn, I just don't have anything further I can give you on this meeting with the Syrians.

Q Ron, I don't understand this dual position that the President will deeply regret Mayor Beame's feelings about Zionism and the issue you raised --

MR. NESSEN: I am sorry, Joe. I would rather be able to state the President's position and not have it misstated in the form of a question. The President deeply regrets Mayor Beame's decision, which was not to meet with or greet President Sadat. Now, do you have a question based on that?

Q Yes. I am asking why he mentioned this and didn't mention the other?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what you mean by "the other."

Q Why does he deeply regret Mayor Beame's decision?

MR. NESSEN: Because President Sadat and his wife are guests of the President.

Q Ron, it appears the two Presidents are not discussing an issue that is a bone of contention between the two countries in bilateral relations. I would like to know what is to be gained by avoiding such touchy subjects.

MR. NESSEN: I would just say I don't understand where the word "avoid" comes from. The meetings have a purpose, several purposes. They are moving forward on those purposes in a good atmosphere, and I suppose there are lots of issues in the world that are not being discussed because they have a purpose, and that purpose is being pursued.

Q Leaving aside the question of whether Zionism has been discussed by the two Presidents, does President Ford have a comment on President Sadat's remarks on Zionism yesterday at the Press Club, as the President did have a comment on Mayor Beame's announcement?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Why not?

MR. NESSEN: He doesn't, Jim.

Q Can you tell us why?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Can we go to New York City?

Q Can you tell us what they discussed on economic subjects and whether the figure for economic aid was reached?

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to be able to talk about the specific numbers that were talked about today. Military assistance did come up in a general way, and military assistance today was not a major part of today's meeting.

There was some discussion of economic aid, and I just don't have any specific numbers to give you at this time.

Q Did President Ford give President Sadat a specific number?

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

Partly in response to Marilyn's question and partly in response to what I said earlier about the P.L. 480 agreements being signed, it covers the shipment of 500,000 tons of wheat and 4,200 tons of tobacco to Egypt in fiscal year 1976, with a total value of about \$75 million.

Q That is P.L. 480?

MR. NESSEN: No, I don't have the exact mechanism for P.L. 480, but it involves the sale and then the money is left in Egypt for the use by the Embassy there, and so forth.

Q Ron, may I ask you, can we assume that the President was briefed on President Sadat's remarks at the National Press Club?

MR. NESSEN: It would be fair to say he was.

Q Ron, a domestic question. The New York Times reported yesterday that the President has been selected for the annual Family of Man Award which, as you know, has been accepted by his four predecessors in the Presidency. This is a week from Thursday in New York, where the Council of Churches, which makes this annual award, has expressed regret about what they term the President's "derogatory references to New York City."

I am asking, will the President accept this Family of Man Award under the circumstances?

MR. NESSEN: Do you mean in person?

Q In person or by a representative.

MR. NESSEN: I will have to check, Les. I have never heard of it before.

Q I have a question standing on the table here. Why is the President going to speak out on New York at this time, and what motivated this --

Q Wait, we are not through with the Sadat thing.

When is the President going to submit to Congress a specific request with figures for economic aid to Egypt?

MR. NESSEN: The entire aid package for the Middle East will be going up this week, as I mentioned yesterday.

Q Military and economic?

MR. NESSEN: The entire aid package, that is correct.

Q Do you have a specific date?

MR. NESSEN: I don't, Ralph.

Q Can you, at this point, give us the details on the New York --

MR. NESSEN: I don't have any details for you, Jim. He will be speaking over there at noon. We have every intention of getting an advance text out, and we will make the arrangements for getting out to Andrews so that you can hear the speech, file and still get there in time to make the press plane to Los Angeles.

Q Ron, do you have a press check-in time at Andrews at this point?

MR. NESSEN: Ray is reworking his plans now on the basis of the speech. Baggage before the California trip, Ray says, should be left in Room 87 of the EOB anytime up until 10:30 tomorrow morning.

The rough plans for departure and so forth are -- and these are not all worked out yet, but you can think roughly in these terms -- that a press bus -- I think we should have a bus -- would depart the Press Club at about 1 o'clock, which means there would be about 40 minutes filing time, go to Andrews and that would get the press plane off about ten minutes ahead of the President, and you can pick up some additional time in the air.

Q Press Club rather than the Southwest Gate?

MR. NESSEN: I assume some people will want to see the speech.

Q Can you give us an approximate time the text will be available, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have an exact time. I am aiming for pretty close to the first thing in the morning.

Fran is asking whether the President will take Q and A's at the Press Club. Due to the fact he is locked into a departure to California and the fact we need to leave some filing time for people going on the trip, there will not be any questions and answers.

Q I did ask you what motivated this.

MR. NESSEN: I think I can combine Jim's question with Helen's question. Jim says, has the President changed his position on New York City, and Helen says, why is he making the speech. I think in response to Jim, I would say wait and hear the speech and in response to Helen I would say it is an important subject, an important issue, and the President has some things to say about it.

Q When did he decide, Ron, that he was going to give this speech?

Q For those of us interested in filing on Sadat, can we leave the briefing now?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think we better do that.

Let me answer Aldo. The President has been thinking about and having some meetings about a possible statement on New York City for about roughly two weeks.

Q Ron, in the scheduling of this, was the White House aware President Sadat was speaking at the exact same hour at the U.N. and it makes it impossible for a live broadcast of each speech for those interested in doing it?

MR. NESSEN: The question from Dick was, was the White House aware President Sadat was speaking to the U.N. at the same hour and that would prevent any live broadcast of both by those who might want to?

Q I stand corrected. Stan tells me Sadat is at 12:30.

MR. NESSEN: Dick has withdrawn his question.
(Laughter)

Q Is it available for live television?

MR. NESSEN: If anybody wants to, they certainly could.

Q Ron, the President has said over and over again that he believes that New York City and State have the means to solve New York City's financial crisis on their own without any Federal assistance at all. Does he still believe that?

MR. NESSEN: I am just not going to talk about what he is going to talk about tomorrow.

Q Ron, what was the question on New York City that you had the answer to yesterday if you had gotten the question?

Q Do you stand by your previous statement that the President will do nothing to prevent New York City from going into bankruptcy?

MR. NESSEN: I would stand by that statement.

Q Ron, you seem to have indicated, when the question was asked as to whether the President is changing his position on New York City, that indeed he has. You indicated that by saying --

MR. NESSEN: I don't know how I indicated that.

Q I will tell you. By saying let's wait and see what he says tomorrow. Did you mean to leave that impression?

MR. NESSEN: No, I don't mean to leave any impression.

Marty said he got the impression I had left the impression that the President had changed his position on New York City when I said wait and see what the speech says. I said I said that was not the impression I wanted to leave. I didn't want to leave any impression.

Q Why does he put that in at the last minute on a day he has to leave and all these arrangements have to be made?

MR. NESSEN: It is not crowded in at the last minute, Bonnie.

Q It certainly is. He can't even take questions and answers.

MR. NESSEN: As I said, the idea of doing it has been in the works for two weeks. After the President made all the final decisions that had to be made, he said let's do it.

Q You use the words "final decisions." Is this the ultimate Administration word on New York we are going to hear tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: It is certainly the President's views on New York City.

Q Is it fair to assume that in tomorrow's speech the President will outline what New York has to do for itself before the Federal Government does anything?

MR. NESSEN: Howard, it is too close to the speech for me to speculate on what the President will do.

Q Is the President concerned about panic, fear of panic on the New York situation?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what panic it is you are talking about.

Q Is he just concerned about the general image around the country that New York is going to default and does he feel any need to do or say anything on this particular matter?

MR. NESSEN: Phil, I really think that rather than trying to pull pieces out piecemeal, it would be better to wait for the speech. It is only 23-1/2 hours away.

Q Ron, you say that the President has outlined his views in the past. If he is not going to say anything new tomorrow, why does he feel it necessary to give this speech?

MR. NESSEN: How do you know he won't say anything new?

Q You just confirmed he still refuses to do anything to help New York City avoid default, right?

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to talk about what is in the speech.

Q You just said that.

MR. NESSEN: I stand by my previous statement that he is not going to take action to prevent a default.

Q Why don't you stand by your previous statements that the President's position has not changed?

MR. NESSEN: I will just let you wait and hear the speech tomorrow.

Q What is the position of the President on the matter before the Senate Banking Committee today, the Stevens-Proxmire matter, on restructuring New York's debt?

MR. NESSEN: Bonnie, it is 23-1/2 hours until the speech. I will just let you wait and hear it from him.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END (AT 12:31 P.M. EDT)