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NEWS CONFERENCE

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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 12:27 P.M. EST

MARCH 29, 1976

MONDAY

MR. NESSEN: Well, the only announcement that I have today, in addition to the _____ you already have, is that His Majesty King Hussein has accepted the President's invitation for a State Visit. He is arriving in Washington to begin his visit and meet with the President tomorrow. The President and Mrs. Ford will host a White House dinner in honor of the King and Queen. The President and Mrs. Ford look forward to meeting Their Majesties again.

Q When is the dinner?

MR. NESSEN: The dinner is tomorrow night.

Q Arrival?

MR. NESSEN: The arrival is tomorrow.

Q What time tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: Well, the President and the King meet at 11 o'clock tomorrow so the arrival probably will be about 10:30.

This visit symbolizes again the close relationship and continuing friendship between the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the United States. In case you are curious about why it is being announced so near to the arrival time that was the privilege of the Jordanians.

Q Why?

MR. NESSEN: You have to ask the Jordanians.

Q Didn't anybody here ask them why they wanted this and are just not telling us?

Q Was it security?

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MR. NESSEN: I think you ought to ask the Jordanians, really.

Q Well, if the Jordanians told you, why can't you tell us, having learned it from the Jordanians?

Q I thought this was announced a long time ago, Ron.

MR. NESSEN: I don't think we formally announced that the King was coming until now, although everybody knew he was coming.

Q Is he in the country now?

MR. NESSEN: I know he has taken off from Amman but I don't know if he has arrived here yet.

Q Will there be any discussion of military sales to Jordan?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have a detailed agenda of what they will discuss.

Q Is the President going to see Bo Callaway today?

MR. NESSEN: He is not on the schedule, no.

Q Did he see him yesterday?

MR. NESSEN: He did not.

Q Is he going to see him this week?

MR. NESSEN: There is nothing on the President's schedule.

Q Does that mean that he will see him unofficially without it being on his schedule?

MR. NESSEN: As I say, there is no such meeting on the schedule and the basic situation has not changed.

Q When you say the schedule, you mean on the record and off the record?

MR. NESSEN: He is not on the schedule to visit the President.

Q Well, will you tell us when they hold their secret meeting -- ask the question?

Q How about telephone contacts?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know there has been no phone conversation between the President and Bo Callaway.

Q Has Mr. Callaway called the White House and talked to a functionary to arrange a meeting with the President?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what you mean by functionary. We said last week that --

Q Has he talked to any of the aides here to arrange a meeting with the President?

MR. NESSEN: As I said last week, he has made a number of calls to Dick Cheney. I have not checked lately on when their latest conversation was, but they have talked on the phone periodically.

Q Since the news conference?

MR. NESSEN: What do you mean, the news conference?

Q The Atlanta news conference, the Callaway news conference.

MR. NESSEN: I believe they have talked by phone since the Atlanta news conference.

Q Would the President like him to resign?

MR. NESSEN: The situation has not changed since the announcement of a couple of Saturdays ago.

Q Ron, does the President have a rock bottom on defense spending beyond which he would not go? I mean, it is a change in terms of what he is thinking.

MR. NESSEN: Well, I am not prepared to give a number any more than the President was. He feels that the figure that he has sent there is a defense appropriation that is required and which contains no fat, and other than that I can't cite a specific number below which he would veto.

Q I guess what we are all saying is he might accept something a little less than that, though.

MR. NESSEN: Well, the number he sent up there is a number that he feels is the adequate number for the Pentagon, the adequate amount of money for the Pentagon.

Q Will he go anything less than that?

MR. NESSEN: I am not prepared to go beyond what he said publicly.

Q Are we talking about roughly \$100 billion in the way of appropriations or \$112.7 billion?

MR. NESSEN: He is talking about the authority because, as he said before, the decisions made this year will affect the defense ability of the United States for five or ten or fifteen years out into the future.

Q Now, Ron, Brock Adams is also talking about that authorizational authority.

MR. NESSEN: Correct.

Q He has talked about knocking \$7 billion off.

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Now that comes out to a little better than 6 percent. In past years it has kind of become common practice for the defense budget to get cut approximately 5 percent. That sort of makes the liberals happy and conservatives go along with it and it happens year after year, so what Brock Adams is talking about is not that much more, really, than past history.

Can you tell me if what Adams is talking about is unacceptable?

MR. NESSEN: As the President has pointed out, John, over the past long number of years the Defense Department budget in real terms, taking into account inflation, has actually remained steady or decreased somewhat partly because of the process that you are talking about. As the President has said, he feels that it is important now to reverse that trend before it gets to a point, as he has explained, that would affect the relationship between our military force and the Soviet Union's military force.

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Q Ron, wouldn't a Presidential veto of the defense appropriation be a very dangerous gamble with national security?

MR. NESSEN: Well, the President, I think, used the expression this morning that it would be highly unusual or unique or something like that.

Q Unprecedented.

MR. NESSEN: Unprecedented.

Well, it would simply be carrying out what he feels is his responsibility not to accept a defense budget which he feels is inadequate for America's needs in this world and in the future.

Q What was the figure, then, Ron? What was the figure you are talking about? Dick, I think, asked which figure. Is it \$112 billion or \$100 billion?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I said to Dick that the figure that the President is talking about is the authority outlay -- that is, the authority figure -- because that affects actual spending for several years into the future.

Q That is \$112 billion, isn't it?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, roughly \$100 billion.

Q Does the President have in mind a figure that would trigger a veto?

MR. NESSEN: I think that since this is in the legislative process and so far only Brock Adams and not the full committee has talked about this deep cut of \$7 billion and there is a long way to go in the legislative process, that the President is not prepared to give a figure except to say that the figure he requested is the one that he feels is adequate and contains no fat -- adequate and necessary.

Q Ron, to put this in the proper time frame, isn't it true that by the time the question would actually arise of him vetoing the defense appropriations or not it would be after the November election?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I don't know but it is not material to the question.

Q Well, it is if people are going to say that this is a political matter and he is really not going to be faced with the decision between now and then.

MR. NESSEN: Well, I suggest that those people and that Dick take a look at the President's record in Congress over 25, 26 years and see whether this is not 100 percent compatible and reflective of the views he has had over the years and not something that he has started talking about in the past couple of months.

Q What is the President's reaction to Helmut Sonnenfeldt's statement on Eastern Europe and in light of what I understand is still the U.S. policy objection to Soviet occupation of the Baltic States?

MR. NESSEN: Well, Les, it is a little bit difficult to talk about the matter because all we know of Sonnenfeldt's remarks are what we see printed by one group of columnists, two columnists who share one column, so I am going to have to talk in terms of press accounts or the columnists' accounts of what he said.

Q Have you not checked with the State Department to see whether Evans and Novak are accurate?

MR. NESSEN: My understanding is that Bob Funseth spoke at some length on that but, in any case, the press accounts of what Sonnenfeldt said do not accurately reflect the President's policy towards Eastern Europe.

I think you know that the United States strongly supports the aspirations for freedom and national independence of people everywhere, including Eastern Europe. The President is totally opposed to so-called spheres of influence by any power, and as long as he is President that will continue to be the policy of the United States Government.

The President has made this a matter of policy, has spoken of it, and it is included in formal diplomatic documents. It is a matter that he has specifically spoken to Eastern European leaders on when they visited here and when he has visited their country. It is a policy that the President intends to pursue with patience and persistence and he won't waiver from it.

The President's policy towards Eastern Europe is spelled out in a letter that he had Dr. Kissinger send to Senator Buckley who inquired about the press reports of Sonnenfeldt's --

Q Is Sonnenfeldt out of town?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know where Helmut is, actually. I know he was in Europe and I don't know whether he has returned yet or not.

Q Will we get a copy of that letter?

Q It just occurred to me since all you had were press accounts that apparently you had not been able to get ahold of him.

Q Did he refuse comment? Did you try to get ahold of him and he just had no comment?

MR. NESSEN: I am not sure. That is probably something the State Department could tell you. What I am trying to tell you is what the President's policy towards Eastern Europe is.

Q I thought the President might have called Sonnenfeldt himself.

Q What does the letter say?

MR. NESSEN: The letter, just to give you some highlights of it --

Q Can you give us the letter, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think I can give it to you in the form that it is here. By that, I mean it is just a teletype copy with all kinds of internal markings on it, but the text of it, I think, is unclassified. It is a teletype form here with internal directions on it. I think we could get it retyped for you.

The letter from Dr. Kissinger to Senator Buckley, just to give you the highlights, are that -- he says that "...the column in question does not reflect our policy towards Eastern Europe.

"I wish to assure you that our long-lasting policy towards Eastern Europe has not changed and that the newspaper rendition of the discussions with Ambassadors in London and of Mr. Sonnenfeldt's remarks on that occasion is severely distorted.

"Our policy in no sense accepts Soviet 'Dominion' of Eastern Europe nor is it in any way designed to seek the consolidation of such 'Dominion.' On the contrary, we seek to be responsive to, and to encourage as responsibly as possible, the desires of Eastern Europeans for greater autonomy, independence and more normal relations with the rest of the world. It is our objective that in this way there should also occur a greater Soviet acceptance of this autonomy and independence.

"These basic policies have been consistently reaffirmed by us in word and deed, including in the course of Presidential and my visits, to the region and in the President's as well as my own meetings with Governmental leaders from Eastern European countries."

Q Ron, would you repeat that sentence in there about Soviet "Dominion"?

MR. NESSEN: "Our policy in no sense accepts Soviet 'Dominion' of Eastern Europe."

Q Before that.

MR. NESSEN: "I wish to assure you that our long-standing policy towards Eastern Europe has not changed" -- no, I think it is the one "Our policy in no sense accepts Soviet 'Dominion' of Eastern Europe nor is it in any way designed to seek the consolidation of such 'Dominion'. On the contrary" -- why don't we get it retyped. We will get it retyped.

Q What is, then, the status of Mr. Sonnenfeldt now that the Secretary of State and the President have publicly disagreed with his position as stated in the press accounts?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think --

Q What is the status?

MR. NESSEN:--that is exactly the right formulation of the question and makes it impossible to answer the question because you are saying what is his position now that the President and the Secretary have indicated that Evans and Novak's description of his position is not the Administration position. It is not possible to answer the question.

Q Are you making an effort to find out from Mr. Sonnenfeldt and from the Ambassadors and so forth precisely what it was that he did say?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I think we know precisely what he did say and if you read the full five- or six-page report of what he did say it adds up to the President's policy towards Eastern Europe.

Q Do you have the transcript?

MR. NESSEN: There is one here, yes -- not a transcript but a --

Q Are there statements in that talk that --

Q I thought you just said you just had the press account, Ron.

MR. NESSEN: I am reacting to the press accounts because the full five- or six-page summary of what he said does not reflect what the press accounts say he said.

Q Well, what did he say?

Q Could that be released?

MR. NESSEN: No, because I am telling you what the President's policy towards Eastern Europe is, and that is really the issue.

Q Fine. We are not arguing that. We are trying to find out two things -- what Sonnenfeldt actually said, not the President.

MR. NESSEN: Well, as I say, if you read the five- or six-page summary of what he actually said in its entirety, it added up to a statement of the President's policy on Eastern Europe.

Q Why can't you release that and let each person make their own judgment? You obviously have made a judgment or want to give us one -- why not let us make our own?

Q Maybe I just misunderstood you. I thought you said here -- I have got it written down, maybe I miswrote something -- it says, "All we know about what Sonnenfeldt said is what is printed." Did you say that?

MR. NESSEN: Well, if I did, what I meant to say is the reaction I was going to give was based on the public reports of what he said.

Q In other words, you are saying that they just distorted what he said?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I think that is the word that the Secretary used in his letter.

Q And that is your understanding, too?

MR. NESSEN: You know, rather than comment on an Evans and Novak column, which I don't think is really proper, I think what I would like to do and what I have done, really, is to state what the President's policy towards Eastern Europe is.

Q Could we have a copy of what Sonnenfeldt said?

Q I thought you were reacting to the press accounts.

MR. NESSEN: I am saying that in response to questions that grew out of the press accounts, which I think is what Les' question did grow out of, I wanted to state what the policy is toward Eastern Europe.

Q Ron, on the policy towards Eastern Europe, the President's policy is, one, basically passive and does not in any way affect America's other negotiations with the Soviet Union, is that correct? We are not taking any active role against the status quo in Eastern Europe?

MR. NESSEN: Well, let me get this statement in writing, Dick, because it does accurately state American policy towards Eastern Europe.

Q Which statement?

MR. NESSEN: The letter from Henry sent to Senator Buckley.

Q When was that letter sent?

MR. NESSEN: The date is on it.

Q Could we get your copy of what Sonnenfeldt said?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think so.

Q Why is that?

MR. NESSEN: Well, it is an internal communication.

Q But it was delivered to persons other than those within the Administration, was it not?

MR. NESSEN: To summarize it, if you read it in its entirety it adds up to a statement of the President's policy on Eastern Europe.

Q Why do you say "in its entirety"? I mean, you suggest that there are things which, if taken out of context or something, could be interpreted in some other way.

MR. NESSEN: Exactly.

Q Why not just hand the whole thing out and just see what he says?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I am telling you what the President's policy on Eastern Europe is, and any other details about Hal Sonnenfeldt and so forth should come out of the State Department.

Q The reason I ask, Ron, is this: There have been a number of occasions when statements have been made by a Kissinger aide which somehow have been interpreted as conflicting with what everyone understands to be Administration policy. One example is the Atherton statement on the PLO which the Secretary then said that he didn't review and repudiated.

Another example is the Sheehan article in which the State Department papers supposedly said that two Presidents had made various assurances to Sadat. This was all done under the Secretary with the Secretary's permission but he repudiates it.

Now time after time you get this occasion when an aide will do something to Kissinger and Kissinger will say, no, it is not so. It seems to me that to get to the bottom of this that we should just have the Sonnenfeldt statement to see what he really did say.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that that is material, Mort. What we have here is a report of something that Hal said carried by Evans and Novak which sparked a question from Les which gave me the opportunity to tell you what the President's policy is and, secondarily, to say that a five- or six-page summary of what Hal said in that circumstance taken in its entirety is a statement of the President's policy on Eastern Europe.

Now you are saying that in order to refute the Evans and Novak column you need to produce a summary of what Hal said, and I don't want to refute an Evans and Novak column but I just want to tell you what the President's policy according to this is.

Q There is another issue here and that is whether what the President thinks is American policy is being communicated accurately and faithfully to the subordinates who carry it out. It seems to me that that --

MR. NESSEN: It must be because if you read Hal's remarks in their entirety you will see that he understands it clearly.

Q Why do you say if we read it, Ron, when you won't let us read it? How can we?

MR. NESSEN: Well, take my word for it, then.

Q That is just the point. You are asking us to take something on faith.

Q Apparently, this caused some concern in Eastern Europe and that certainly suggests that there was a lot of impact from an Evans and Novak column. It was a story in the Washington Post the other morning which suggested that there was a lot of concern in certain Eastern European capitals.

Is it possible that people attending the meeting also misconstrued what Sonnenfeldt really had to say?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have any indication that they did, no.

Q Ron, when was the five- or six-page summary prepared? Was it at the time Sonnenfeldt spoke to the Ambassadors or since this?

MR. NESSEN: Shortly after, yes. Shortly after.

Q By whom?

Q Can you say who prepared the summary?

MR. NESSEN: I will check on who it was that prepared the summary of it.

Q Ron, for the sake of assuming that everybody knows what the President's Eastern European policy is, would you kindly itemize exactly? Is it following the Helsinki Accord or is it something different?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I think Dr. Kissinger's letter to Senator Buckley is probably as good a statement of American policy towards Eastern Europe as any you will see, and it is being typed now.

Q Ron, could we know definitely whether this summary you have was prepared before or after the North Carolina primary?

MR. NESSEN: Howard, I don't know exactly what you are driving at there.

Q Oh, yes you do.

MR. NESSEN: I don't understand. (Laughter) Well, I can assure you that if you suggest that the North Carolina primary results are involved in any way in this matter, you are quite wrong.

Q Ron, how many other Members of Congress other than Senator Buckley queried the President about this?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know but I believe there were some. I know there were some.

Q On another subject, does the White House agree with Ronald Reagan that he should be given time on the networks to speak or, sold time, I should say?

MR. NESSEN: Phil, actually I don't know all the details of the request of former Governor Reagan to buy time from the networks and, since we don't have all the facts, I just can't comment specifically on the matter, but the White House does hope that the matter can be worked out.

Q I don't understand that.

Q Which way? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: Well, that it can be resolved.

Q Which way?

Q Ron, has there been any contact between the White House or any member of the President Ford Committee and the networks relating to Reagan's request?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Well, in that same connection, does the President plan to hold a press conference this week? I am talking now not about a press conference out in Wisconsin, let us say, or a question and answer session or anything, but I am talking about a regular press conference with the Washington Press Corps this week.

I have a second question which may not be necessary. Does he plan to hold a press conference at any time prior to the Wisconsin primary next Tuesday, a week from Tuesday? In other words, this week or the weekend up to next Monday?

MR. NESSEN: In answer to the first question, I would not anticipate a White House press conference this week, and, as for whether there would be one before the Wisconsin voting, I don't know at this point.

Q I am talking now essentially about Monday and so forth.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know.

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Q Do you look for one on Monday?

MR. NESSEN: Currently it is not planned.

Your first question was would be there --

Q This week, and the second question is any time before the Wisconsin primary.

MR. NESSEN: There may be one in Wisconsin on the trip out there, local.

Q Do you have anything on the trip, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: No. The advance team has gone out there today so they have not locked up all the stops yet. I think you could count on going out there Friday and Saturday and come back Saturday in time for the evening's Gridiron Dinner. The exact stops are not arranged.

Q Is it early Friday?

MR. NESSEN: We have not gotten that far on the arrangements yet.

Q Ron, I would like to pursue this Reagan speech a little bit further. You really declined to say very much, I think, in saying that you hope it can be worked out or resolved.

MR. NESSEN: Right.

Q Does the White House have any position on whether or not he should be given the right to speak?

MR. NESSEN: Dick, as I say, we don't know all the facts and circumstances.

Q He has asked for time and he is willing to pay for it and so far he has been denied the opportunity. Doesn't the White House have any position on a simple case like that?

MR. NESSEN: As I say, we don't have all the details of what is involved and so forth.

Q Ron, is this controversy affecting your plans on whether or not to hold a news conference?

MR. NESSEN: I don't see how it would, Phil. I mean the President, as you know, has certain things he takes part in in his role as President, not as a candidate, and I think the FCC has recognized that by indicating that a Presidential news conference is a legitimate news event free of equal time requirements. So I don't see how one thing would affect the other. As I understand it, Governor Reagan is trying to buy television time. If the President has a news conference, it would be not related or anything.

Q Let me suggest what some people are thinking if you have not thought about this. There have been charges by Reagan throughout this campaign that Ford is using the office of the Presidency and taking advantage of it. What we would have here is if the networks do not give Mr. Reagan the time, do not sell him the time, and then Mr. Ford comes along and requests time and holds a news conference, we would have a situation where the President of the United States, candidate Ford, would be on network television, all three networks, and Mr. Reagan could not even buy time. That is the issue.

MR. NESSEN: I think there are a number of fallacies in there, Phil. Even if we were thinking of anything like that, for one thing, as you know, the White House does not request that the networks carry news conferences. We have only in the 18 months I have been here requested time once and I think that was -- what was the purpose of that?

Q That was the speech in Kansas City, wasn't it?

MR. NESSEN: That's right. That was the only time that the White House has requested time. Now when news conferences are held, we say they are available for full coverage if you want to and others are not. I mean, I know that you recall one occasion where the networks in fact declined to carry a Presidential news conference which was available. So there is no requirement that networks -- we don't have any control over how the networks handle any news coming out of the White House, including a news conference, except on the one occasion, I guess, in the fall of 1974 where we did request time. But other than that the White House does not have any control over how the news is handled by the networks.

Q Are you saying, Ron, that when you told us before that you would not anticipate a White House press conference this week that at this point whether or not Reagan gets time would affect your having a press conference?

MR. NESSEN: Well, one thing is not related to the other, Dick.

Q I am not relating them. I am trying to establish then that regardless of what Reagan does as far as his speaking --

MR. NESSEN: It would have no effect on whether the President did or did not have a news conference.

Q I am not asking whether it would have an effect. I am asking whether or not the President would have a news conference.

MR. NESSEN: You know, all the lead-up to that does not change the answer to the simple question, does the President plan to have a news conference this week. I don't anticipate one. I mean, that is the answer leaving aside all the part about Reagan.

Q But when you say you do not anticipate one, you are leaving open the possibility that he could have one.

MR. NESSEN: Well, at this moment I don't anticipate one. I mean, I cannot tell you what I am going to anticipate on Friday or next Monday or whatever. Right now I don't anticipate one.

Q Ron, when you say that you hope that it can be worked out or resolved, does that mean that you hope that former Governor Reagan will be able to buy the time?

MR. NESSEN: We just don't have all the facts, Lou, to make any kind of assessment of the situation.

Q I guess my question is what do you mean when you say that you hope it can be worked out?

MR. NESSEN: We just hope that it is resolved and worked out.

Q Ron, can you give us some more information on the President's announcement in La Crosse about the investigating commission into the foreign bribery headed by Elliot Richardson?

MR. NESSEN: Yes. He has made the basic decision that that is the way he wants that investigation conducted. Now some of the other decisions as to who the other members are, what its powers are, when it is supposed to report back and what areas it is supposed to look into and so forth, are still being put together, and when all that is finished, which I anticipate will be quite soon, then we will announce the other details of it.

Q Ron, there is a report that the Administration intends to appoint Turner Shelton to the post of Consul General in Bermuda. Now there are strong objections down at the State Department and the Senate Foreign Relations. I am just wondering, is this true, and, if so, why Shelton, in view of the reported conduct during the earthquake in Managua.

MR. NESSEN: Well, the post of Consul General in Bermuda is not a Presidential appointment and so, really, you have to ask the State Department what they plan to do at that post. I have checked with our personnel people here and I do not anticipate a Presidential appointment.

Q Who does the appointing, do you know? Do you have any idea?

MR. NESSEN: Whoever appoints Consul Generals at the State Department.

Q Ron, is the President prepared to invoke Taft-Hartley if necessary to head off a truckers' strike Wednesday?

MR. NESSEN: Well, those negotiations are going on. The President is hopeful that the collective bargaining process will work successfully. I just don't think that during the negotiations it is proper to speculate on what might happen.

Q Ron, do you have anything to add to what the President said the other day in Fresno when I asked about the report that some Teamster officials are confident that they would not be investigated or prosecuted by this Administration?

MR. NESSEN: I really don't, John, other than to say that those sorts of matters are handled by the Justice Department and the President, in this and all other matters, is confident that Attorney General Levi and the Justice Department will carry out their duties.

Q Does your answer to the previous question suggest that there is a possibility that the President would not ask for any aid to help the truckers?

MR. NESSEN: Well, at this point, Dick, the collective bargaining process is underway and he has faith in it and is hopeful it will result in a settlement, and I just don't want to talk about what might happen.

Q Ron, does the President feel that there is anything political in the sudden big flash of Watergate publicity -- a new book coming out, a new movie coming out right at this time -- and has the President read the material that he had not read when he was in California?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know whether he has read it or not, actually, and I have not heard him talk along the lines that you indicate, Howard.

Q Ron, do you have anything at all further on what the purpose of this Hussein visit is tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: Well, you know the two countries have a longstanding relationship and also the President has a personal relationship with the King. I don't know if you recall, but the King was the first foreign visitor to come here in August of 1974 after the President had taken office and also made one other visit in April of 1975. So it is both reflection of the close relationships of the two countries and also of the personal relationship the two men have.

I don't think there is any question that the Middle East situation will be discussed, not because it is -- (Laughter) Well, let me finish the sentence.

There is no question that the Middle East situation will be discussed but not as part of any particular new initiative but rather as part of the ongoing consultations that the United States has been having with the various parties in the Middle East, at least trying to find a solution there.

Q Ron, to pursue that question a bit, the Israeli Cabinet has approved the request of the United States to see if it is possible to negotiate a new sort of plan -- that is, whereby the Israelis would make substantial withdrawals from occupied territories in return for an end to the state of the belligerency.

Has the President decided whether he will pursue that initiative and will he be doing so in the meetings with Hussein?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I don't have the full agenda for the meeting, Mort, and specifically I don't know the answer to your question.

Q Ron, I seem to recall your saying that the President never accepts any honorariums for speeches; is that correct?

MR. NESSEN: That is correct.

Q In view of that, what is the President's feeling about Senators Goldwater and McGovern having arranged to eliminate the \$15,000 limit in this regard?

MR. NESSEN: That is an amendment to the Federal Election Commission, isn't it?

Q Well, I think the rules of the Senate, I am not sure. They put a limit of \$15,000 on speeches and so forth and McGovern and Goldwater have got a \$25,000 fee in the offing.

I just was wondering, what is the President's reaction? Does he feel that \$15,000 is enough or not?

MR. NESSEN: Let me ask him because I have not talked to him about that.

Q To what charity did he give the \$1,500 check he got from the construction industries?

MR. NESSEN: I will have to check that, Fran, because I didn't ask him.

Q Ron, when will we receive the letter from the Secretary?

MR. NESSEN: As soon as it is typed and Xeroxed.

Q Ron, he used to accept honorariums when he was in the House, didn't he?

MR. NESSEN: Correct.

Q Ron, George Bush came by to see the President this morning. What was the purpose of that call?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. I don't know if it is anything we can talk about.

Maybe he is a believer in the car pool idea.

Q The President seemed to take some personal exception, at least that is the way I understood his answer in the KABC interview to the revelations of the Nixon story from the standpoint of digging beyond a propriety of views and of personal realms.

In that same interview, he was asked about a lot of rather personal matters -- his drinking habits, whether he takes pills, his family life and so forth.

My question is, did he feel the questioning in that interview was within the realm of propriety?

MR. NESSEN: He did, yes.

Q He had no objection to the questions?

MR. NESSEN: He did not.

Q Why does he not object to being questioned about something like that but objects to seeing it written, as in the case of Nixon's interview?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I don't know. I have got to read over again what he said there, Tom, because, you know, he has not repeated that on any other occasion that I have heard and I want to see what he did say about the propriety of it. It is not something I have heard him speak of before.

Q This was the interview with whom?

MR. NESSEN: With Jerry Dunphy of KABC in Los Angeles.

Q Are we going to get copies?

MR. NESSEN: The broadcast begins, I am told, tomorrow night and we will put out a transcript, yes.

Q Ron, going back to the press conference, wasn't a press conference under serious consideration for this week? And, if that is true, what caused the change of heart?

MR. NESSEN: Well, it is not really true. I mean, you know, we talked about should we have one this week or should we have had one last week, but it has never gotten very far down the track in terms of really having one.

Q But you are not going to have one now?

MR. NESSEN: I don't anticipate one.

Q Ron, have you personally recommended a news conference at any point here in the last couple of days?

MR. NESSEN: I have not, no.

Q Did you suggest that it might be a good idea?

MR. NESSEN: As I say, we talked about the possibility but it has never gotten very far.

Q Did he see Senator Weicker?

MR. NESSEN: Senator Weicker?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: This morning?

Q Just a little while ago.

MR. NESSEN: I don't think Weicker was here.

No, Weicker was not here to see the President.

Was he?

Q He was part of the Slogans U.S.A. group.

MR. NESSEN: Oh, that group. That is right. I am sorry. I was thinking of the other groups.

Q What is that?

Q Slogans, U.S.A.

MR. NESSEN: Yes. Jack Anderson came in this morning to have the President present the prize to the people who won his Bicentennial slogan contest.

Q What is the winning slogan, please?

Q Onward and Upward.

Q Something to take away with us.

MR. NESSEN: Let me see. What was the slogan?

The slogan selected is Freedom's Way - U.S.A. --

Q Could you tell us why that was closed?

MR. NESSEN: -- and submitted by Mrs. Ellen Harness of Litchfield, Connecticut. I think Jack Anderson made that public in his column today.

Q Why was the meeting closed, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: Well, for one thing, it was at the same time as the briefing and the second thing was it was just a private little ceremony.

Q Was she there, the lady?

MR. NESSEN: I think so.

Q Ron, did the President submit "Peace Through Strength"? (Laughter)

Q WIN.

MR. NESSEN: I don't think he turned one in on the contest.

Q Ron, did the President have any comment to make on the comments by Senator Mansfield and Tip O'Neill relative to the Cuban situation?

MR. NESSEN: No, he did not have a response to that.

Q Have they finished their review of the Cuban situation?

MR. NESSEN: I think, as the Secretary of State indicated last week, this is not a review in the crisis sense of the word "review" but just a number of economic, diplomatic and other steps are being examined and there is no timetable for finishing the examination.

Q Well, I realize there is no timetable, but have they finally decided on some options?

MR. NESSEN: To my knowledge, no, but let me check.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END (AT 1:20 P.M. EST)