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This Copy For _____

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

#513

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 11:00 A.M. EDT

JUNE 18, 1976

FRIDAY

MR. NESSEN: Let Janice Adele pass out these statements. They are self-explanatory, and while she is doing that I will give you whatever other little information I have.

The President had a meeting this morning with his National Security and diplomatic advisors beginning at 8:30, it lasted about an hour. The attendees were the President, Kissinger, Bush, General Brown, Dick Cheney, Jack Marsh, Clements and Scowcroft. The prupose was to review the situation in Lebanon and the plans for the evacuation.

The President has cancelled his trip to Iowa because of the impending evacuation and the situation in Lebanon. Mrs. Ford and Jack Ford will be going in his place.

The only other thing I have to tell you is that the bodies of Ambassador Meloy and Counselor Waring will be arriving at Andrews at 4:20 tomorrow afternoon and the President will go to Andrews to pay his respects. The Cabinet meeting, which is about to begin -- and I think some of you are in the pool to see that -- is a long-scheduled Cabinet meeting unrelated to the situation in Lebanon.

Q Can we go file?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Will it be discussed, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: Let me find out.

Q Will you read the statement?

MR. NESSEN: Due to the continuing uncertainty of the situation in Beirut, the President has directed the United States Embassy there to assist in the departure by overland convoy to Damascus of U.S. citizens who wish to depart Lebanon at this time.

MORE

#513

The convoy is expected to leave Beirut Saturday, and American citizens are being alerted both by the Embassy and by broadcast on the Voice of America to be prepared for departure at that time, if they so wish.

The remains of Ambassador Francis Meloy and Mr. Robert Waring have been brought to Damascus overland. They will be picked up by a U.S. plane and returned to the United States, arriving on Saturday.

Only those Embassy officials not essential to our continuing operations will be leaving Lebanon. The American Embassy in Beirut is to remain open to continue our efforts to help bring an end to the strife which has brought this tragedy to Lebanon.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END

(11:10 A.M. EDT)

June 19

10:20 until 11:12

Kissinger
Scowcroft
General Brown
Marsh
Bush
Clements
Hyland
Cheney

|

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

NSC has just informed me
that Habib was also at the
meeting.

gay

✓ AP

AP audio - John Hewitt

✓ UPI - Helen Thomas (Rev)

✓ UPI audio - Movielee Box

✓ Reuters - Peter Gregson.

✓ ABC - Ann Compton.

✓ CBS - Hal Walder.

✓ NBC - Russ Ward.

✓ LATimes - Paul Haulson.

✓ WA Post - Austin Scott.

✓ NY Times - Dave Bender. 150 NA

✓ Wash Star - Jerry O'Leary.

✓ Forest Boyd.

✓ Phil Lurey.



SATURDAY, JUNE 19, 1976

SIGN UP SHEET (DURING LID PERIODS)

LEBANON DEVELOPMENTS

NAME	PHONE
UPI	393-3430
Paul Houston L.A. Times	532-4329
HELEN THOMAS	232-3838 (add 2-7831)
Ann Compton - ABC	337-1387 OR (212) 580-7100 (NEW YORK DESK)
DICK ROSENBAUM	986-1166
Forest Boyd	949-6195
AP	833-5310
UPI NEWSPICTURES	347-1124
HUGO WESSELS	384-6838
CBS NEWS	457-4444 OR HAL WALKER
ROB ARMSTRONG	893-5547 337-2834
Toby MASSEY - AP Photos	968-7338
NBC - NEWSFILM	686-4200
AUSTIN SCOTT	{ 223-7435
	{ 291-8117
Alan Ryan	322-4819
DAVE BINDER, NYTIMES	213-3100 TIL MIDNITE 652-9056 AFTER
Jerry O'Leary	484-4220-0
Phil. Jurey	836-7043 - home after 1:00 AM
(VOA)	363-8117
Russ WARD	755-4444
John Hewitt	320-4183
A.P. Radio	833-5910
ANN COMPTON	337-1387
Merrilee Cox	333-5430
UPI Audio	333-2514
ART LOOO	627-2113
MURRAY ALVEY	381 3003-Boulby
Frank Tibson	585 7329 (HOME)
PETER GREEN/REUTERS	384-1312 NBC
NBC RADIO (N.Y.)	538-8472 OR 628-9212
MARY DORMAN (NBC RADIO)	212-765-3520
LYNN PETERSON " "	823-9185
NAOMI NOVER	360-6375
	363-6991

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

1:45 am Charles Gibson
N. B. C.
363-7846

Told
to come
over
1:45 am

✓ John Hermit
AP Radio
833-5710

Told
to come
over
1:50 am.

Jin Weighardt T
Asahi Shimbun
Yoshio Murakami >

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

1:30 am

Peter Gregson.

Renters

533-8472

called
1:45 am.
to come
over

1:25 am

Bill Greener

Christopher
Cannell

A. P.

833-5310

called
1:45 am
to come
over

Gerry Shaw - Foreign Desk

Washington Post

223-~~6000~~ 7400

~~3~~

called
1:45 am
to come
over

June 20, 1976

Following sent by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld

FROM: SECDEF

TO: ALL COMMANDS PARTICIPATING IN THE BEIRUT EVACUATION OPERATION

President Ford has asked that his thanks and congratulations be extended for the successful completion of this operation.

I offer my personal appreciation to those members of the U.S. Armed Forces who have participated in the successful evacuation of U.S. and foreign personnel from the city of Beirut.

A high degree of coordination and cooperation have been evident throughout the operation. The mission was successfully accomplished and those available for evacuation appear to have safely reached the U.S.S. Spiegel Grove. Donald Rumsfeld.

BEIRUT EVACUATION

Chronology

20 June 1976

(All times based on preliminary reports)

0123 EDT Execute Message
Dispatched

0230 EDT Speigel Grove arrived 3 miles off Beirut Beach

0310 EDT LCU - 1654 Departed Speigel Grove for Beach

0328 EDT LCU Beached

0333 EDT LCU Ramp Lowered to Embark Evacuees

0356 EDT 105 evacuees on Board LCU. Evacuees are being loaded

0402 EDT 120 evacuees aboard LCU. Attempting to verify evacuees still in hotel..

0407 EDT 176 evacuees on board. LCU loading satisfactorily. No further breakdown available. Reported 2 NBC, 2 UPI, 1 AP reporter(s) on beach among evacuees. Security remains good.

0436 EDT Have been informed that last bus has arrived at embark site. Presently 272 evacuees on LCU.

0442 EDT LCU departed beach

0447 EDT Around 270 evacuees on board LCU verified. Report of no remaining evacuees on beach..

0452 EDT LCU presently 4,400 yards from Speigel Grove and closing.
Medical status of evacuees:

- 1 evacuee with broken arm
- 1 preg woman
- 1 child at breast
- 1 aged
- 2 dogs
- 1 parakeet

0455 EDT Due to swells in the area, debark of evacuees on accommodation ladder not considered safe. Evacuees to be on loaded in well deck. LCU advised by security force (on Beach) that, only evacuees on hand when left, there would be no more evacuees.

0508 EDT LCU was advised by convoy radio that once LCU left beach there would be no more evacuees

0512 EDT LCU entered Speigel Grove well deck.

0543 EDT Speigel Grove released and evacuation operation terminated.

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BEIRUT EVACUATION:
FOLLOW -UP

Q: Now that the Americans and others have left Beirut for Athens are there any plans for further evacuation of American citizens?

A: As you know, we urged all Americans who wished to depart to do so and provided the means for their departure. There are no plans now for further evacuations. Of course we do have an embassy staff in Beirut and should the situation deteriorate to the point where further departures are necessitated, we are prepared to take steps to assist Americans in leaving.

Q: On what basis did the President make his decisions? To what extent did the assassinations of our diplomats contribute to the decision making?

A: The President had to consider a wide range of alternatives in making his decisions on evacuation those who wished to leave. This was not a simple case of getting American citizens out of the country nor was it prompted simply by the tragic deaths of our diplomats; there is a very serious security situation in Beirut. When we decided to join efforts with others who already had or were in the process of departing (French, U.N., British) it was not a question of whether to evacuate but rather how to evacuate given the situation at the time.

The President's choice of the sea route as opposed to the
convoy was based ^{on the situation and} on his determination to contribute to
calming the situation rather than exacerbating it. And I
would remind you that no one was forced to leave; we made
available the means for those who wished to take advantage of
them.

Q: What has been the involvement of the PLO in the evacuation?
And doesn't the President's tacit acknowledgement of the part
they played elevate their status in the eyes of other nations?

A: We received assurances from all the parties that those we
were assisting would be able to depart safely.

(Only IF PRESSED: These assurances were received through
third parties including the Palestinians among others). As to
whether the President's remarks enhance the position of the PLO,
I would say that you have to look at this operation as basically
humanitarian with a dangerous situation on the ground and not
read ~~too much~~ ^{anything} into it beyond that. We appreciate the efforts of
all those who helped in the evacuation.

Q: How many Americans are now in Beirut? In Lebanon?

A: We cannot pin down the exact number of Americans in Lebanon, but
reports in the press that there are 1800 in Beirut are exaggerated.

(If PRESSED) A closer approximation would be 1400 in Lebanon of which perhaps half are in Beirut).

Q: What is our attitude toward the Pan Arab force that is moving toward the airport to restore order?

A: Our position on the Pan Arab force remains as Secretary Kissinger stated last week . I would not want to go beyond that at this time.

FLASH
 ESA286BEA873
 DE RUQMBE #6426 2811658
 Z 191645Z JUL 76
 FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC FLASH 1227

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN FLASH 1725
 AMEMBASSY ATHENS FLASH 7184
 AMEMBASSY CAIRO FLASH 4266
 AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS FLASH 3228
 AMEMBASSY LONDON FLASH 4341
 AMEMBASSY JIDDA FLASH 8826
 AMCONSUL STUTTGART FLASH 438
 USCINCEUR FLASH
 USIA WASHDC FLASH 5612

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE BEIRUT 6426
 STUTTGART FOR ELG
 E.O. 11652: N/A
 TAGS: AMER, LE, US
 SUBJECT: POSTPONEMENT OF BEIRUT EVACUATION: ANNOUNCEMENT AND PRESS
 GUIDANCE

1. WE ARE INSERTING THE FOLLOWING ANNOUNCEMENT IN BEIRUT
 PAPERS APPEARING TOMORROW MORNING: QUOTE CONVOY TO
 DAMASCUS POSTPND, THE LAND CONVOY TO DAMASCUS SCHEDULED
 TO DEPART ON JULY 28 HAS BEEN POSTPONED, A NEW DATE WILL BE
 ANNOUNCED SHORTLY IN THIS NEWSPAPER. UNQUOTE REQUEST THIS ANNOUNCEMEN
 T
 BE PLACED ON VOA AND BBC AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. PHRASE "IN
 THIS NEWSPAPER" SHOULD BE CHANGED TO "ON THIS STATION."

2. WE SUGGEST FOLLOWING PRESS GUIDANCE ON THIS POSTPONEMENT:
 Q. WHY ARE YOU POSTPONING THIS CONVOY?
 A. BECAUSE WE ARE ADVISED THAT THE ROUDE ISNOT TOTALLY
 SECURE.
 Q. WHO ADVISED YOU OF THIS?
 A. THE PARTIES WITH WHOM WE ARE IN CONTACT.
 Q. DOES THIS INCLUDE THE PLO?
 A. IN INCLUDES ALL PARTIES WITH WHOM WE HAVE HAD DIRECT AND

*****WHSR COMMENT*****

SCOWCROFT, HYLAND, LL

PSN:BS8152 RECALLED PAGE 81 TOR:281/17:10Z DTG:191645Z JUL 76

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DECLASSIFIED
 E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4.

MR 94-5, #25, Sub 14, 4/21/94

By lt NARA, Date 4/21/94



INDIRECT CONTACT.

Q. WAS THERE A THREAT?

A. WE ARE NOT AWARE OF ANY THREAT.

Q. WHEN WILL THE CONVOY BE RE-SCHEDULED?

A. WE HOPE TO ANNOUNCE A NEW DATE IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS.

Q. IS THERE ANY CONSIDERATION BEING GIVEN TO OTHER MEANS OF DEPARTURE?

A. NOT AT THIS TIME.

Q. HOW MANY ARE NOW REGISTERED FOR DEPARTURE?

A. AS OF JULY 19, 403 PERSONS HAVE REGISTERED. OF THSE, 143 ARE AMERICANS.

3. SECURITY CONTACT HAS SPECIFICALLY REQUESTED THAT PLO NOT BE IDENTIFIED AS SOURCE OF ADVICE LEADING TO POSTPONEMENT. THEREFORE WE DO NOT PLAN TO BE DRAWN OUT ON QUESTION OF WHO ADVISED US.

SEELYE

BT

RHA *p.2*

74-5
125

74-5
125

RECALLED

PSN:050152

PAGE 02

OF 02

TOR:201/17:10Z

DTG:191645Z JUL 76



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DPC 137

TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS, RADIO AND TELEVISION NEWS BRIEFINGFRIDAY, JULY 23, 1976, 12:58 P.M.

(ON THE RECORD UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED)

MR. BROWN: Good afternoon. I have two announcements.

Available in the office is the statement of Fred C. Ikle, Director of ACDA, before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Mr. Ikle appeared at ten o'clock this morning, and he discussed Senate Bill Number 1439, which would reorganize the export functions of the Federal Government in the civil nuclear field.

Second, James J. Blake is being sworn in this afternoon at 4:30 as Ambassador to Iceland, and we will have his biography available at that time.

Questions?

Q Yes.

A Yes, Jim.

Q In Belgrade the Yugoslavs released Loslo Toth, a Yugoslav-born American, from prison. One, do you have any comment on that?



Two, do you have any comment on the remarks by our Ambassador, Lawrence Silberman, who said he was criticized by the Eastern European section of this Department for his efforts to free Toth. He quotes the Eastern European section as saying, "I was being undiplomatic for pressing the case."

A Jim, I do have something to say on that. I will take your second question first, if I may.

No, it is not true that Ambassador Silberman was reprimanded at all. There was never any question of reprimanding the Ambassador. Ambassador Silberman has done an excellent job in keeping the Toth case before the Government of Yugoslavia and in finally securing the release of Mr. Toth.

Now, I think the main point to bear in mind is that all concerned offices and officers of the State Department have been actively and continuously involved in the efforts of the Government and of the Embassy in Belgrade to secure Mr. Toth's release.

I'll just mention a couple of things. On more than forty separate occasions senior U.S. officials, including Ambassador Silberman, Deputy Secretaries

Ingersoll and Robinson, Counsellor Sonnenfeldt, and Assistant Secretary Hartman, on instructions of Secretary Kissinger, met with Yugoslav officials here in Washington and in Belgrade -- their purpose, to urge a prompt and satisfactory resolution of the case.

I will just also mention that on innumerable additional occasions the Embassy in Belgrade and State representatives here kept the matter before the Yugoslav authorities in the most forceful terms. We have consistently made clear that the highest levels of this Government regard Mr. Toth's case as a serious obstacle to the improvement of U.S.-Yugoslav relations.


Q Fred --

A May I say one more thing, Jim.

Finally, the Secretary has been fully informed of the Toth case and has been concerned and involved in its satisfactory resolution since its inception.

Does that answer your question?

Q Well, you answer a question I didn't ask. I didn't say he was reprimanded, and I don't think he directly said that he was -- quote -- "reprimanded." What he has said was that he was accused of being undiplomatic for pressing the case as hard as he did.



The question is there seems to have been -- although many contacts -- there seems to have been some cross purposes and he was -- to get away from the specific legal term of "reprimand" -- he was criticized by this Department. Is that the case?

A No, that is not accurate at all. That is not accurate.

Q Not criticized? In fact, the Department was pleased with the way he dealt with the matter?

A The characterization of Ambassador Silberman having been criticized by some level or another of the Department is inaccurate.

Q Was there any fault found with the way he went about this?

A No. I think I have described to you how all levels of the Government cooperated and did what was possible under the circumstances to gain Mr. Toth's release. And I think you have to bear in mind that he has been released and he is on his way back to the United States, which is the outcome of our efforts.

Q The immovable object has met the irresistible force. How do you explain the Ambassador -- who has been praised for the way he conducted this case,

which is what I understand that you are doing -- feeling that he was criticized?

A What I am saying is that we feel Ambassador Silberman did a good job in keeping the case before the Yugoslavs and representing very forcefully our position. A lot of other people did too, as I have tried to make plain. I think it would be very inaccurate to say that there was any lack of zeal or lack of interest on the part of the State Department in pushing the Toth case.

Q Will there be any action by the Department at any level taken now against Ambassador Silberman for making statements such as -- quote -- "To these people diplomacy is apparently the passive pursuit of American interests, and I don't accept that"?

A I haven't any idea on that, Jim.

Q-- In other words, that is a possibility -- that there could be disciplinary action taken now because of his public statements?

A I have no knowledge of any kind of disciplinary action.

Q Did he violate any rules, written or otherwise, by going public with this internal dispute?



A I do not know whether there are any written rules on an Ambassador --

Q Unwritten?

A Written or unwritten rules on an Ambassador making a press statement or expressing his point of view.

Q Have the Yugoslav authorities or the Yugoslav press had any comments about Ambassador Silberman's conduct?

A Not that I am aware of.

Q Do you know whether he is a career man?

A No, Ambassador Silberman is not a career Foreign Service Officer.

Q He's a former Deputy Attorney General. What was he, a special Deputy?

A I think he was a Deputy (Attorney General), yes.

Q Was there any internal dispute?

A Internal dispute in what sense, Marvin?

Q Did Silverman say we ought to move a little faster and the Department either ignore him or move slower?

A I am not informed of the give and take over the last year in devising our policy with regard to the Toth case. I really cannot answer that. I do

not know about the question of dispute. Certainly alternatives must have been discussed.

Q Certainly what the Ambassador says then you're not challenging.

A I really do not want to get into challenging or refuting Ambassador Silberman on the nuts and bolts of how the case was handled. I think I have really tried to indicate that a lot of people cooperated in what ultimately has been a successful effort in getting Mr. Toth released, and I think that is the main point we have to bear in mind.

Q Is the Secretary of State among those who consider that Ambassador Silberman has been doing a great job in Yugoslavia?

A I think I have already addressed that.

Q I'm asking whether the Secretary of State personally has said this.

A I do not know what the Secretary of State has said directly to Mr. Silberman, but I do know that the Secretary has supported the efforts to get Mr. Toth released and has been fully informed and directly concerned throughout.



Q No, I mean in this combination which you expressed about the feelings or about Ambassador Silberman's conduct, is the Secretary of State associated personally with this commendation?

A I am sure he feels that the Ambassador did a very competent job in, as I say, keeping the case before the Yugoslavs and pressing it to a successful conclusion.

Q Fred, on another subject?

A Yes, Jim.

Q Can I just finish this one please?

The main object, getting Toth out of jail, is now fulfilled. Does the Department of State plan any further action?

A Action with regard to what?

Q In the case.

A With regard to Toth?

Q Well, in regard to the Yugoslavs who put him in jail.

A Not that I am aware of. I do not know what action it would be possible for the United States Government to take. I do not know of any appropriate action that we could take now that the case has been

appropriately resolved.

Q Why was his detention, when he was under detention, an obstacle to better relations with Yugoslavia -- because he is an American, or is there something specific?

A It is our view that he is an American citizen. Of course, the Yugoslavs did not recognize that fact, and we were not given consular access to him. We felt there were no grounds for his being held. And I think it must be clear if there were forty high level demarches made on this subject, not to mention the numerous other ones during the period of almost a year, this had to be a bone of contention between the two governments, which I think has been now resolved.


Q Has he been held for a year?

A I think it was August '75. Let me check that.

Q Almost a year.

A Yes. August 6 of last year.

Q Just so we can get our definition of terms right, would it be correct to describe these forty high-level contacts as American protests?



A No, I do not think you would categorize all forty as protests. There are many times, as you know, in an Embassy overseas when you go into the host government and make your position clear. Now, that is not a protest. A protest is reserved for very strong language.

Q Were there any protests?

A I do not know whether any of the high level demarches could be properly classified as -- quote -- protests -- unquote.

Q Why is taking a picture of a sugar factory considered espionage?

A That is the interpretation of the authorities in Yugoslavia, and I certainly would not hazard a guess as to why that was considered espionage.

Q Do they have another concept of what he was doing than industrial --

A I have no idea.

Q Did they drop the charge or pardon him or terminate the sentence?

A I understand that they decided he was not a Yugoslav citizen and therefore could be deported. That is my understanding.

Q Where is he now?

A He is on his way back to the United States. I think he gets into New York this afternoon and then goes immediately on to Denver. That is his hometown, Denver.

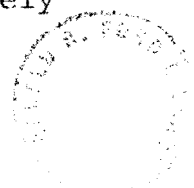
Q When does he actually leave the security of the United States officials in Yugoslavia, when he boards the plane? Or is he under U.S. official association or security until he actually lands in New York, and is a free man.

A You don't mean security; you probably mean protection.

Well, once he is in an airplane traveling over international territory, if he is traveling by an American carrier I presume that it would be considered under American auspices, but I doubt very much that he has any kind of special security once he gets on board that airplane.

Q Do you have any more details on his arrival in New York?

A I do not. I don't have a time. He is arriving in New York this afternoon and goes immediately to Denver. Arrival in Denver at 6:50 -- that must be



Denver time -- in the evening. Yes, it is local time.

Anything more on Mr. Toth?

Q Can we go to the PLO?

Q Can we go to Evans and Novak?

Q That's the same question.

A Yes, who has the --

Q The question, Fred -- in this morning's paper Mr. Evans and Novak, with a great wealth of details, maintain that there is acute concern in the Administration over the possibility that the PLO and its leader, Mr. Arafat, are holding Americans and other foreign nationals as virtual hostages in Beirut. Is there indeed such concern felt in the Administration?

A I went into this in some detail yesterday and gave you our reasons for postponing the evacuation. We are having daily exchanges with all the parties concerned regarding the situation in Lebanon. We are not going to talk about these exchanges or go into any other details until the evacuation is completed. And I would just like to underline that the evacuation will be completed, and until it is over and done with we are simply not going to go into other aspects of it.

(Continued on page B-1)

Q Fred, the question is not about the exchanges, the question is about our appraisal -- the U.S. Government's appraisal -- of what is going on. And with all respect, we are talking about at least the safety and possibly the lives of a considerable number of Americans including officials.

I wonder whether it is proper to refuse all comment on that. It's a serious question.

A I know it is a serious question and I have given you our explanation of the situation.

I am not going to go into speculation or any digression on it. We expect the evacuation to be completed and our paramount aim is to get these Americans who want to depart, out of Beirut safely, and as soon as possible.

And I think it is worth mentioning, also, that this is not only our concern, but the concern of other nations whose citizens are in Beirut, and they share our purpose.

Q The major thrust of the column, or the column certainly underscores how importantly the PLO figures in this rescue effort -- this evacuation effort.

A Yes.



Q So first let me ask you if your daily exchanges involve exchanges with the PLO; and if your response is what it has been until now, how can you not have daily exchanges with the PLO if, indeed, as you see demonstrated in this column again, the PLO is a very direct part of this situation?

A Barry, we are in contact with the various parties who are in Lebanon. I am not going to be specific and I think it has been stated previously, that we have not had contact with the PLO. And I am not going to expand on that.

Q Is that still true?

A It is true. We are engaged in talking to all the parties.

Q But not the PLO?

A I think that has been stated and made very clear before.

Q No -- you just said that today.

A I am saying we are in contact with the various parties that have an interest in the situation there on the ground. We are making our judgments based

on what information we receive from them and we are making decisions with regard to the evacuation on the basis of that information.

And I am not going to expand on that.

Q Fred, don't you think the PLO is on the -- one of the parties on the ground?

A I am not going to go beyond what I have said so far.

Q But you said, "All the parties" and the PLO is a party.

Are you in contact with the PLO through a second party?

A No, I am just going to stick on what I have said, if I may.

Q But Fred, can we be clear about what you have said? I heard you say simply that it has been said before that we have not had contact with the PLO --

A That has been said.

Q We know it has been said. That's true, it has been said.

A Right.



Q But you are reluctant to say now that we have not had any communications with the PLO. Is that where we are?

A No, I am not reluctant at all.

Q Well can you tell us --

A I have said that we are in contact with the parties concerned, and we are not going to go into details on those contacts, or provide any other information until the evacuation is safely carried off.

And I think that is a very understandable position on our part, not to go further on it.

Q But will you answer the question whether there's --

Q -- It is understandable -- but my problem here is that if we are in contact with the parties concerned -- and I think at one point you said "all" the parties concerned although I might stand corrected on that.

And that, ergo, means the PLO.

A I have said we are in contact with the parties concerned.

Q You said, "All parties."

A Well you can say "the parties" or "all parties".

Q You said, "all."

A All right.

Q Which would include --

Q There is no problem later?

A And I am not making that inclusive, or exclusive. Right?

Q But it becomes inclusive. It becomes inclusive.

Q If you say, "All parties," you are talking about the PLO. It becomes inclusive -- there is not -- there is no way, there is just no alternative.

A Let's just leave it the way we originally stated it: that we are in contact with the parties concerned and we are not going to go into any kind of detailed discussion --

Q Excuse me, my notes say, "All the parties concerned."


A Well you can leave your notes that way if you wish.

All right, let's just leave it at that.

Q Could you repeat for us that the United States is not in direct contact with the PLO?

A I can repeat that, yes.*

* See subsequent clarification on final page.



Q You can?

A Yes.

Q Well, fine. So what was the big fuss about, a moment ago?

A All right.

Q "Not in direct contact," is that the word?

A That is correct.

Q Now, can you tell us whether the United States is in "indirect" contact with the PLO?

A Joe, I am not going to go any further than what I have said. All right, let's just leave it at that. We can quibble all day on "all," "exclusive," "inclusive," or what have you?

But I think it is really pretty clear, just to recap:

Daily exchange with the parties concerned.

Not going to talk about these exchanges until the evacuation is successfully completed.

And we intend to go ahead with it at the appropriate time, based on our best judgment of the situation on the ground.

Q Fred, I bet you think that does it. (Laughter)

Well, I have another question: The definition of the PLO, you know, has always been a slippery thing.

A Yes.

Q So let me just make it very simple:

When you say we have not been in contact with the PLO -- we have not been in contact with any element of the PLO? Is that correct?

A Barry, we have gone around and around on this definition of contact, direct, indirect, etc. I really don't want to say anymore on this, today.

Q But I mean, the PLO is an umbrella group --

A Yes.

Q And its membership changes as befitting a particular situation or a strategic need.

A Yes.

Q Or other acts.

A Yes.

Q When you say you are not in contact with the PLO, are you not in contact with any part of the organization that calls itself the Palestine Liberation Organization?

A Barry, you know, I would just really like to leave it the way we have it.

Q There is some dispute over whether George Habash is in the PLO right now, or not.

A Yes.

I really cannot get into a dissection of the various Palestinian organizations.

Q Oh, I don't want you to. But will you rule out any contact with any PLO element?

A I think we have ruled that out. So let's just leave it at that. O.K.?

Q Is the PLO acquiescence a prerequisite for safe evacuation of Americans from Lebanon?

A I am not going to go beyond what I have said on this.

Q Indirect acquiescence ?

A I am not going to go any further than what I have said on this.

Q Fred, do you think that the PLO has an interest on the ground?

A I'm sorry, Francois, would you say that again?

Q Do you think the PLO has an interest on the ground?

A I am not going to characterize the attitudes or interests of the PLO.

Q How about Evans and Novak now?

A O.K., Marvin?

Q Are you hopeful for an evacuation imminently?

A I have no indication that it is absolutely imminent. As I say, this is a question for the Embassy to evaluate, and I have no indication that it is "imminent" if by that you mean in the next twelve or twenty-four hours.

Q Would you say the three major methods of evacuation are still under consideration -- meaning ground, air and sea -- and giving about equal due at this point -- equal consideration?

A At the moment, our planning is still based on the idea of the land convoy, Barry.

We are not going to rule out other alternatives should they prove more practical. But again, this is a judgment call by the Embassy in Beirut.

Q Yes.

Q If we are finished with that, I have one more question about the Toth affair.

A O.K.

Q You said that there had been high level contacts and that there had been high level support for the efforts to release him.

A Yes.

A Ambassador Silberman agrees that this is the

case, according to the accounts from there.

What he says, and you haven't addressed here, is that the middle level of the State Department bureaucracy, specifically the East European Desk, in fact opposed his efforts and -- to use your earlier word -- "Asked Kissinger to reprimand him for his insistent efforts."

Is that true?

A That is not true.

Q Fred, do you have anything to say about the provisional government that has been established by Mr. Jumblatt, in Beirut, or in Lebanon?

A No, I really do not have anything to say about that.

Q How many people have signed up for the convoy of all nationalities?

A I was asked that question yesterday, and I was told that the number we gave for the July 20 evacuation is still the number we are carrying. I do not have the number with me, but it was posted yesterday.

Do you have that, Barry?

Q Yes, it was, and it stated that it stayed the same.

A It stayed the same because we have not taken

another nose count.

Now if the evacuation were to take place, for instance, the day after tomorrow, there would be another nose count and update. But we are not subtracting and adding, hour-by-hour, Jerry.

Yes.

Q Fred, would you say that with each day that passes and the U.S. is unable to effect an evacuation from Beirut, that there would be heightened concern in this building about the U.S. capacity to do so?

A No, I do not think I could say that, Marvin.

I think our concern is already very high, and I wouldn't put a time factor on it. Our concern is already very strong.

Q Are there any U.S. Naval vessels in the waters close to the Lebanese seaports, that might be used for the evacuation?

A The Sixth Fleet, as you know, has traditionally, in a situation like this, been within call. Whether it is within 50 miles or 500 miles, I could not say. But I feel sure that they are in an appropriate position, Joe.

I cannot give you -- we do not reveal the precise

location, obviously, of the Fleet. But it is there.

Q What comes to my mind is whether or not the preparation for sea evacuation may be a factor in the delay because of the land group being bargained with through the PLO -- which is not satisfactory --

A I am not going to speculate on that.
That is your idea.

Q Fred.

A Yes.

Q The United States, earlier, had a stated position against the partition of Lebanon as a solution to the civil war there? Does that position still hold?

A I would like to repeat what we have said before, in answer to your question -- that the United States is opposed to the partition in Lebanon. So the answer to that is: Yes.

Our aim remains a political accommodation among the parties which will sustain a solution, maintaining the territorial integrity, political independence, national sovereignty and unity of the country of Lebanon.

Q Were you asked yesterday about this number two man in the PLO?

A Yes, I was, Marvin.

Q O.K. Thank you.

A François has one more question.

Q Fred, do you have any comment to make on the two French nuclear tests which took place last month on the 10th of July and 22nd of July? It has just been announced.

A I have not seen the announcement, François. Did that come out this morning?

Q It came out -- yes. Yes.

A I do not have any comment to make at this time.

Q Do you think you might have something?

A Let me look into it, o.k.?

I was not aware of it.

Q-- Thank you.

A Thank you.

[The proceedings ended at 1:25 p.m.]

*ADDENDUM TO THE RECORD GIVEN TO JOURNALISTS IN THE PRESS ROOM FOLLOWING THE BRIEFING:

"To clarify for you our position on the security situation in Beirut, it is recognized that the Palestinians are an important element in maintaining security in West Beirut. Therefore, any arrangements relating to security necessarily involves them." That is the way you should interpret what I have said."

In answer to further questions about possible contacts with the PLO, the Spokesman said: "If what you are getting at is whether our policy toward the PLO has changed, the answer is no."

JULY 24, 1976

Office of the White House Press Secretary

NOTICE TO THE PRESS

This is to inform you that the reduction of the Embassy in Beirut and the evacuation of Americans, which the President ordered last week, will be carried out by sea on Tuesday. The following announcement is being made in Beirut tonight.

#

Beirut =

GF will come to
NSC office at 2 am.
When actual
evacuation is supposed to
begin.



[7/26/76?]

Bernt -

Carl Greener

GF not sit up.

Notified if anything goes
wrong.

Waked with near ab
success.

- o -



+

EVACUATION

Q: Why did you abandon the road convoy for a sea departure?

A: On the basis of our exchanges with the parties involved in maintaining security for an evacuation, it was decided that departure by sea is the safest way to do it.

Q: By "all the parties involved" do you mean to include the PLO?

State discussed this issue at some length on Friday.

A: ~~Yes. This includes contact with the PLO at the local level of our mission in Beirut. I see no reason to go through it all again. Contacts were made only to insure that these have been contacts at the local security level, as a very practical matter.~~
adequate security arrangements for the evacuation prevail.

Q: Does this indicate a change of policy toward the PLO?

A: No.

Q: Does this mean that the President or Secretary Kissinger have been in direct or indirect contact with Arafat on the evacuation?

A: No they have not.

Q: But private persons and convoys go to Damascus every day by road safely. Why couldn't you?

A: The security arrangements for a large number are necessarily more difficult to assure than for a single car or small convoy.

The parties responsible for security advised us that the road ~~way~~ ^{way} not ~~be~~ secure, and the safest way to go ~~is~~ ^{would be} by sea.

Q: Will Ambassador Seelye be coming out?

A: That has not been decided, ~~He probably will~~

Q: How many will be coming out?

A: We will not know exactly how many until the registration is complete, but ~~rough~~ ^{from registration last week} figures indicate that about four to five hundred are expected to depart, and of that total approximately 160 will be Americans.

Q: How many were evacuated in June?

A: A total of 279 were evacuated, and of that 116 all Americans.

[Refer to State any further questions on details of the 20 June evacuation.]

Q: Will you still reduce the Embassy staff? To what level?

A: Yes, the Embassy will be reduced to a minimal level of about 15 Americans. ~~(42 now)~~

- Q: Things are looking better in Lebanon -- the emplacement of the Arab League force and some hopeful indications from the Syrian-Palestinian meeting -- why are we pressing for evacuation now?
- A: Because of the increasingly difficult living conditions, ~~it~~ it is necessary ~~to~~ ^{absolute} to reduce the size of our Embassy to ~~what is~~ minimum levels. ~~actually needed to function in current circumstances.~~ ^{With} ~~this reduced Embassy staff we have asked~~ ~~have an obligation to assist private American citizens who~~ ~~the private American citizens in Beirut to also evacuate.~~ ~~also want to leave, to the extent possible.~~ We contemplate no such further organized departures and are therefore urging all private Americans to take advantage of this opportunity to depart under U.S. Government auspices.
- Q: Does this mean you expect the situation to take a turn for the worse?
- ^{as I have said, our decision is based on the very difficult living conditions in Beirut and the}
- A: Not necessarily but we judge it prudent in light of the unpredictability and difficulties of living in West Beirut to evacuate as many Americans as possible now. ^{Consequent necessity to reduce our Embassy to minimum levels.}
- Q: You evacuated in June and now again in July; can we expect another in August?
- A: No.

Q: Did the PLO approve this evacuation? Have they guaranteed safe passage?

A: We have continued to have daily exchanges with ^{the} various parties involved ~~including the Palestinians~~ in order to facilitate the departure of Americans and other foreigners. ~~On the basis of these exchanges we have decided on departure by sea.~~ We are pleased that all parties have extended their full cooperation ^{including assurances, is similar} to facilitate this departure. The situation ^{is almost identical to} ~~to~~ the June evacuation, ~~including the issuance of assurances of safe evacuation.~~

Q: What will you do about the remaining people in the Embassy should the security situation become acute?

A: We do not anticipate such a situation arising and I do not want to speculate on a hypothetical case.

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 3:12 A.M. EDT

JULY 27, 1976

TUESDAY

MR. NESSEN: The evacuation has been completed successfully. Let me backtrack from there and go to the beginning and work my way up to the present.

The President came over to Brent Scowcroft's National Security Council office at about 1:25 a.m. He was dressed in a blue suit and white sport shirt. He had taken a nap -- beginning about 10:30 -- for about two hours or so.

Shortly after he arrived there, Don Rumsfeld phoned and brought him up to date. At that point the ship had just about reached the beach. The President spent the entire period of time monitoring the evacuation from Brent's office. With him, in addition to Brent, was Dick Cheney, Jack Marsh, William Hyland, and myself.

The monitoring took the form of talking directly to Don Rumsfeld at the Pentagon, the President talking directly to Don and in some cases Brent Scowcroft talking to Don and relaying the messages to the President.

At approximately 2:25 Brent received a phone call and relayed out loud to the people in his office the message, which was, "Everyone is on board." Then, about five to seven minutes later there was another call which Brent took and out loud repeated, "They have cleared the beach." They have cleared the beach meant that the landing craft with the evacuees on it had pulled away from the beach. About 15 or 20 minutes later the landing craft reached the mother ship off-shore, the CORONADO, safely.

O What time was that?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have an exact time on that but it was about a half hour or so later.

The President then placed two phone calls, one to Phil Habib, who was the head of the task force at the State Department that was following the evacuation, and a second call to Don Rumsfeld at the Pentagon.

MORE

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The President congratulated both men and both groups and said to Don, "It went smoothly. There were no incidents." The President left the NSC office at about 2:45, stopped in the Oval Office for about five minutes and then went home.

The number of people taken off was approximately 300, including American citizens. I can't be any more precise as to the exact number of people or the exact number of American citizens. We won't be able to nail that down tonight.

The President is pleased that the evacuation was carried out successfully. The President wants to congratulate the officers and men of the Sixth Fleet and the members of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut for having arranged a safe and orderly evacuation of American and other foreign nationals.

The President also wants to express his gratitude and sincere thanks to all others who gave their cooperation to facilitate this departure.

Q Does that include the PLO?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Was the number of Embassy personnel unchanged?

MR. NESSEN: I think I said 28 this morning. It actually was 27.

Q That would leave about how many?

MR. NESSEN: About 15 there.

Q 27 evacuees?

MR. NESSEN: That includes the Ambassador.

Q Ron, was there any kind of military activity, any kind of shooting or anything?

MR. NESSEN: No. As the President said, it went smoothly. There were no incidents. There was just literally no incidents at all.

Q They are on their way to Athens now?

MR. NESSEN: That is correct, yes.

Q When are they expected to arrive?

MR. NESSEN: If I remember, the last time it was about 40 hours.

Q Is this the last evacuation?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, it is.

Q Do you know whether there were women and children involved?

MR. NESSEN: I just don't have a breakdown. I know that the total number is approximately 300, of which 30 are press, but that is the only breakdown I have.

Q American press?

MR. NESSEN: Mostly American, yes.

Q Did the Ambassador come out?

MR. NESSEN: Ambassador Seelye came out, that is correct.

Q He did?

Q He came out?

MR. NESSEN: Yes. He came out for consultations.

Q Is he flying back to Washington?

MR. NESSEN: He will, yes.

Q What is his first name?

MR. NESSEN: Talcott.

Q Is his correct title Ambassador?

MR. NESSEN: He is the President's Special Representative but he has the title of Ambassador.

Q And he is coming back?

MR. NESSEN: He will be coming here to Washington for consultations.

Q Do you know when he will arrive here?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have the exact time.

Q Will the Ambassador go back?

MR. NESSEN: It is a little premature to say whether he will go back. We will have to wait and see.

Q Who is the man in charge then?

MR. NESSEN: The Deputy Chief of Mission, whose name I don't have.

O What is the name of the Deputy?

MR. NESSEN: We will check to see if Brent is still there and we will get the name.

O There is nobody at the Embassy --

MR. NESSEN: No, there are 15 or so people still there to maintain an American presence and perform the minimal functions of an Embassy.

Q What is the estimate of Americans left?

MR. NESSEN: It is impossible to say because of the confused situation.

Just to give you a little background on that, those Americans who live in the Christian areas, if they had wanted to get out, there is a ferry that runs three times a week, for instance, to Cyprus, and there is no way of telling how many left that way.

Individual cars have been getting through to Damascus, so there is no way to tell how many have gone out that way. The number of Americans has been reduced down from, I think, 40,000 at the height to those Americans who are left, many of them are Lebanese-Americans who have more ties to Lebanon than they do to America.

O It sounds like this place is going to blow up.

MR. NESSEN: Well --

Q It is going to get worse. This is a massive withdrawal.

MR. NESSEN: We don't have any information to indicate anything other than what has already been going on. The evacuation, as you know, resulted from the fact that the living conditions there have deteriorated in terms of no electricity, water, shortage of food, shortage of fuel and the living conditions really made it too difficult to maintain an Embassy of the size that we did before.

So, the decision was made to reduce the Embassy to a minimum because of the difficult living conditions. Once that decision was made, then Americans living there were notified that they would no longer have full Embassy services and protection, and that is why the evacuation was urged.

Q Why are all the newsmen going then?

MR. NESSEN: You will have to ask them.

Q Do you know whether there are any American newsmen left there?

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

Q You are indicating that Ambassador Seelye will not return?

MR. NESSEN: It is just premature to make a decision on that. We will have to wait and see.

Q Did the American Embassy advise newsmen to get out?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think they singled out newsmen, Charlie. I think newsmen were covered by the same advice that was published and broadcast to all Americans who were left there.

Q Where was Kissinger waiting to be advised of this?

MR. NESSEN: I think he was probably at home being kept advised at home, as far as I know.

Q Ron, what kind of protection is now being offered to any Americans left in Beirut?

MR. NESSEN: There is just a minimal Embassy staff and minimal Embassy services and protection available. As the announcement of the evacuation said, the staff has been reduced to a level and the conditions are such that the Embassy cannot guarantee protection for Americans, legal or otherwise.

Q Didn't the announcement also say this was the last evacuation?

MR. NESSEN: It is the last organized evacuation, that is correct.

Q What cooperation did the PLO give to the evacuation?

MR. NESSEN: All the parties that are involved gave their assurances of a safe departure.

Q Is there any additional leverage being used?

MR. NESSEN: Not to my knowledge, it isn't.

Q Did you have any guards?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have a precise description of the area around there.

Q Is this the first news that this thing was successful or is the Pentagon announcing it?

MR. NESSEN: Bill Greener said he was leaving his office to walk to his briefing room at the same time I walked down here to my briefing room. I think Bill will have more of the military details whereas I have more of the Presidential view.

The American charge'at the Embassy in Beirut is Leamon Hunt, and he would be the senior American official remaining in Beirut.

Q If the group of Americans fled from the Embassy, wouldn't there be some attempt to help them get out?

MR. NESSEN: That is correct.

Q There would be some attempt?

MR. NESSEN: There are no further plans for any organized evacuation. That was made clear in the announcement, in the broadcast.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END (AT 3:25 A.M. EDT)

22 July 1976

MELOY MURDER

Q: There are reports that Yasir Arafat's right-hand man was responsible for the murders of Ambassador Meloy, Mr. Waring and the driver. Do you have any information on these reports?

A: We have seen the news item but have nothing that would confirm that report.

Q: What is being done to find the murderers of Meloy and the two others?
~~Ambassador Meloy and Mr. Waring~~

A: We are committed to pursuing action to bring to justice the murderers of Meloy and the others. We are acting in a number of ways, and it would not help to discuss in public the steps we are taking or the information which we may receive. But you may be assured that we are not going to let the matter rest.

BACKGROUND ONLY (Not for public release); There was a similar report three weeks ago, ~~xxxxxxx~~ which was also unsubstantiated. We feel there is nothing to this report either.)

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 3:30 P.M. EDT

JUNE 18, 1976

FRIDAY

MR. NESSEN: I don't really have very much. I just wanted to keep you posted on where we stand. The only thing new that I have is that at 7:00 p.m. the President will meet pretty much the same group he has been meeting with -- Kissinger, Bush, Brown, Scowcroft -- to have a final review of the evacuation plans. Other than that, the President has been in the office all day doing paperwork and meeting with members of the staff.

Q Does the call to the Iowa Republican dinner come before or after that meeting?

MR. NESSEN: I don't even know if there is going to be a call, Walt.

Q Well, we were led to believe this morning that perhaps there will be a call. Is it now not going to happen?

MR. NESSEN: Who led you to believe that?

Q That was my understanding of what you have said.

Q What is the likelihood of that?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have any feeling for it one way or the other, Phil.

Q Ron, it is our understanding, I think it has been on the wire, that exactly 30 of the 1400 and some odd Americans and U.S. dependents have signed up for this convoy out and there also were comments from Americans there that Washington seems much more concerned about the situation in Lebanon than the Americans in Beirut do, which raises the question of what kind of reports the President is getting from there. How serious is the situation, or is it perhaps overreacting?

MORE

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MR. NESSEN: I saw a UPI story that indicated that well over 100 people had signed up and that the number was increasing all the time and that the phones were tied up with people calling for information.

Q What is your information?

MR. NESSEN: I have not checked the NSC cable for a while. I don't know what the number is.

Q In terms of the evacuation, no troops are going in at all and it is all being kind of British security all the way through, is that it?

MR. NESSEN: First of all, let me say there is no anticipation of any American troops being involved, but as for the exact details of the evacuation, I am not going to be able to give them to you, for obvious reasons.

Q Ron, the State Department announced this morning that they had received a guarantee of safe conduct and the Associated Press followed that question up by asking who was the safe conduct guaranteed from; in other words, who provided it, and at that point they said we were not going to say.

I am wondering, do you have any idea why the State Department would announce that we are getting a safe conduct and then not say who is providing it so that it illustrates what is safe? Are we dealing with the PLO or not?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't see that the State Department had said anything like that.

Q I can guarantee -- I just came from there.

MR. NESSEN: For obvious reasons, in a very delicate situation like this, I am not going to spell out details of the evacuation.

Q How about Les' direct question? Are we dealing with the PLO?

MR. NESSEN: I think I have said all along through this that there is no direct contact with the PLO.

Q Could I ask, if there is no plan to use American forces for the evaluation of American military forces, why the President feels it necessary to stay here in the White House and watch this evacuation being conducted by -- or even if it is a relatively small evacuation of 150 people with no American troops, why it is necessary for him to watch-dog this thing this closely?

MR. NESSEN: He needs to oversee the preparations for the evacuation and follow the developments as they occur.

Q Ron, maybe a direct question. Many of these questions are suggesting that this thing may be trumped up domestically, at least. What is your reaction to those suggestions?

MR. NESSEN: Phil, that question is so far from anything that compares to the reality of the situation that I don't intend to dignify it with an answer.

Q Nine days ago, Ron, the American Foreign Service Association wrote a letter to the President representing 9,000 Foreign Service protesting his entertainment of Numayri of Sudan, who had released the killers of Ambassador Noel.

Dr. Kissinger has not even answered the letter. Is the President going to answer the letter at all?

MR. NESSEN: I am sure the letter will be answered, Les.

Q It will?

MR. NESSEN: Those people you speak of, the question was raised here the other day, and I indicated then that they were in jail in Cairo or somewhere in Egypt.

Q Ron, I am glad you brought that up because the State Department admitted this morning that no one from the State Department that Mr. Funseth has ever heard of has been in Egypt in the place where they are allegedly detained. No one has any guarantee that they are not on a Mediterranean villa or in a hotel or anything and the State Department -- 9,000 of them -- their Board of Governors said that we have no guarantee that they will even serve out the seven-year sentences.

Now, what about that? Do you have any other information on that? Does the President know that these people are in jail that murdered Noel?

MR. NESSEN: The letter has arrived from the association representing the employees of the State Department.

Q He will answer it?

MR. NESSEN: The letter will be answered, and to the best of my knowledge the people you speak of are detained in Egypt.

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Q Ron, could we get back to the number of people being evacuated? When you last saw cables, was a figure indicated? Do you have no information on the number being --

MR. NESSEN: I saw a UPI story, as I said, a short while ago.

Q I am talking about NSC figures or figures from the American Embassy in Beirut.

MR. NESSEN: I have not seen a figure.

Q So, it might not even be a dozen, then?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know exactly what the issue is.

Q What is the President being told about this?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what he is being told about the number signing up, Fran.

Q Ron, is the United States Government planning to charter special planes to bring these people to Athens and further?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what the plans are once they reach Damascus. I will check for you.

Q Is Rumsfeld going to come back any earlier than --

MR. NESSEN: I don't have any indication that he has changed his plans?

Q Ron, was President Ford told about what the wires were reporting about the convoy carrying the two bodies being caught in cross-fire?

MR. NESSEN: I checked into that report. The only thing that even vaguely resembles anything like that report is that there was some fighting off in the distance nowhere near the convoy.

Q This does not worry the President for the particular safety of any of the Americans trying to go out by convoy route?

MR. NESSEN: That is right.

Q Why don't you check that report?

MR. NESSEN: I have checked that report with the NSC.

Q Can't the NSC tell you how many people have signed up for the evacuation tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: They certainly can, but I didn't ask them. I didn't know it was an issue.

Q How about asking?

MR. NESSEN: I will ask.

Q Ron, Jim Baker was at the Cabinet meeting this morning and escorted the Secretary to wherever he was going. My question is, did Baker report on the delegate hunting at the Cabinet meeting?

MR. NESSEN: There were a number of things discussed at the Cabinet meeting, Phil.

Q Was that one of them?

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to say anything more about the Cabinet meeting.

Q Why? Is this an open Administration or not?

Q Was politics discussed?

MR. NESSEN: There were a number of things discussed, Fran.

Q Larry reported that Kissinger reported on the Mideast situation. Now, why can't you tell us if Baker reported on the delegate situation?

MR. NESSEN: I am just going to say there were a number of other matters discussed, including legislative proposals.

Q Why did the President decide it was necessary to have another meeting this evening? Could you be more specific?

MR. NESSEN: To review the final evacuation plans, Walt.

Q Can you be more specific than that?

Q You said make decisions.

MR. NESSEN: I don't recall that I said make decisions. If there are any decisions needed, he will certainly make them.

Q Will General Brown be at the meeting tonight?

MR. NESSEN: I anticipate that he will.

Q But still no American troops are involved?

MR. NESSEN: There is no anticipation that there will be.

Q Why does Brown keep coming to these meetings?
(Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: What was that? What was the question-- I mean the answer?

Q The reference to the Duke University appearance.

MR. NESSEN: I see.

Well, you know that the Sixth Fleet has been off the coast there for a long time, I forget how long, but in case they were needed in any way in an evacuation. There are no plans for them.

Q Ron, is something happening over there of such a gravity as to necessitate or require this many meetings of the President's national security advisers? I mean, we don't know very much, so I have to ask a stupid question like that. Is something happening over there of such gravity that the President has to meet with his national security advisers twice a day?

MR. NESSEN: A very delicate evacuation of Americans who want to leave is being organized, Walt.

Q Is something happening over there of such gravity that the President is required to meet this frequently with his national security advisers?

MR. NESSEN: I am telling you that a very delicate evacuation of Americans who want to leave Lebanon is being arranged, Walt, and obviously the President is having what meetings he needs to oversee that process.

Q What meeting is this now, the fourth, the fifth?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. Let Larry give you what meetings we have had.

Q Ron, if you look back over reports on Cabinet meetings since you have been Press Secretary and since Mr. Ford has been President, you will find there have been some rather detailed reports on what was discussed at Cabinet meetings.

MR. NESSEN: That is correct.

Q Why have you decided not to tell us whether or not they discussed the delegate count?

MR. NESSEN: I did tell you about the Kissinger report, and I mentioned that there were some legislative proposals discussed and other matters, and I would like to leave it at that.

Q Are you ashamed of any political talk that happens in the Cabinet?

MR. NESSEN: I am not ashamed of anything, Ann.

Q What about his plans for tomorrow now?

MR. NESSEN: We will put out a schedule before the end of the day.

Q Will you get us those NSC cable figures on the number of evacuees as soon as possible?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, I will see what the status of that is.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

(AT 3:43 P.M. EDT)