

POOL REPORT - AIR FORCE ONE  
TRAVERSE CITY, MICHIGAN  
FRIDAY, July 11, 1975

Wheels up at 11:50 a. m. Washington time.

Shortly after take-off, Ron Nessen came back and read us the following statement; which he said was in anticipation of questions about the Butterfield allegations:

"We have no information to substantiate the allegation that a member of the previous Administration was a secret CIA agent or indeed any kind of CIA agent, nor have we heard of such information. The questions apply to previous Administrations. Those questions could best be addressed to those who were involved in the Administrations.

"To the best of our knowledge, and we have no reason to believe otherwise, there is no employee working at the White House who has, or who has had, a CIA connection of which we are unaware. We have no reason to believe that anyone currently working at the White House, either as an employee of the White House or on detail from another agency, is surreptitiously reporting information on White House activities to any other government agency.

"I failed to make clear, in responding to questions in this area yesterday, and maybe I should have made clear, that I was speaking specifically of the present White House. I can only speak for this Administration. I don't want you to think that this qualification I am mentioning today means we have discovered that any CIA agent infiltrated the White House in the past. We have no reason to believe there ever has been such an agent, but I want to make clear that I speak only for this Administration and this President." (End of statement).

Asked to explain the discrepancies between this statement and his flat denials yesterday, Nessen said: "Nothing I said yesterday was untrue. I just want to get back to the position I've always taken -- that I speak only for this Administration."

Nessen said in reply to another question that his statement today had the knowledge and approval of the President.

Then, in response to further questions, he said he would have issued today's statement even if the allegations about Butterfield had not been made. He said again that he was making the statement because he wanted to get back to his standard position of speaking only for this White House.

When we pressed Nessen on the discrepancies -- or apparent discrepancies if you prefer -- between this statement and his remarks yesterday, he repeated what he had said yesterday -- that he had checked and had been assured that there was no reason to believe that any White House personnel had reported clandestinely to the CIA in previous Administrations.

"What I said yesterday was true," Nessen said, but he again said he wanted to get back to the position of speaking only for this White House.

Asked whether there were any plans to investigate the present White House staff to determine whether there were any covert CIA agents, Nessen said: "I'll check (to see whether any such inquiry is planned)."

(MORE)

On more routine matters, Nessen said the President brought a large amount of mail with him on the flight to Traverse City and planned to spend most of the flight signing letters.

With the President on Air Force One were Mrs. Ford, Senator Robert F. Griffin of Michigan, and the following members of the Michigan delegation in Congress, all Republicans: Representatives Elford Cederberg, Guy Vander Jagt, Philip Ruppe and Marvin Esch.

Also: James and Paul Griffin, sons of the Senator; Donald Rumsfeld, Philip Buchen, L. William Seidman, Milton Friedman, Cwen Anderson and Ron Nessen.

Nessen drew attention to the fact that the schedule shows Mrs. Ford making a tour of Mackinac Island on Sunday. Nessen said this is only tentative -- Mrs. Ford has not yet decided whether she will do it.

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Deakin/Leubsdorf/Pippert