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NEWS CONFERENCE

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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 11:40 A.M. EDT

JULY 16, 1976

FRIDAY

MR. NESSEN: I think you know that the President is meeting now with Chancellor Schmidt. It is their second meeting, the final meeting. It began about 11:00 and I would think it would last until noon or perhaps a little later.

They will continue their conversations from yesterday. One of the subjects I feel fairly sure will come up today involves economic developments. The President planned to pass on to the Chancellor the revised economic projections that were issued here at the White House this morning. He asked for a copy of the charts, and so forth, to take with him to that meeting, so that will be one of the subjects.

A more complete read-out on what was discussed at the meeting will be put out here at the White House following the lunch lid; in other words, around 3:00 or 3:30.

For those of you who did go to the briefing on the budget revisions, I passed on there, at the briefing, some of the President's own thoughts about this revision. Dick Lerner, among others, asked me to reduce that to writing so it could be looked at, and I did that in the form of a statement by the Press Secretary. I think we have copies of this ready to hand out after the briefing, if you would like to have those.

The schedule for today you have pretty much seen. There is one slight change. That has to do with the departure time for the press buses which will be going over to Baltimore to cover the reception aboard the German tall ship.

In order that the press buses don't get caught in traffic and perhaps miss the President's arrival, the buses will be leaving a half hour earlier than previously announced, from the Southwest Gate. In other words, at 3:30, the press buses will leave the Southwest Gate instead of 4:00, as we said earlier.

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This will make sure you get through both the Washington and Baltimore rush-hour traffic, get to dockside and set up cameras, and so forth. There is a press area and a camera platform adjacent to the ship at dockside, and there will be this expanded pool which will also go aboard the ship to cover the reception and the President's brief remarks.

There will, of course, be buses bringing you back from the reception.

The President is due back here at about 8:30 p.m. I know there is a forecast of thunderstorms again late this afternoon. If that is the case, the President would motor over instead of taking the helicopter over. That decision will be made late in the afternoon.

For the Hartford trip, I look for a bible by late this afternoon. Just to run through some general times, the press check-in, as I mentioned, is 6:00 a.m., a 6:30 departure for the press plane from Andrews and the press plane arrives at Hartford at 7:30. The President tentatively will be taking off from Andrews at 7:00 a.m. and will be arriving at Bradley International Airport at Hartford at about 8:00 a.m.

The first event will be a Republican breakfast reception at the Hartford Hilton at about 8:30. Then, as I mentioned, he will be in his suite at the hotel and it would not surprise me if he saw some individual delegates there and then will go to the Bushnell Memorial Hall to speak to the actual State Convention around noon. Immediately after the speech, the President will leave and return to the South Lawn at about 2:00.

On the speech text, we are still hopeful of a speech text for Hartford with a 6:00 a.m. embargo on it, and hopefully, to have it reproduced and handed out before the press bus leaves for Baltimore is our plan.

When the President gets back from Hartford tomorrow, I expect him to work in the Oval Office all afternoon without any golf tomorrow, with mostly staff meetings. I think the best way to do this would be that on the way back from Hartford, or some time during the Hartford trip, we could let you know whether there would be any need to come to the White House after the Hartford trip for any coverage activities.

Q During would be better than on the way back.

MR. NESSEN: As soon as I know, I will let you know.

Q Ron, would he not be likely to have some statement on the outcome of the Convention out there in the afternoon? They will be voting in the afternoon, won't they?

MR. NESSEN: I think that is right. That is possible, but I would not think that would be worth sitting around here all afternoon for.

Q Right. (Laughter)

Q We still want it, no matter what.

MR. NESSEN: I know.

I don't have any definite Sunday plans. The President will stay in the White House. There is the possibility of church and there is the possibility of golf, but I won't know about either one of them until tomorrow. But there is certainly the possibility of golf.

Q With whom?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have any foursome yet.

That is it. Those are all the announcements I have today.

Q What was the President's reaction to the Democratic nomination of Jimmy Carter?

MR. NESSEN: It came as a tremendous surprise to the President, as it did to most people. (Laughter)

Q Is that legitimate?

MR. NESSEN: No, that is a joke.

Q Is there any reaction to the acceptance speech?

MR. NESSEN: No, the President was not able to watch it because, as you know, he had the State Dinner for Chancellor Schmidt. Obviously, he read about it in the morning papers and in the news summary.

Q Ron, can you give us any idea of what the impact of Mondale's remarks, which were very sharply aimed at Watergate, might have on the selection of a Vice Presidential running mate for the President?

MR. NESSEN: I really can't help you with much political analysis today, Aldo.

Q He had no comment at all on what the ticket was?

MR. NESSEN: I quoted pretty fully from his phone call to Carter yesterday, which really, I think, tells you a lot about the way he views the race. He talked about having a good contest, and on a high level, devoted to the issues and so forth, so that is a reaction. As the late summer and fall unfolds, you will certainly see more thoroughly what his reaction is.

Q Was he, therefore, disappointed at the raising by Mondale and Carter of such things as the American reaction to the air hostages in Uganda and the mention of Watergate and the pardon? Does he think that was taking the high road?

MR. NESSEN: I am just not in a position to give you any sort of textual analysis for, or reaction to, the speech.

Q He didn't call Mondale?

MR. NESSEN: He did not.

Q Not only did Mr. Rodino and Mr. Mondale mention the pardon, but they were passing around Clark Mollenhoff's book, called, "The Man Who Pardoned Nixon," passing around very freely -- I mean gratis and also liberally -- to everybody. Did it stir up that controversy? Have you any comment on that?

MR. NESSEN: You say "liberally"?

Q I mean they had boxes of them. Is there any reaction to that? Does the President have a reaction?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Has the President read the book?

MR. NESSEN: To my knowledge, he has not.

Q Has he gotten a copy?

MR. NESSEN: I have not seen a copy around anywhere.

Q Ron, did the President authorize Mary Louise Smith and Rog Morton, among others, particularly those two, to take the line that the nomination of Mondale showed as a "liberal" ticket and there is something bad about that? Are they reflecting the President when they take that line?

MR. NESSEN: John, I think the President's own response to this ticket is going to unfold as the campaign goes on, but Mary Louise Smith is the Chairman of the Republican National Committee. She does not need authorization or anything from the President to speak out. Rog is the President's campaign manager, who the President has had faith in and confidence in to lead the campaign and speak for the campaign.

Q Will it unfold tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: In what way?

Q In Hartford, Connecticut?

Q The speech?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. I have not seen the latest draft of the speech. In earlier drafts, there was not any direct reference to the ticket.

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Q Ron, are you saying that the President had no reaction whatsoever that you know of that you could tell us to the selection of Mondale?

MR. NESSEN: I think at least some of his reaction to the Carter selection was in the phone call yesterday, as I reported to you, but I have not heard him speak specifically of a reaction to it.

Q Did you see the President today?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q So, obviously, he does not want to say --

MR. NESSEN: Helen, as I say --

Q -- because you must have asked him the question?

MR. NESSEN: We have lots of time, during which you will hear plenty of his response to this ticket.

Q Ron, yesterday Phil Shabecoff asked you to see if you could bring something for us to get together with the President for a couple minutes. I guess that was not possible?

MR. NESSEN: Right.

Q How about today? Is it also impossible?

MR. NESSEN: I would not anticipate there would be that opportunity today.

Q Did the President have any involvement in the closing down further of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut?

MR. NESSEN: It was discussed here earlier in the week. He discussed it with the various advisers who are involved in that, including Secretaries Kissinger, Rumsfeld and Bush, and Scowcroft. Of course, it was his decision, but the details of it are being worked out at State.

Q Why did he make the decision?

MR. NESSEN: The decision to reduce the Embassy further is really based on the fact that the living conditions in Beirut, or the difficult conditions -- without water, without electricity, fuel growing short, food in difficult supply, and so forth --

Q What is the President doing to try to help solve this war, end it?

MR. NESSEN: He has his Special Representative, Mr. Selye, there ready to help the parties involved to, first of all, stop the fighting and then have the Lebanese parties work out among themselves a solution.

Q Since he says the U.S. policy is against military intervention in any country, has he made any overt protest to Syria?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think I am going to get into a detailed discussion on the Syrian situation today.

Q I mean, either he has or he hasn't.

MR. NESSEN: I think the State Department and I have spoken repeatedly over the weeks and months about the situation. I don't have anything new today.

Q You certainly haven't, and I think the United States seems very silent when the war is going on in the Middle East.

MR. NESSEN: I don't think we have been silent about it, Helen.

Q Ron, is it fair to say, however, that there is no crisis atmosphere, as there was a couple of weeks ago, when there was a partial evacuation?

MR. NESSEN: I think there is a slightly different situation today. I mean, what has happened is that the Embassy has been reduced because of the very difficult living conditions there. As a result, if there are any Americans remaining in Beirut or in Lebanon--and it is not clear how many there are--the object of the newspaper ads and the radio broadcasts is to notify them that the Embassy is being reduced and that the normal services and protection provided to Americans will no longer be available and, therefore, advising them that if there are any Americans, they should take advantage of this organized evacuation.

Q This means a cut-off of direct diplomatic contact with the various parties inside the country?

MR. NESSEN: No, because the Embassy remains open with a very much reduced staff.

Q How many?

MR. NESSEN: I can't give you that number, but I think the State Department could.

So, that is the situation today. The situation during the previous evacuation in July was a relatively large number of Americans remaining in Beirut and a real concern about their security.

Q Ron, in light of the President's strong feelings concerning the Olympic situation, does he consider the decision by the U.S. Olympic team to be capitulation?

MR. NESSEN: I would say two things. One, that there does appear to be at least some improvement or progress in trying to resolve the matter, and that the President is pleased by that.

Secondly, one thought that has been in his mind all week, and I guess I have not relayed it to you perhaps as fully as I should have, is that his full understanding and appreciation of the feelings of the young athletes -- and after all, he saw many of them last week at Plattsburgh -- he understands that this is a once in a lifetime chance for them, that they personally have no involvement in politics, they should not be pawns in a political argument and that this is their once in a lifetime chance for most to compete in Olympic games. They have prepared for this for four years or longer in many cases. He heard and saw that himself last weekend in Plattsburgh, and so he understands the feelings of the athletes.

Q That top Taiwanese team of intellectuals at MIT who have been asked to depart, can you tell us something about that?

MR. NESSEN: I saw it in the paper today, and I have not had a chance to look into it.

Q Ron, I saw an interview this morning with Krumm on one of the morning shows, and he sort of suggested that it was a little ridiculous for a little island out there off the coast of China to call itself the Republic of China. I wonder if the President's reaction to that political conclusion on the part of --

MR. NESSEN: Again, I want to make the point that the United States Olympic Committee is a private organization, unrelated to the Government. The International Olympic Committee is a private organization. Its American members are not related to the Government, and so forth, so the President does not have a direct role in all of this, but I don't think the issue has ever been Taiwan.

The issue has always been, and still is, the principle that the host country does not have the right to dictate political terms or conditions for at least competing and that has always been the issue. The focus obviously is on Taiwan because that is the particular team whose conditions for competing the Canadian Government has attempted to dictate.

The issue has never been whether it is a large island or a small island or a mainland or a peninsula or whatever; the issue is Canada has violated, first of all, its agreement with the International Olympic Committee, and certainly the spirit of the Olympics, which is that politics shouldn't be a consideration for competing and that the host country has no right to determine the eligibility of athletes to compete.

Q But obviously a political decision on the part of the head of the U.S. Olympic Committee played some role in the decision of the U.S. Olympic Committee to participate.

MR. NESSEN: Those who want to cover the departure of Chancellor Schmidt should meet Thym right outside the side door here.

Would you repeat that, Aldo?

Q I said obviously a political decision or a political conclusion on the part of the U.S. Olympic Committee, Mr. Krumm, was a factor in the decision. He this morning in effect said Canada has a point because with right do those few people even have to call themselves the Republic of China?

MR. NESSEN: My understanding is that the International Olympic Committee has stood up for that principle. My understanding at least--and this should not really be taken as authoritative by any means--my understanding of the compromise which has been reached is that the Canadians have fully recognized that they have no right to tell a participating country that it can or cannot fly its flag, can or cannot sing its anthem, can or cannot bring its athletes in from the outside to compete.

Canada has now conceded all those points. I said earlier that there has been apparently some improvement and the President is pleased by that, but it is not fully resolved yet.

Q The President is not disappointed then in the actions of the U.S. Olympic Committee in their public statements?

MR. NESSEN: That is a private organization, Aldo.

Q I understand.

MR. NESSEN: I frankly have not been able to keep up with all the reports of their statements because they have varied from time to time.

Q Ron, what does the President plan to do to make sure there is no repetition four years from now when the games are in Moscow?

MR. NESSEN: Let me say two things. Number one, the Winter Games in 1980 are at Lake Placid, and the President certainly pledges that the United States will not violate the spirit or the contract by attempting to dictate any political requirements for participation in the winter Olympics of 1980, which are in Lake Placid.

As for the summer games that year, which are in Moscow, I would simply say that the President is a very strong believer in the spirit and principle of the Olympics, which is that it should be a competition among athletes without the interference of political factors.

Q Yes, he stated that right along, but I say, does he plan to do anything to insure that in Moscow four years from now that the Russians won't start setting conditions? I mean, is he going to talk to somebody about this, plan something about this, talk to the Russians?

MR. NESSEN: We need to get the Montreal situation worked out first, Dick. I can't give you a specific answer on that at this point.

Q Did any of the players contact the President because you seem to be making a point here or stressing you are trying to tell the athletes themselves that --

MR. NESSEN: He talked to them and saw and felt their mood on Saturday, but Jim Cannon, who has been in touch with the people who are with the team, has relayed to the President this additional dealing of --

Q Which is that they should stay in and play or participate.

MR. NESSEN: That this is their chance, they have trained for it, and looked forward to it, and they should not be made pawns or prevented from participating because of political considerations.

Q Ron, does the President plan to receive the Taiwanese team members at the White House following the games?

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard of any such plans, Russ.

Q But does the President believe that the Taiwan delegation should be allowed to appear in Montreal calling themselves the representatives of China, or whatever they want to call themselves.

MR. NESSEN: I don't think the President ought to get into those specific details at this time when negotiations are still going on in Montreal.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.