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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Presidential statements on the
Warren Commission

Press Conferences

#12 - April 3, 1975

#13 - May 6, 1975

#26 - November 26, 1976

Also Remarks of the President
at Love Field in Dallas, Texas
on September 13, 1975



of the
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

12:01 P.M. PDT
April 3, 1975
Thursday

In the Silver Room
At the San Diego Convention
and Performing Arts Center
San Diego, California

THE PRESIDENT: Will you please sit down.

At the outset, let me express my appreciation to Mayor Pete Wilson and the fine people of San Diego for the very warm welcome.

I also am delighted to see one or more of my former colleagues in the Congress here. It is always nice to see them and all others who may be here. Good morning.

I have a short opening statement.

We are seeing a great human tragedy as untold numbers of Vietnamese flee the North Vietnamese onslaught. The United States has been doing -- and will continue to do -- its utmost to assist these people.

I have directed that all available Naval ships to stand off Indochina, to do whatever is necessary to assist. We have appealed to the United Nations to use its moral influence to permit these innocent people to leave, and we call on North Vietnam to permit the movement of refugees to the area of their choice.

While I have been in California, I have been spending many hours on the refugee problem and our humanitarian efforts. I have directed that money from a \$2 million special foreign aid children's fund be made available to fly 2000 South Vietnamese orphans to the United States as soon as possible.

I have also directed American officials in Saigon to act immediately to cut red tape and other bureaucratic obstacles preventing these children from coming to the United States.

MORE



QUESTION: Mr. President, in light of current concerns regarding the assassination of President Kennedy and the recent showings of the Zapruder films, do you still have the same confidence in the finding of the Warren Commission that you had as a Member of that Commission?

THE PRESIDENT: I think you have to read very carefully what the Warren Commission said. And I, as a member of the Warren Commission, helped to participate in the drafting of the language. We said that Lee Harvey Oswald was the assassin. We said that the Commission had found no evidence of a conspiracy, foreign or domestic.

Those words were very carefully drafted. And so far, I have seen no evidence that would dispute the conclusions to which we came.

We were most careful because in 1963 and 1964, when we most carefully analyzed all the evidence available, there was none of the involvement of anybody or anybody as a group, in the assassination.

It is my understanding that the Rockefeller Commission may, if the facts seem to justify it, take a look at it, at the problem, and I suspect that the House and Senate committees that are currently investigating CIA history may do the same.

But the Commission was right when it made its determination and it was accurate, at least to this point -- I want to re-emphasize that -- as to the evidence that we saw.

QUESTION: Mr. President, some people are saying this week that despite all our massive aid in Vietnam and all the lives that were lost there, that the whole thing has come to nothing.

Now, how do you feel about this, and do you think there is any lesson to be learned in what has been happening over there?

THE PRESIDENT: I believe that the program of the previous four or five Presidents -- President Kennedy, President Johnson, President Nixon, and myself.-- were aimed at the -- in the right direction, that we should help those people who are willing to fight for freedom for themselves.

That was a sound policy. Unfortunately, events that were beyond our control as a country have made it appear that that policy was wrong. I still believe that policy was right if the United States had carried it out as we promised to do at the time of the Paris peace accords where we promised, with the signing of the Paris peace accords, that we would make military hardware available to the South Vietnamese government on a replacement, one-for-one basis. Unfortunately, we did not carry out that promise.

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PRESS CONFERENCE NO. 13

of the

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

7:31 P.M. EDT
May 6, 1975
Tuesday

In Room 450
In the Old Executive
Office Building
Washington, D.C.

THE PRESIDENT: Will you please sit down.
Good evening.

Miss Thomas?

QUESTION: What are the lessons of Vietnam in terms of the Presidency, the Congress and the American people in terms of secret diplomacy and fighting a land war in Asia, and also, would you welcome a Congressional inquiry into how we got in and how we got out of Vietnam?

THE PRESIDENT: Miss Thomas, the war in Vietnam is over. It was sad and tragic in many respects. I think it would be unfortunate for us to rehash allegations as to individuals that might be to blame or Administrations that might be at fault.

It seems to me that it is over. We ought to look ahead, and I think a Congressional inquiry at this time would only be divisive and not helpful.

QUESTION: Mr. President, may I ask you, then, don't you think we can learn from the past?

THE PRESIDENT: Miss Thomas, I think the lessons of the past in Vietnam have already been learned, learned by Presidents, learned by Congress, learned by the American people, and we should have our focus on the future. As far as I am concerned, that is where we will concentrate.

Miss Lewine?

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QUESTION: Mr. President, I would very much like to follow that up. Is your job going to be complicated by what happened in Southeast Asia? You have gone out of your way in the past week or two to say the United States will honor its foreign commitments. What sort of private feedback are you getting in foreign capitals? Is there a lack of confidence now? A loss of confidence in the United States?

THE PRESIDENT: We do get reactions from foreign governments wondering what our position will be, asking where we will go and what our policy will be. We have indicated to our friends that we will maintain our commitments. We understand the perception that some countries may have as a result of the setback in South Vietnam. But that perception is not a reality because the United States is strong militarily.

The United States is strong economically, despite our current problems, and we are going to maintain our leadership on a worldwide basis, and we want our friends to know that we will stand by them and we want any potential adversaries to know that we will stand up to them.

QUESTION: Mr. President, there have been persistent reports here in Washington that the Rockefeller Commission is looking into reports that somehow or the other, discussions of the assassination of Fidel Castro may have somehow triggered the assassination of John Kennedy. Can you tell us is there any connection between those two events?

THE PRESIDENT: I cannot give you the inside information on the Rockefeller Commission because I established it for the purpose of investigating the CIA and making any recommendations concerning it. It is my understanding that they are taking a very broad look. Until I get their report, I think it would be premature for me to make any comment as to precisely where they are going with their investigation.

Now, as a former member of the Warren Commission, a commission that I think did a good job, we found as a Warren Commission, no connection of anything between Cuba and the United States. We found no evidence of a conspiracy, foreign or domestic.

QUESTION: Mr. President, after eight years of a Republican in the White House, there probably will be a lot of people who next year will say it is time for a change. Now what accomplishments can you cite to rebut the argument that there should be such a change?

MORE



PRESS CONFERENCE NO. 23

of the

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

7:30 P.M. EST
November 26, 1975
Wednesday

In the East Room
At the White House

THE PRESIDENT: Will you sit down, please.

Good evening. Before we go to questions, I would like to comment briefly on recent developments in New York. Since early this year and particularly in the last few weeks the leaders of New York State and of New York City have been working to overcome the financial difficulties of the City which as a result of many years of unsound fiscal practices, unbalanced budgets and increased borrowing, threatening to bring about municipal bankruptcy of an unprecedented magnitude.

As you know, I have been steadfastly opposed to any Federal help for New York City which would permit them to avoid responsibility for managing their own affairs. I will not allow the taxpayers of other States and cities to pay the price of New York's past political errors. It is important to all of us that the fiscal integrity of New York City be restored and that the personal security of 8 million Americans in New York City be fully assured.

It has always been my hope that the leaders of New York, when the chips were down, face up to their responsibilities and take the tough decisions that the facts of the situation require. That is still my hope and I must say that it is much, much closer to reality today than it was last Spring.

I have, quite frankly, been surprised that they have come as far as they have. I doubted that they would act unless ordered to do so by a Federal Court. Only in the last month after I made it clear that New York would have to solve its fundamental financial problems without the help of the Federal taxpayer has there been a concerted effort to put the finances of the City and the State on a sound basis. They have today informed me of the specifics of New York's self-help program.

MORE



On the other hand, we are going to pursue as much as we can and maintain our own position of strength because I think it is in the national interest to put a cap on the strategic arms race, but I can't forecast at this time if and when any such meetings will be held.

QUESTION: Well, do you think it would be helpful to have a Ford-Brezhnev meeting to perhaps break the SALT deadlock or are we still insisting on an agreement in SALT as a prerequisite for any Ford-Brezhnev meeting?

THE PRESIDENT: I believe that Mr. Brezhnev and I should not meet until we make additional progress.

QUESTION: Mr. President, in the past the American Bar Association has had great input on the selection of Judicial appointees, and I was wondering how you feel about this, whether the ABA's Judicial Committee should have a veto on your Judicial appointments?

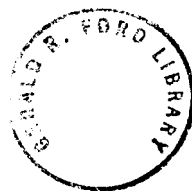
THE PRESIDENT: The ABA, the American Bar Association, has done a fine, fine job under very tough circumstances in analyzing the legal qualifications of some 15 or more names that have been submitted to them, and I thank the American Bar Association for their very, very great cooperation but I don't think in the final analysis they should have a veto over the person that I select.

QUESTION: Mr. President, has Secretary Kissinger talked to you recently or to any top officials in your Administration about the possibility of resigning? Has he complained to you or others in the White House that he felt he was not receiving sufficient support from the White House, particularly on the House contempt citation move and, if he has, are you in a position to say whether you -- to repeat your earlier promise, or your earlier statement, that you wanted him to stay on through the completion of this term?

THE PRESIDENT: Secretary Kissinger has not spoken to me about resigning. I continue to give him full and complete support because I think he is one of the finest Secretaries of State this country has ever had. I know of no criticism within the White House Staff of his performance of duty and I strongly -- and I want to emphasize and re-emphasize that I think he has done a superb job under most difficult circumstances. I certainly want him to stay as long as Secretary Kissinger will stay.

QUESTION: Mr. President, in view of the Congressional report on the CIA and the recent testimony about FBI activities and continuing doubt in the country, don't you think it would be in the national interest to re-open the assassination investigation of President Kennedy and now Martin Luther King as well?

MORE



THE PRESIDENT: I, of course, served on the Warren Commission and I know a good deal about the hearings and the Committee report, obviously. There are some new developments -- not evidence but new developments -- that according to one of our best staff members who has kept up to date on it more than I, that he thinks just to lay those charges aside that a new investigation ought to be undertaken.

He, at the same time, said that no new evidence has come up. If those particular developments could be fully investigated without re-opening the whole matter that took us 10 months to conclude, I think some responsible group or organization ought to do so but not to re-open all of the other aspects because I think they were thoroughly covered by the Warren Commission.

QUESTION: Are you prepared, then, to take that step on the part of the Administration to appoint a task force from the Justice Department, say, to look into the new developments and to report on those as well, or would you rather have it done by an independent organization?

THE PRESIDENT: I think in light of my former membership on the Warren Commission, it might be better done by somebody other than I appoint.

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