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

#533

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 11:40 A.M. EDT

JULY 14, 1976

WEDNESDAY

MR. NESSEN: This morning at about 10:20 the President met with Vice Admiral Zikry, who came to deliver Egypt's Bicentennial gift to the United States. The gift was a stela, which is a carved sort of tablet. It is two and one-half feet high, a foot and a half wide and three inches thick. It has a scene of an Egyptian priest offering incense with an Egyptian inscription on it, and it is quite old. It was probably carved in 1420 B.C., and it was discovered in 1967. This is the gift to the United States for the Bicentennial.

Q How about the Israelis? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: It will be, I understand, displayed permanently at the Smithsonian.

Q What does the inscription say?

MR. NESSEN: Actually, the inscription just has the names and titles of the gods and persons depicted. It weighs about 220 pounds and made out of limestone.

The President did have his physical examination this morning. Dr. Lukash wrote me a memo of his findings and I am having this retyped and it will be distributed at the end of the briefing so you don't have to write this down. I can run over it for you, if you would like to hear it.

It says, "Memo to Mr. Nessen: The President is 63 years old today and completed a six-month interval physical examination this morning in the White House Medical Office. His last complete physical examination was performed on January 27, 1976, at Bethesda Naval Hospital. The results of the laboratory tests and physical examination today were completely normal, and I have found the President to be in excellent health."

I am not going to go too slowly because, as I say, this is all typed and ready to hand out at the end of the briefing.

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"He had no complaints during this period"-- meaning the past six months--"other than mild discomfort in his knee following periods of prolonged standing. The President has maintained his physical capacity for working long hours. He sleeps very well and continues to follow his diet and weighs between 195 and 198 pounds."

"The electrocardiogram was normal and the blood pressure was 120 over 72. His cardiovascular functions remain excellent and he continues with his early morning exercise program and evening swim. The President feels exceptionally fit and is looking forward to continued good health."

As for the other aspects of his birthday, I think the poolers probably reported on the cake and so forth aboard Air Force One last night.

This evening the President will have a private dinner in the Residence about 8:00 with Mrs. Ford, Jack and Susan. Traditionally, on his birthday, the other children -- Steve and Mike and Mike's wife Gayle -- telephone and they are expected to telephone tonight.

As for the presents, I don't have a list yet, but Sheila promises to provide one, and I will pass it on to you or post it when we have it.

Q How long was the exam? Who was there?
Where was it conducted?

MR. NESSEN: It was conducted in Dr. Lukash's office here at the White House. Present were Dr. Lukash and his assistants there.

Could you check the length of it, John?

Q No outside doctors?

MR. NESSEN: You can check that, John. Find out if any outside doctors came to help Dr. Lukash.

Q Ron, quite a bit has been made of the fact that he didn't eat any of that birthday cake last night, and I assume that was because of his early morning exam and he will eat birthday cake tonight.

MR. NESSEN: I assume that is right, yes.

Q They saved some of that cake for him?

MR. NESSEN: There was quite a bit left over. I don't know what happened to it.

I don't have any other announcements today.

Q Will you explain why he threatened Tom DeFrank last night? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: I think it was a joke. (Laughter)

Q Why did one of the President's guests refer to all of the reporting pool as lizards? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: Which guest was that?

Q A fellow journalist from Los Angeles, some hack. (Laughter)

Q Ron, anything new about the Olympic games?

MR. NESSEN: No, we don't have anything new on the games. The President is keeping up with developments or is being kept informed of the developments by Jim Cannon, who is the staff member assigned to follow this matter but as of now there is nothing new. I think what is awaited now is a decision from Taiwan whether to compete under the conditions imposed.

Q Ron, does the President feel that Taiwan should, that this is a reasonable compromise?

MR. NESSEN: The President feels that the International Olympic Committee is the one who should determine eligibility for the games and that the host country has no role in imposing conditions, political conditions or any other kind of conditions, on the participation of the athletes in these games, and that is his view.

Q Ron, I saw a story this morning that said that this compromise under which the Taiwan team would appear under the Olympic banner without any name, that it had the blessing of the Americans, and I assume that means the American Olympic delegation and not President Ford.

MR. NESSEN: As you know, the United States Olympic Committee is totally independent of the United States Government. Not only that, but further complicating the matter is that the United States representatives on the International Olympic Committee are different from the officials of the United States Olympic Committee.

Now, I understand that Mr. Krumm has said that he never said that this compromise had the blessing or was urged upon them and so forth. It is not my role to talk about that here. The President has no direct role in either the U.S. Olympic Committee or the International Olympic Committee, and I know for a fact that this has not been urged on the Taiwanese by the United States Government.

Q Aren't you taking a slap at Canada this way? Isn't the President taking a slap at Canada?

MR. NESSEN: I think the President had me very forcefully express his views yesterday and he certainly stands by those views, that the role of the host country is to provide facilities for the athletes to compete and it is not the role of the host country to set political conditions, or any other kind of conditions, to exclude certain athletes. That is his view and it is a strongly held view. So, I wanted to relay it to you.

Q Ron, did the President show any more enthusiasm for the Democratic National Convention last night than the previous night?

MR. NESSEN: Well, there was no opportunity to watch last night because he was at the All Star Game.

Q Has he watched the replays of any of the Convention activities?

MR. NESSEN: Not to my knowledge. As you know, he is an omnivorous newspaper reader and he has his own daily news summary prepared here at the White House which has had a summary of each night's Convention activities, including a summary of the speeches and so forth, so he has had ample opportunity, both from reading the newspapers and reading his own news summary, to keep up with developments in the Convention.

Q The next question is, does he plan to watch, do you think, tonight?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know how his dinner is going to affect the TV watching or exactly what his plans are, but I will check and find out after the fact.

Let me go back to the medical examination which lasted 40 minutes. Dr. Lukash was aided by a hospital corpsman and a nurse and these are people who are regularly assigned to his office. There was no other doctor present.

Q Where is Dr. Lukash's office?

MR. NESSEN: It is over on the ground floor of the Residence.

Q Ron, about the Olympics, does the President feel that his activity in this matter is limited just to making statements and advising, giving his views?

MR. NESSEN: There is no direct role, Dick, I mean in terms of -- you know, he cannot order the United States team not to compete, for instance, because the team is organized by the United States Olympic Committee, which is a private organization.

Q Ron, can he advise them not to?

MR. NESSEN: I suppose he could make his views known publicly, yes.

Q Ron, since this is a kind of a delicate international matter, whether it should be or not, has he discussed this at all with the Secretary of State?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, yesterday morning.

Q Could you tell us what the Secretary of State's advice might have been?

MR. NESSEN: I just would rather not tell you specifically what his advice was, but you will recall that it was after that meeting that I talked yesterday about the role of the host country not setting conditions on participation, so that will give you some idea of how that meeting went.

Q Has there been any communication from the Peking government about this, either directly or indirectly, to the U.S. Government?

MR. NESSEN: Peking? No, there has not.

Q Has the President been in contact with Prime Minister Trudeau?

MR. NESSEN: He has not.

Q Has Kissinger been in contact?

MR. NESSEN: No, no official of the Government has been in contact with Trudeau.

Q Ron, has the President seen the HEW Secretary today re the swine flu serum.

MR. NESSEN: No. Dave Mathews was in today and maybe some of you saw him leaving. He was here to talk to a White House Fellows' group at breakfast, but while he was here, he stopped in to tell me that -- if you recall, the last development in this was Dave Mathews telling the President that the insurance companies and the drug manufacturing companies were going to confer and that the HEW was going to kind of encourage them to confer to see if they could work out the liability insurance problem and Dave thought that he would have a progress report on that to give to the President perhaps by the end of the week.

Q Ron, there have been several flights by U.S. Navy planes into Kenya in the last couple of days. Officials at the Pentagon say privately that apparently this is to demonstrate United States support for Kenya in its dispute with Uganda. Has the President discussed this with the Secretary of State or does he have any statement on that or could you elaborate on that somewhat for us? That is all we have at this time.

MR. NESSEN: I would not want to elaborate on what the Pentagon or the State Department has said about the -- I don't know what you mean by flights in and out of there. I understand there has been a visit by one patrol plane.

Q Two, now.

MR. NESSEN: I would not want to elaborate on what they said at the Pentagon.

Q Do you know, has the President talked with the Secretary of State about this?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know whether he has talked to him specifically about that or not.

Q What are we trying to accomplish by this? What is the purpose?

MR. NESSEN: I think I will leave the description of that mission up to the Pentagon.

Q Did the President meet with CIA Director Bush this morning?

MR. NESSEN: He meets with him once or twice a week. I don't know if this morning was the morning or not. I don't think so. I didn't see him here. He does have a meeting once or twice a week, a regular meeting.

Q Does Bush normally bring anyone with him?

MR. NESSEN: Who, George? He is normally alone, with Brent Scowcroft. Do you mean alone from the CIA?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: No, he normally is the only one that comes from the CIA.

Q Did he have such a meeting today with the staff?

MR. NESSEN: No, today was not the day for him to have his meeting.

MR. CARLSON: But he was in the building for some reason:

MR. NESSEN: Was he?

Q What is the President filming today?

Q What did you say, John? He was in the building with other members of his staff from the CIA?

MR. CARLSON: He was seen in the building. He did not see the President.

MR. NESSEN: I didn't see him today.

Q Who did he meet with?

MR. NESSEN: I assume he met with Brent.

The filming today is a number of short messages. You know, when the President is not able to accept invitations to various events, dinners and so forth, he sometimes sends a filmed message and he is filming four of those today. I didn't bring the list out here with me, but it is clubs and organizations that ask him to come and speak and he is not able to so he sends them a message on film.

Q There is nothing on his schedule this afternoon? He is tied up with that all afternoon?

MR. NESSEN: No, no, that is only taking I think --

Q Who is supervising the filming of these messages?

MR. NESSEN: What do you mean who is supervising the filming of these messages?

Q I mean, who was there with the President supervising, getting the right camera angles and everything for that?

MR. NESSEN: I have to check, Phil. I don't know.

Q Is Mr. Mead still on the payroll?

MR. NESSEN: Oh, yes. I mentioned yesterday that he was until August 8.

Q Ron, to go back to that Olympic Games situation, has the President or anyone on his staff had communication on this problem with members of what used to be called the China lobby and I mean by that Senator Hiram Fong or Anna Chennault or anyone?

MR. NESSEN: No, to my knowledge they have not been in contact with the White House, Bob.

Q Do you have any more details about the Connecticut trip Saturday?

MR. NESSEN: What do you mean by details of the Connecticut trip?

Q You said he was going to go to a breakfast first and then some other events. Do you know what those other events are? I assume he is going to wind up with a speech to the convention.

MR. NESSEN: As I said, this is a very tentative schedule and very likely to change in some of the details. Tentatively, the President was expecting, as I said yesterday, to take off from Andrews at around 7:00. It is an hour's flight to Hartford.

The event is in the Hilton Hotel, where he would attend a breakfast reception. I don't know who the guests are. It is described as a Republican breakfast reception.

Then he has some time set aside to talk to delegates privately. Then he would go from there to Bushnell Memorial Hall, which is the site of the convention itself, where he would speak at roughly 11:30 to noon and then would actually return directly to Washington after that.

Q Is Reagan going to be there, do you know?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that, Helen.

Q Are you finished with the schedule?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Is he likely to have a text on that 11:30 to noon speech? I mean an advance text.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. It is too soon to say, I think.

Q When are they supposed to vote? That afternoon? Do you know?

MR. NESSEN: I think Saturday is the day, that is right.

Q Do you think later in the day?

MR. NESSEN: Later in the day on Saturday, yes.

Q Is that the wind-up of all of the public effort in terms of campaigning?

MR. NESSEN: Saturday is the last day for State conventions. Utah is the other one on Saturday.

I think you were asking, is this the President's last public sort of campaign effort before the convention. To my knowledge, it is yes.

Q Has Mississippi been ruled out, do you know, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know, there has not been any trip to Mississippi seriously considered.

Q Ron, have you announced the visit here by the Pennsylvania delegation? Have you announced the visit to the White House by the Pennsylvania delegation?

MR. NESSEN: Didn't Senator Scott bring in some Pennsylvania delegates about two weeks ago?

Q No, I mean some others coming in later.

MR. NESSEN: I have not announced any such visit.

Q Ron, what is the President's schedule this afternoon? What is the President doing?

MR. NESSEN: He has got some staff meetings and some paperwork and so forth later in the day.

Q What is the President's reaction to Reagan's call yesterday not to challenge him for the delegates?

MR. NESSEN: I think Rog Morton or people at the Committee can fill you in in greater detail on what the reaction to this will be, and I think we ought to get --

Q I know what Rog said. I am wondering if the President had any direct --

MR. NESSEN: Rog is the President's Campaign Manager, and he is speaking for the President in that particular matter.

Q Ron, is the President not just a little bit concerned? He had these people in who conducted this Operation Sting yesterday. Is he not just a little bit concerned that these so-called Stings are just publicity stunts since the police are really preying on the weaknesses of the individuals who have been hooked on drugs and would sell anything to anyone, including the police, to get the drugs?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know how to answer that question other than to say that the President spoke yesterday of his view of the so-called Sting operation and I think that would answer your question, probably..

Q Was any consideration given to that aspect of it, the fact that a good many of the people who brought the material in to be sold were just addicts looking for a fix and would sell it to anybody and they knew it was the police?

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard that mentioned here.

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Q A lot of the people who brought these stolen items in admitted knowing that they were selling to the police.

MR. NESSEN: I am not familiar with that.

Q Ron, you mentioned Bush was in and I am not suggesting that he was in this morning for any particular purpose, but I just wonder, is he giving any political advice to the campaign or is it the President's understanding that his confirmation hearings forbade him from giving such advice?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know whether the confirmation hearings forbid him to give any such advice. He has not. He is not involved at all in politics.

Q Did the President feel it would be improper for him to give campaign advice?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that it has ever even been discussed. I just know that he is not doing it.

Q Ron, to go back to the Olympics for a minute, in the last couple of days, you have been saying that it is too early to talk about any possibility that the U.S. team might not compete or the President would do something, that you hoped this thing would get resolved and yet, today, you seemed to soften that a bit and say that the President really can't order the U.S. team not to compete, it is not his role, et cetera. You already said it is highly unlikely that the President would take any action in advising the team and will simply allow this thing to run its course.

MR. NESSEN: Well, I have a feeling there is some misunderstanding about the President's role. You know the U.S. Olympic Committee is not an arm of the United States Government and the International Olympic Committee does not have official American Government representation.

Q I understand that, but you were not saying that the last couple of days. The question was specifically asked if the President would do anything to inhibit the United States participation in the games and you said, "It is too early to talk about that, we have got a long time to go." I am simply saying, is the President not going to do anything?

MR. NESSEN: No. I think if I were you, I would get the opposite impression, that the President is weighing what response to make depending on the outcome of the next step which, as I understand it, is Taiwan considering whether it will accept the conditions imposed upon it.

Q If he does not have anything to do with it, then why is he meddling in it?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think he is meddling in it. I think it is a matter of principle, certainly. It is a very important matter of principle and the President believes it is a matter of principle. As I think I said earlier in the week, it is not only a matter of principle, but it is a very important precedent, especially when you consider that the 1980 games will be in Moscow. If you accept, which the President does not, the idea that the host country can impose political qualifications on who may compete -- think ahead of what that could mean in 1980.

So, that is why the President feels it is important to make his views known and to continue to make them known depending on what happens next. So, I can assure you that he will not step aside and shrug off this, but will let you know as each development comes up how he feels about it.

Q Is there anything he can practically do except make a recommendation to the U.S. Olympic Committee? You started to talk about a number of -- I assume you were going to say a number of options, and you changed that. Is there practically anything else he can do except advise them?

MR. NESSEN: I think I will just leave it right there, Ralph, until we see what happens next.

Q You are implying that he could ask the team not to participate?

MR. NESSEN: I am going to let you make your own interpretation.

Q The President's major concern is this principle of whether a host country could dictate the political or other conditions with a view toward 1980 when the games are going to be held in Moscow?

MR. NESSEN: With a view to 1976 and the precedent that it sets for the future, sure.

Q But is suggesting the withdrawal of American athletes an option that is under his consideration?

MR. NESSEN: I said that the President is considering what statement or what position to take next, depending on what happens and I think I will just leave it there for the moment, Aldo.

Q You are not ruling that out?

MR. NESSEN: I am just going to leave it right there.

Q Ron, what exactly is the U.S. proposing to be done about international terrorism?

MR. NESSEN: I think Ambassador Scranton outlined the American position on international terrorism the other night in his statement at the Security Council debate concerning the raid into Uganda.

Q Ron, in the U.N. there has been some mention by the Israelis of threats against the Ugandan government, against Britishers who were living in Uganda, et cetera, and nationals of people who were defending the Israelis on the U.N. line. Has there been any threat against Americans, that we know of?

MR. NESSEN: In Uganda?

Q Yes, any reprisal for resisting them?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I have heard of.

Q What is the President planning to discuss with Chancellor Schmidt?

MR. NESSEN: I will have to bring you up to date on the possible agenda items and so forth. I didn't bring my paper out with me on that subject.

Q What is the schedule for the meeting with Schmidt? Do you have that?

MR. NESSEN: 10:30, arrival and South Lawn ceremony.

Q There was a time when the Germans held a counterview to a lot of the industrial nations which was that they were terribly concerned about inflation and felt some other countries were not. Did the Germans sort of view us as their particular ally in the fight against inflation?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what you mean by that, John, exactly.

Q Well, I just wonder if Schmidt thinks he is on the same wavelength as Ford, more than any of the other Western leaders. Did you get the feeling that the German and the United States' position was very close?

MR. NESSEN: I would hate to try to rank the Western leaders in terms of their degree of feeling toward inflation. I think the communique issued after the Puerto Rico meeting indicated that they shared a view about inflation.

Q Does the President intend to ask the Chancellor about the plans up in the air by Volkswagen to open up an assembly plant in Pennsylvania?

MR. NESSEN: Let me bring myself up to date on the agenda for the Schmidt meeting and give it to you after I have done that, Dick.

Q How does the President expect to do in Connecticut and Utah Saturday?

MR. NESSEN: I would rather you talk to the Campaign Committee about that, Helen.

Q Have you been told not to discuss the campaign?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Why do you never answer our question on this?

MR. NESSEN: I think I do, but I just feel that you probably want the most authoritative information and I don't, on a day-to-day basis, keep up on the things about how many delegates the President will win in Connecticut and so forth. I would think you would want to go to the people who have the most authoritative information.

Q Has the President expressed himself recently on how well or badly he thinks he is doing in the past couple of days, what his prospects are?

MR. NESSEN: I think he certainly felt that last week was quite a good week for him. He widened his margin over his opponent and so that was a good week, and he expects to widen it further this week and expects to have the necessary 1,130 delegates committed to him before the Kansas City Convention opens.

Q Who is going to put his name in nomination?

MR. NESSEN: I have not looked that closely at the Convention schedule, Helen. I will, though.

Q Ron, when is the guest list for the State Dinner to be announced for tomorrow night and will you tell if any of the guests are uncommitted delegates or not?

MR. NESSEN: The normal procedure for guest lists being published will be the same for tomorrow night as it always is. It comes out of Sheila's office, it is my understanding, and whatever timetable they normally follow, they will follow tomorrow night.

Q Any White House regular correspondents invited?

MR. NESSEN: I believe there are. I forget exactly who they are. We normally have three or four White House correspondents, or other journalists, attend.

I am not going to put a lunch lid on. I may have a little additional bit of information shortly.

Q How shortly?

MR. NESSEN: Fifteen, 20 minutes.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END

(AT 12:09 P.M.)

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This Copy For _____

NEWS CONFERENCE

#534

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 12:29 P.M. EDT

JULY 14, 1976

WEDNESDAY

MR. NESSEN: Mrs. Ford wanted to surprise the President for his birthday and so she wanted to take him to the Sans Souci for a little private lunch, and they have just departed for the Sans Souci by car for a private lunch. It did come as a surprise to the President.

We arranged for a pool of four people to dine in the restaurant at the same time the President was there -- the two wire services, Bob Fierpoint for the broadcasters and Muriel Dobbins for the writers.

The lunch is expected to take somewhere around an hour and 45 minutes and I believe the President is thinking of walking back, or Mrs. Ford is thinking of inviting him to walk back, and so that will take place somewhere around a quarter of two to two o'clock, somewhere in that area.

Q Is Mrs. Ford going to pay for the lunch?

MR. NESSEN: John tells me that he was over there when the President and Mrs. Ford walked out to the car and he heard the President ask whether this was going to cost him anything. (Laughter)

Mrs. Ford planned this as a surprise treat. She will pay.

Q For the pool, too?

MR. NESSEN: No, I think the pool will have to pay for itself.

Q Is Susan going with them or just the two?

MR. NESSEN: Just the two.

Q This is the first time he has eaten lunch out publicly since he has become President?

MR. NESSEN: I think they did go to Trader Vic's and I think --

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Q That was his predecessor.

MR. NESSEN: -- Sea Catch. I think they ate out at restaurants in Vail somewhat, Dick.

Q Too late, it is already on the wire.
(Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: Then it has got to be true.

Q It is the first time that he has eaten lunch with his wife alone in Washington since he became President in a public restaurant.

MR. NESSEN: They went to dinner at the Sea Catch.

Q Dinner? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: Okay.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

(AT 12:31 P.M. EDT)