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NEWS CONFERENCE

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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 11:40 A.M. EST

MARCH 25, 1976

THURSDAY

MR. NESSEN: Tomorrow the press check-in time at Andrews is 6:15. You can bring your luggage with you, if you like, or you can leave it in Room 87 of the EOB until 6 o'clock this evening.

The press plane leaves at 6:45 and gets to the San Francisco International Airport Coast Guard facility at 9:45 California time.

The President is leaving the South Grounds of the White House at 7:10 tomorrow and Air Force One takes off from Andrews at 7:30. The President will arrive at the San Francisco International Airport at 10:15 California time. A full breakfast will be served on the flight to San Francisco.

The bible really is pretty far along, In fact, the first day is already done so I would think you could look for your bibles about mid-afternoon.

Q Can you just tell us now, Ron, does he have an engagement before that luncheon speech in San Francisco?

MR. NESSEN: I think there will be a kind of drop-in speech before he goes to the luncheon speech.

Q Is that the textile one?

MR. NESSEN: That's right.

Q Will there be an advance text?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think we will have any advance text for any of the speeches the first day.

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Q Not even tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: No, I don't think we will have any speeches before he actually delivers them.

Q Did I understand you to say arrives LA at 10:15?

MR. NESSEN: I meant to say San Francisco at 10:15.

Q Could you tell us more about that drop-in?

MR. NESSEN: There is a convention -- the 27th Annual Convention, as a matter of fact -- of the American Textile Manufacturers Institute at the Fairmont Hotel, and the President was invited and decided to stop there and speak. Then he will go on from there to the Northern California PFC luncheon, which is at the Sheraton Palace Hotel.

Q What time would you expect him to speak at this first place?

Q Is it open coverage or is it pool coverage, that type of thing?

MR. NESSEN: No, it is open coverage.

Q The textile speech?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Where will the press room be, in the first hotel or the second hotel?

MR. NESSEN: The second hotel. He will go from the airport straight to the Fairmont and make that speech, beginning roughly 11 o'clock California time. There will be about 800 people attending that Convention of the American Textile Manufacturers Institute. After that he will just leave there and go on to the other hotel and give that other speech.

Q You described that as a drop-in. Does that mean that --

MR. NESSEN: I don't know why I described it that way, actually. It is a regular speech, a regular 15-minute speech.

Q Ron, since there are no advance texts, will we have time for filing after the second speech before we go into Los Angeles?

MR. NESSEN: It is going to be a little tight. Here is how I propose to resolve it. The President goes from San Francisco to Los Angeles and goes directly to the Century Plaza and goes up and has between two and three hours of just staff time, resting time, up in his room at the Century Plaza, so what we propose is to have the press plane stay behind in San Francisco for filing and then come on to Los Angeles and then on to the hotel in plenty of time to catch the PFC dinner speech there, if that is all right with everybody.

Q He will have an Air Force One pool with him?

MR. NESSEN: Of course, there will be a pool with him going to Los Angeles.

Q Which of those speeches, if any, would you classify as being a major speech?

MR. NESSEN: I think I am probably going to --
(Laughter)

Q Actually it is a PFC speech, not major.
(Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: Here is some good news. The new Press Center is opening at Andrews Air Force Base tomorrow morning. This is located adjacent to and just south of the passenger terminal that is presently used, and there will be signs posted there to show you the way to the new Press Center entrance. The buses for the plane will from now on load at the Press Center, and the baggage carts from now on will be pulled in front of the Press Center.

Some of you, I know, have ordered your own telephones in the Press Center and if you want them activated for tomorrow, you should call the phone company. For any other questions, call Captain Alderfer, whose phone number is 981-4511.

Q Ron, when you say the bags will be picked up there, will that be on the parking lot side still or on the other side?

MR. NESSEN: The parking lot side.

I don't know what else I can offer you today.

Q What about stops coming back, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: The only stop coming back is LaCrosse, Wisconsin.

Q At least yesterday you were not able to say anything about what he is going to be doing in California, I guess the Los Angeles area, on Saturday morning other than he was going to campaign. Do you have any details on that now?

MR. NESSEN: I think he is going to accept one of the many requests he has had for interviews, and I think that is what he will do Saturday morning before he goes to Fresno.

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Q Just that one thing?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know.

Q What time is the LaCrosse event scheduled for?

MR. NESSEN: You will have a bible here shortly.

Q He is still going to Fresno, isn't he?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q What kind of interview are you talking about?

MR. NESSEN: That is still being arranged and, in fact, which of the many requests to accept has not quite been decided yet.

Q Will we be able to monitor that?

MR. NESSEN: Either monitor or get a transcript, depending on when it will be for use.

Q You seem to be saying it will be with one individual. Is that what you are talking about?

MR. NESSEN: It is not possible to say since the President has not decided which one he wants to accept yet.

Q There is not any question or any doubt that that would be usable for Sunday's editions is there, inasmuch as if it was not there would hardly be anything else to write about.

MR. NESSEN: Do you mean the interview?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: For instance, if it were a TV interview for broadcast later in the week or the next week or something it would certainly not be available.

Q I wonder about a copy of those things.

MR. NESSEN: You can cut your own deal with the TV station, I suppose.

Q Is that the only event on Saturday before he leaves for LaCrosse?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Is there only one event in Los Angeles, to the best of your knowledge?

MR. NESSEN: Do you mean the night before?

Q Right. In other words, when he gets to Los Angeles he has two or three hours in his room and staff time and then he comes down and has this one single event.

MR. NESSEN: That is right. He goes to his room at 4:10 and doesn't come out again until 6:40.

Q Also, do you have the amounts of dollars per plate for the fund-raising luncheon and fund-raising dinner?

MR. NESSEN: The luncheon is \$500 per plate, or a ticket, and the dinner is \$1,000.

Q Ron, for those of us who are filing in San Francisco, can you tell us about when the press plane would leave for Los Angeles?

MR. NESSEN: That would be up to you, whenever everybody finished filing.

Q Ron, does the President plan to see Callaway soon?

MR. NESSEN: The President does not have an appointment with Callaway today.

Q Tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: He does not have any appointment tomorrow, either.

Q Ron, do you expect Cheney to see Callaway today?

MR. NESSEN: No, I do not.

Q Is the President aware of what Callaway said on television last night?

MR. NESSEN: I read what Callaway said on television last night.

Q Is the President aware of it?

MR. NESSEN: I think he probably read it also.

Q Is there any change in the status --

MR. NESSEN: I did not hear him say -- actually, there is no change in the status of Callaway.

Q Ron, would you expect a change in the status of Callaway in the next week or so?

MR. NESSEN: I am not a fortune teller, Tom, and you know today there is no change in his status.

Q Ron, when is that likely to change?

MR. NESSEN: I just don't want to forecast.

Q Has Callaway asked for an appointment with the President and/or Cheney either tomorrow or sometime next week?

MR. NESSEN: There is no appointment tomorrow, either.

Q Has he asked for one?

MR. NESSEN: I will have to check on that. I don't know.

Q Has he asked for an appointment with anyone else on the President's staff?

MR. NESSEN: Callaway has no appointment with anybody at the White House today or tomorrow.

Q When you say appointment, does that also preclude the possibility of telephone conversations?

MR. NESSEN: No, it does not preclude the possibility of a telephone conversation, but there are no plans for the President to talk to him on the phone today.

Q Or tomorrow?

Q What about the day after that and the day after that and the day after that?

MR. NESSEN: Let's take it just a few days at a time. I don't anticipate Callaway would have any appointment this week, at least.

Q Callaway said last night he would ask for an appointment with the President and with Cheney. Has he been turned down, then?

MR. NESSEN: I said I would have to check to find out whether he had asked for an appointment. I don't know. There is no appointment scheduled this week.

Q Ron, the Justice Department says it may be a while more before they can issue a determination on whether Mr. Callaway did or did not violate any ethical lines. Does President Ford worry that he needs someone other than Stuart Spencer in command of his committee before the campaign year goes on any longer?

MR. NESSEN: There is just simply no change in the statement that we issued a couple of Saturdays ago. That is where it stands.

Q Ron, does the President share Mr. Callaway's feeling that Callaway probably won't be returning to the PFC?

MR. NESSEN: It is exactly where it was two Saturdays ago, Russ, which is Bo has stepped aside temporarily until the matter is resolved. That situation has not changed.

Q He did not say temporarily. He said he probably would not be coming back, suggesting his condition is more than a temporary one.

MR. NESSEN: From the point of view of the White House, there has been no change in what we said the other Saturday.

Q Will President Ford go by Mr. Callaway's wishes as to whether he wants to come back or not, or will the President make that decision?

MR. NESSEN: I just don't want to speculate on what might happen down the road some time.

Q Ron, has there been any result of the analysis of the North Carolina vote yet?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I am aware of, but the PFC would get that first.

Q Ron, has the Administration ruled out a visit by Secretary Brezhnev to the United States this year?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. That is something I have not looked into for a while.

Q There was a story I guess in the Times this morning to the effect even if there was a SALT treaty agreed to, a second SALT treaty agreed to, that the Administration has pretty well made up its mind that it would not be timely for Brezhnev to visit because of the difficulties in Angola. Does that reflect the President's views?

MR. NESSEN: That is something I have not checked on lately. I will check.

Q Ron, Bishop Abel Muzorewa, who is the exiled Rhodesian, African nationalist, has called on the Cubans to assist in the liberation of Rhodesia. I was wondering, what is the White House reaction to this?

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to forecast what might happen in a hypothetical situation.

Q This is exactly the same answer we got at the State Department yesterday. I wonder if it isn't true that Dr. Kissinger's statement about, "We will tolerate no more adventurism by the Cubans," is that not also hypothetical?

MR. NESSEN: No, that is quite a specific matter of American policy.

Q But how specific? Could you tell me how specific it is? I am puzzled.

MR. NESSEN: As Dr. Kissinger has said, and as the President has said, that is American policy, but as far as spelling out in detail what the response would be to any future Cuban action, we are not going to say.

Just to finish that, I think you know the American position on Rhodesia is that that is an illegal Government and we believe in majority rule rather than minority rule, but at the same time we believe that the change should come about peacefully rather than by insurgency.

Q I am puzzled on that because the Secretary of State denounced the sanctions on Rhodesia, as you may remember.

MR. NESSEN: I don't remember that.

Q Secretary Dean Acheson said the sanctions on Rhodesia were immoral.

MR. NESSEN: That Secretary.

Q Well, he was Secretary of State of the United States, Ron. I just wonder how is it that you look on this Government as illegal and all those dictatorships as legal?

MR. NESSEN: Our view of the Rhodesian Government is based on the fact that we still consider it to be under the jurisdiction of Great Britain, and Great Britain has said that the unilateral Declaration of Independence and so forth is illegal, and we subscribe to that.

Q Ron, the Secretary of State has gone to great length to state the American position on any Cuban adventurism in Angola or anywhere else in the world by implication.

MR. NESSEN: Right.

Q I am wondering, what makes this threat credible in light of the fact Congress has refused to go along with other such requests by the Administration in Angola and recently in Vietnam?

MR. NESSEN: That is American policy, and as the Secretary has said, it should be taken seriously.

Q How? Why should it be taken seriously when there is no evidence that is backed by the Congress of the United States? Is this a unilateral Administration policy?

MR. NESSEN: It is American foreign policy, yes.

Q Can the Administration deliver the Congress on this question?

MR. NESSEN: I think we are now leaping ahead into the speculative phase.

Q Ron, how is the threat credible if it is not backed up by more than bipartisan foreign policy? It does not appear at this point to be backed up.

MR. NESSEN: I think all of these questions were addressed by the Secretary the other day in Dallas and in other places, and that is the American policy as determined by the President and as enunciated by Dr. Kissinger and I don't know what more I can tell you about it.

Q Ron, Senator Stone came out yesterday and talked about military contingency plans in case Cuba gets adventuristic. What are these military contingency plans?

MR. NESSEN: There are a number of things under study, Bill, but I am not going to be able to tell you specifically what they are.

Q Do they include a naval blockade?

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to confirm or deny any of a list of things that you may suggest.

Q Doesn't the President have to go to Congress under the War Powers Act before he commits American troops?

MR. NESSEN: Since I am not going to specifically talk about any of the matters under study, I don't see how I can answer that question.

Q But there are military contingency plans, is that right?

MR. NESSEN: I said the matter is under study.

Q Do you deny what Senator Stone said?

MR. NESSEN: I am just going to say the matter is under study.

Q You said there are a number of things.

MR. NESSEN: Matters under study. That is correct.

Q What do you mean by matter? What is a matter? (Laughter)

Q Bill specifically asked you whether there were military contingency plans under study and you said the matter is under study. Does that mean military contingency plans are under study?

MR. NESSEN: I think Dr. Kissinger was asked all of these same questions the other day and I am going to stick to his answer which is we are not going to discuss specifically what we would or would not do if Cuba did attempt further military adventurism.

Q But that means Kissinger is enunciating policy whereas policy theoretically should be enunciated from the White House and no one asked you to itemize. You were just asked if indeed military contingency plans were being prepared. That is a simple yes or no.

MR. NESSEN: There are a number of matters under study in this area.

Q There is no common border between Angola and Rhodesia. Do you have any reports of Cuban troops in Mozambique which does have a common border with Rhodesia, and, if so, how many?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think I want to do a daily troop report from here.

Q Are there any in Mozambique?

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to comment on that.

Q Back on the Cuban matter, Senator Stone came out yesterday and talked about specific contingency plans. Did the President review those with him or did he just assure him there were contingency plans?

MR. NESSEN: I think the way I would like to leave it is the way I have left it, which is a number of matters in this area are under study.

Q But that has nothing to do with my question.

MR. NESSEN: I did not attend that meeting because it coincided with my briefing so I don't know how specific the President was in his discussion with the Members who were here.

Q Ron, this meeting yesterday, was this the beginning of a process in which the Congress is being apprised of the options that Mr. Kissinger discussed the other day in order to ask the Congress' permission to utilize some of these options?

MR. NESSEN: I tried to make clear yesterday that this meeting had been requested about a month ago by the Members to discuss a number of things that concerned them or were of interest to them on foreign policy and had been postponed once because the people could not get together on the original date. So it was not a question of the President calling them in yesterday to lay out for them some plan for dealing with any Cuban adventurism. It came up in the context of a meeting that they had requested quite some time ago.

Q But did that in fact happen, whether or not that was the purpose of the meeting?

MR. NESSEN: I told Tom and Bill that since I was not there because it coincided with my briefing, I would find out into what detail the President went on the matter.

Q Ron, may I ask a question? By what legal authority would the President of the United States have any right to take any action against Cuba should Cuba be involved in any adventurism anywhere else in the world?

Let's take Rhodesia, or any other country, for example. By what legal right does the President of the United States have any latitude for action to take retaliatory action against Cuba if the Cuban troops aren't involved in action against the United States?

MR. NESSEN: That is just a speculative question, Walt, and I can't answer it. It is about something that may or may not happen.

Q It is not speculative. It is what Kissinger said. The question is by what legal authority does the President have any right to take any action against Cuba if Cuba becomes involved in a third party war of liberation or any world trouble spot?

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to answer a question that has that big an if in it.

Q The if is raised by Secretary Kissinger. He says if Cuba becomes involved in any future adventurism in Africa or anywhere else in the world he cannot rule out -- so that the if is raised by the Administration and I want to know what legal authority do you have for making this threat?

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to add anything further to what the publicly stated position has been.

Q Ron, if you could just tell us what is the legal authority. That is not an if. What is the law on this, Ron? That is a very legitimate question.

MR. NESSEN: I understood the question.

Q Could I broaden that to say if not the law, what is the precedent, what is the national security interest?

MR. NESSEN: This is all quite speculative, Ted, and I am not going to know what has been said publicly.

Q Has the matter been discussed at all with either OAS member States or any American allies, including NATO allies, these contingency plans or whatever is being considered?

MR. NESSEN: I will check for you and find out.

Q Ron, at a meeting with the Dallas Republicans yesterday the President seemed anxious to refute Governor Reagan's charge about us falling behind the Soviets in military superiority. In light of that, is there some concern on the part of the President and his senior advisers that he has been thrown on the defensive on this issue?

MR. NESSEN: Not at all. If you look at the President's record in Congress for 27 years, whatever it is, 25 years, as a Member of the House Appropriations Committee and the Subcommittee on Defense, his record on the need for a strong national defense is there, and it is a long-time record. It is not something he is bringing up in this year's election campaign for the first time. He is also on record with his defense budget for last year and for this year, so I would say certainly not.

Q But as a follow-up to that, it appears that Governor Reagan thinks that issue won for him in North Carolina and that very well could be the theme of his nationally televised address next week. That is why I asked if there was some concern that the President was in a position of reacting to the Reagan charge.

MR. NESSEN: No, I think the President's record on this is very clear. It goes back 25 years. It doesn't go back to the beginning of the election campaign.

Q Can I ask, you know I raised the question about the legal authority for the Kissinger threat and you say that is a matter of American foreign policy, but you won't answer my question about the legal authority. Can we assume there is no legal authority for making that kind of threat?

MR. NESSEN: I wouldn't assume that, no.

Q Can you refer me to some area of the Government that can cite me a legal authority, either NSC or State Department, for Kissinger making that sort of threat?

MR. NESSEN: I could refer you to the State Department.

Q Which office?

MR. NESSEN: I will find out, Walt.

Q Ron, the discussion that the President had yesterday with Senator McClure and the other Senators on foreign policy, was that off the record or was a transcript made of it?

MR. NESSEN: To my knowledge, there was no transcript made of it.

Q Were the Senators allowed to speak out?

MR. NESSEN: Again, since I was not there, I don't know what admonition was given to them or whether any classified material was discussed or not. I will have to check.

Q Ron, some of the President's North Carolina supporters say that one reason he may have lost is he did not take an effective tack against Reagan, but rather for reasons of party unity or other reasons withheld the attacks that occurred in Illinois and Florida and New Hampshire in some cases.

Does the President plan to reverse field and go back to these tactics?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what you mean by "go back to." I think the President's campaign plan, as I said yesterday, has remained unchanged and as far as I know, he intends to go on exactly as he has done, which is to run on his record.

Q The game plan has had two platoons, then. One is the attack and one is the defense, and in North Carolina the defense and his own record was more in evidence than the attack phase. Since they are both part of the arsenal, is he going to start resorting to attacks again on Reagan?

MR. NESSEN: I don't agree with "attacks again on Reagan," the part of your question that says that. The President's strategy is not going to change, it has not changed, and he does not plan to change it.

Q Ron, if he does not plan to change anything, what is the reason for this analysis of the issues?

MR. NESSEN: Because the campaign is interested in the same question you are, which is why did the President lose in North Carolina.

Q But if he is not going to change anything--

MR. NESSEN: He is not going to change his overall strategy, which is to run on his record.

Q But he will change his tactics to some extent?

MR. NESSEN: At this moment, there are certainly no plans to change.

Q Are you in on those strategy sessions, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: You would not believe how much I know, Annie.

Q Ron, in the aftermath of the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, the United States had a pledge at most and an understanding at least with the Soviet Union that it, the United States, would never invade Cuba again or subsidize an invasion. Does that remain U.S. policy?

MR. NESSEN: Somebody asked that around here about two weeks ago, and I said I would check. I guess I did not check, but I will.

Q Ron, another thing about Cuba. You seemed very reluctant to discuss military options. What about nonmilitary options; more specifically, asking the OAS to vote again on those sanctions that they voted on a few months ago to lift.

MR. NESSEN: I think you have to understand what that vote was all about. The United States position there was it was going to vote the way it felt was in its best interest and the others were all free to vote in the way they thought was in their best interest, and my understanding is that the upshot of the vote was that no individual country has changed its position on economic sanctions against Cuba. There has been no change in anybody's actual position.

Q The situation today is nearly every Western hemispheric country does recognize Cuba and trade with Cuba. Is the U.S. considering this as one option, if Cuban adventurism continues trying to isolate Cuba diplomatically?

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to discuss any of the contingencies which are under study.

Q Ron, why does the President think Cuba is showing adventurism when it sends 12,000 troops to Angola when we sent 555,000 to Vietnam?

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MR. NESSEN: That is a matter we should sit around and have a few drinks on some night, but it is not very profitable at a press briefing.

Q How would you define the difference?

MR. NESSEN: Jim, this is not the place for a great ranging philosophical discussion of American foreign policy. I tried to answer the specific questions that we can answer but that is something that you will have to get the Secretary into conversation sometime about.

Q Without disagreeing with that, what is the proper forum for that? Can we look forward to some discussions of these very important matters by the President soon?

MR. NESSEN: Which very important matters, Ted?

Q All the questions that are being raised here on Angola, Cuba, adventurism, authority for threats or whatever. The whole business of foreign policy and who is first and who is second in national security.

MR. NESSEN: You know the Secretary who does speak for the President's foreign policy very often goes to the Hill and engages in just the kind of discussions that Bill and the others have asked about. He does go out and around the country and speak at considerable length with historic and philosophical backgrounds of some of the positions and he makes himself available there for questions and also here at the State Department. I really think there are ample opportunities to deal with these questions.

Q Excuse me, I don't think the President has had a press conference for some time, general press conference, where these questions could be addressed.

MR. NESSEN: He has them quite often, Ted, meetings with reporters in various settings and also news conferences here at the White House.

Q When was the last time he had a news conference in general where we could ask these questions?

MR. NESSEN: I guess it was three weeks ago or three and a half weeks ago in the East Room.

Q Do you think if we put in an application for an interview he would give us one collectively?

Q Ron, this is kind of a housekeeping matter. Is there any particular reason why there will be no advance text on this trip?

MR. NESSEN: Primarily because the President will be working late this afternoon on the speeches and I suspect will not conclude the writing of them by late this afternoon and he will probably want to take another look at them when he gets back this evening. So I would just think it is going to be much too late to get texts out.

Q That is throughout the whole trip. Would you be able to characterize the speeches that he is going to be delivering in any way in terms of what subject matter he is going to focus on? Will it be standard campaign speeches?

MR. NESSEN: He is still working on them so it is not possible to completely characterize them. In the textile speech, which is fairly well along, he will talk about the role of the textile industry in American history. (Laughter) And some of the problems that the textile industry has, both because of the domestic economic situation and because of international competition.

Q Ron, you said "when he gets back." Is he going somewhere?

MR. NESSEN: He is going to the Radio-TV Correspondents Dinner, as I think a lot of you know.

Q Ron, on that do you expect another announcement similar to the steel announcement?

MR. NESSEN: In the speech tomorrow?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know there is no comparable issue in the textile industry.

Q They are quite concerned, though, about imported finished products.

MR. NESSEN: Yes. He is going to talk about some of those problems, but since there is no comparable issue before the International Trade Commission --

Q Ron, has the President asked directly or indirectly for John Connally's support in the Texas primary?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I am aware of, John.

Q Ron, is the President going to accept the resignation of Dr. Hall as Assistant Secretary of Defense and destroy his nomination for the Air Force post?

MR. NESSEN: I think Dr. Hall has submitted his resignation and I think we should be getting the letters up here in the next couple of hours so we can post them this afternoon.

Q You mean resignation or withdrawal?

MR. NESSEN: There are two parts to it. One, he is resigning from his present position and asking that his nomination to another position be withdrawn.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END (AT 12:15 P.M. EST)