

PRESS CONFERENCE #21
of the
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

7:30 P.M. EST
November 3, 1975
Monday

In the East Room
At the White House
Washington, D. C.

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

I have several announcements to make tonight.

First with respect to foreign policy and national security affairs:

You will recall that when I became President a year ago last August, I indicated that I believed it was essential to guarantee stability and continuity in the conduct of U.S. foreign policy. I made a conscious decision at that time not to change personnel in the important national security area. I have, however, made a number of significant changes in the Cabinet in the domestic area. We have now successfully reassured our allies that the United States will stand firm in the face of any threat to our national interest and convince potential adversaries that America will aggressively seek out ways to reduce the threat of war.

Therefore, I am tonight announcing several personnel changes which I believe will strengthen the Administration in the important area of national security affairs.

I intend to nominate Donald Rumsfeld as my new Secretary of Defense. Don has served with distinction as a Congressman from Illinois, Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity, Director of the Cost of Living Council, and as Ambassador to NATO.

For the past year he has been my senior White House Assistant and a member of my Cabinet. He has the experience and skill needed to help our country maintain a defense capability second to none.

MORE

The Nation owes Secretary Schlesinger a deep debt of gratitude for his able service to his country as Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, Director of the CIA and as Secretary of Defense.

Henry Kissinger has been serving with great distinction and success as Secretary of State and as my Assistant for National Security Affairs. Secretary Kissinger will relinquish his post as Assistant to the President to devote his full time to his important responsibilities as Secretary of State.

Brent Scowcroft, who has been serving ably for three years as Deputy Assistant at the White House, will move up to Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs.

For the past year George Bush has been U.S. Representative to the People's Republic of China. He has served with great skill as a Congressman and as Ambassador to the United Nations. It is my intention to nominate Ambassador Bush to be Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. The CIA is one of our Nation's most important institutions. In recent months it has been the focus of some controversy. During this difficult period, Bill Colby, as Director of the CIA, has done an outstanding job of working with the Congress to look into and to correct any abuses that may have occurred in the past while maintaining an effective foreign intelligence capability.

MORE

Mr. Richard Cheney, who has been serving effectively as Deputy Assistant, will replace Don Rumsfeld as Assistant to the President, and will take over his responsibilities for coordinating the White House staff.

In a separate area, I have one additional personnel announcement to make.

Some weeks ago, Secretary of Commerce Rogers Morton indicated to me that after the first of the year, he would like to reduce the pace of his activities and resign his current position to return to the private sector. Rog Morton has served with great distinction in the Congress, and in two Cabinet posts for the last five years.

He has earned the respect of Americans everywhere. He has been a long and close personal friend. I am deeply grateful for his valuable service, and I will be calling on his assistance in the future.

Elliot Richardson will be nominated to become Secretary of Commerce. An able former Secretary of Defense, Secretary of HEW, and Attorney General, Mr. Richardson is presently serving as our Ambassador to Great Britain.

I know he will do an important job in his new assignment. I hope that the Senate will move rapidly to confirm my nominees for those positions which require confirmation.

Now, to the questions.

Mr. Growald?

QUESTION: Thank you, Mr. President, for your rundown on the personnel changes.

There has been one other personnel change, or a suggested change today, and I wonder if, in your estimation, Mr. President, has the Vice President, by his action today, sacrificed himself on your political behalf, and have you in any way urged him to do so?

THE PRESIDENT: The decision by Vice President Rockefeller was a decision on his own. He made the decision and delivered to me personally the letter that has now been published.

The Vice President has done a superb job, and will continue to do so in the months ahead. But, under no circumstances was it a request by me. It was a decision by him.

MORE

QUESTION: Thank you, Mr. President.

A follow-up question. Would you accept Governor Reagan or former Governor Connally as your running mate next year?

THE PRESIDENT: We have a long time, many months, to discuss and to think about that matter. I will give it my closest attention as to my running mate, but we have got lots of time, and we will think about all of those alternatives as we move ahead and try to do the business of the Government.

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QUESTION: Mr. President, have you any commitment in your conversations with Governor Rockefeller that he will support you in 1976 or might he conceivably go out and seek the job himself?

THE PRESIDENT: Vice President Rockefeller has assured me categorically that he will support me in 1976.

QUESTION: Mr. President, we are told that not only have there been personnel changes in the area of foreign policy and national security matters but the decision-making process has been altered as well, that Secretary Kissinger will now have to share access to you on a regular basis with the new Defense Secretary and with Mr. Bush of CIA. That leaves a very strong impression that Secretary Kissinger's influence in both these fields has been substantially reduced. Is that a correct impression?

THE PRESIDENT: Let me state affirmatively that Secretary Kissinger has done a superb job as Secretary of State and as my Assistant for National Security Affairs. He will continue to handle the responsibilities of a foreign policy which I think has been not only successful but in the best interest of the United States.

There will be organizational changes, as I have indicated, and there will be closer liaison and cooperation as is necessary as we move ahead, but Secretary Kissinger will have the dominant role in the formulation of and the carrying out of foreign policy.

QUESTION: Mr. President, could you tell us why Mr. Schlesinger and Mr. Colby did not fit on your new team?

THE PRESIDENT: I think any President has to have the opportunity to put together his own team. They were kept on when I assumed office because I wanted continuity but any President to do the job that is needed and necessary has to have his own team in the area of foreign policy. I believe the team that I have assembled, as I have indicated tonight, will do a first class job.

QUESTION: Mr. President, there are reports, though, sir, that Secretary Schlesinger was in conflict with your attitude on detente and with Secretary Kissinger's. Can you address yourself to that?

THE PRESIDENT: There were no basic differences. I wanted the team that I selected and as President I think it is important that a President have that kind of a team on an affirmative basis, and I have it.

In Secretary Kissinger and in Don Rumsfeld and Brent Scowcroft, I put it on the affirmative side that they are my choices and that we can work together effectively to carry out an effective foreign policy.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, you have said many times that Vice President Rockefeller along with you made a team that was one you liked and that you said there was no reason to break up that team.

What I want to know is, did you urge him not to withdraw from the race for the Vice Presidential nomination?

THE PRESIDENT: The Vice President came to me and indicated that what he said in the letter was his decision and I accepted it.

QUESTION: One other question on the Vice Presidential race. Does the nomination of Donald Rumsfeld as Defense Secretary and the nomination of Mr. Bush as CIA Director, does that eliminate them as Vice Presidential running mate possibilities?

THE PRESIDENT: They are first class public officials. They have important responsibilities. I don't think they are eliminated from consideration by anybody -- the delegates to the convention or myself.

QUESTION: Mr. President, would you be more specific and tell us exactly how the appointment of Mr. Rumsfeld and Mr. Bush to the new posts will strengthen your team in the area of foreign affairs?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I have indicated that Secretary Bush or Ambassador Bush had been an Ambassador at the United Nations for two years. He has been in China for better than a year. He is a man of experience in public life as a Member of Congress, and Don Rumsfeld has had excellent service in the Congress. He has been in the White House for 14 months. He was in NATO. Don Rumsfeld has experience and the kind of working relationship with me that I think will be very helpful.

MORE

QUESTION: Mr. President, I would like to follow up.

Does this have any specific implication for policy?

THE PRESIDENT: I have indicated that in my judgment we have been very successful in the execution of foreign policy on behalf of the United States. We have achieved great success in the Middle East. We strengthened NATO. We have continued our relations on a good basis with the People's Republic of China. We are working with the Soviet Union in certain areas to relieve tension.

The foreign policy of this country is in good hands, but I wanted a team that was my team, and this team of Kissinger and Rumsfeld, Bush and Scowcroft, gives to me the kind of team that I think can carry out and execute a continuing successful foreign policy.

QUESTION: Mr. President, Secretary Schlesinger has expressed publicly some apprehension about detente, and I wonder if you can give us some assurance that the United States is getting at least as much out of it as the Soviet Union is?

THE PRESIDENT: Let me assure you that my record in the Congress, and as Vice President, and as President, has been one of strength in national security affairs, in international relations. I believe that in our attempt to ease tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States, we have achieved a two-way street.

I believe that the policy that I will follow, the team that I have, will continue that policy in the future.

QUESTION: Mr. President, would you expect, sir, that the Central Intelligence Agency, under Ambassador Bush's tenure, would continue to have the same relationship with the Congressional investigation as during Mr. Colby's period in office?

THE PRESIDENT: The Central Intelligence Agency will continue its policy of notifying the responsible committees in the Congress as to developments. They have done it in the past. They will continue it in the future.

I can see no change in the relations of the Central Intelligence Agency with the Congress under Mr. Bush different from what they have been under Mr. Colby.

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QUESTION: Specifically, sir, ~~has~~ the Church committee continues its investigation, your instructions to Mr. Bush would be to cooperate fully with that investigation?

THE PRESIDENT: I have given that word to Mr. Colby. He has carried it out in a very responsible way, and Mr. Bush will continue that policy.

QUESTION: Mr. President, how do you make a high-level personnel shift of this kind, such a fast shift? Did you ask for suggestions, or did you do this largely on your own?

THE PRESIDENT: I did it totally on my own. It was my decision. I fitted the pieces together, and they fitted excellently. It was my decision.

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QUESTION: With Mr. Rumsfeld, who is involved in your decision, would he have had any in-put into the over-all decision?

THE PRESIDENT: He did not.

QUESTION: Could you tell us, Mr. President, when you and Mr. Rockefeller first discussed his withdrawal and what reasons he gave you for it other than what he stated in his letter?

THE PRESIDENT: The letter speaks for itself. I don't think I should amplify it and the accompanying statement, which was agreed to between him and myself indicates our personal views. I don't think we have to go beyond the letter or the joint statement.

QUESTION: Mr. President, will these changes that you have made, do you feel, give you a more directly responsive intelligence community than you have had hitherto. In other words, do you feel your putting Mr. Bush and Mr. Rumsfeld in these two important positions give you a more direct control over the intelligence community than it has been previously?

THE PRESIDENT: Mr. Bush and Don Rumsfeld are long personal friends of mine. I have known of their fine record. I have an excellent relationship with them. I am certain that they will contribute very significantly and these are my guys and the ones that I wanted and I hope and trust that their confirmation will be quick in the United States Senate.

QUESTION: Mr. President, when do you expect to fill the vacancies -- the Ambassadorship vacancies -- in London and Peking, and do you plan any further changes in your campaign committee?

THE PRESIDENT: We have not addressed the questions of replacements for Mr. Bush or Mr. Richardson and I have no specific changes in mind at the President Ford Committee. In due time there will be a person to succeed David Packard.

QUESTION: There will be no change at the top, sir -- Mr. Callaway?

THE PRESIDENT: I have indicated what the changes are.

QUESTION: Mr. President, the Pentagon and Secretary Schlesinger have been less than enthusiastic about the Administration's SALT policies. Can we expect to see an acceleration toward an agreement now that this power shift has occurred?

THE PRESIDENT: The Defense Department, with Secretary Schlesinger and the others, were very forthcoming and very strong in endorsing the agreement that I reached at Vladivostok. They wholeheartedly agreed with the decision that were reached there. We expect to continue to pursue, but not under any pressure, negotiations with the Soviet Union in strategic arms limitations. We have differences. But I think it is in the national interest for us to continue to work toward a SALT II agreement. We are under no time pressure to do so.

QUESTION: But do you see the possibilities for a second-stage agreement, then?

THE PRESIDENT: I think it would be in the national interest if we can get mutual concessions by the Soviet Union on the one hand and by us on the other.

QUESTION: Mr. President, if you were Mr. Brezhnev, how would you analyze the removal of an American Secretary of State who is known for his advocacy of a strong national defense, possibly a stronger national defense, than his rivals in the bureaucracy?

THE PRESIDENT: I think you misstated Secretary of State at the outset.

QUESTION: Right.

THE PRESIDENT: Let me say very emphatically there is no one in this Government more emphatic for a strong national defense and the maintenance of our own national security than myself, Secretary Kissinger and Don Rumsfeld, and many others who I could mention by name.

From the top on down, we believe in strong national defense, and we have sought to implement it, and we need some more help in the Congress. I won't speculate on what Mr. Brezhnev might feel concerning these changes.

QUESTION: Have you possibly been in contact with him directly or indirectly to explain what they mean, to leave no misunderstanding on his part?

THE PRESIDENT: We have not.

QUESTION: Mr. President, with all due respect, you have been talking about your desire to make your own team, but in fact, you have replaced half the team and you have not replaced the other half. Mr. Kissinger and Mr. Scowcroft are really part of someone else's team whom you have elected to keep.

It seems to me that you really have not answered the question. What did Secretary Schlesinger do wrong that you didn't like?

THE PRESIDENT: I have affirmatively answered the question by saying that I wanted my own team, and I am keeping Secretary Kissinger because I think he has done an outstanding job in the field of foreign policy.

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I wanted a change in the Defense Department because I wanted, in that case, a person that I have known and worked with intimately for a long period of time, a person who is experienced in the field of foreign policy and who served in the Department of Defense as an naval aviator.

The President has the right, and I believe ought to have the team with him that he wants to carry out the policies in the national interest, and the team I have selected will do so.

QUESTION: Mr. President, how worried are you about Ronald Reagan? (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: I am not worried about any competitor, Democratic or Republican.

QUESTION: Much of the criticism of your travel has been directed at the idea that you are greatly concerned about a challenge from your right, and that is why you have been to California three times.

I was wondering if you feel that criticism is justified?

THE PRESIDENT: It is ridiculous.

QUESTION: Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, Tom?

QUESTION: Mr. President, there have been reports that the China trip is being reduced from a possible five or six days in China to three or possibly four days. Is that so, and if so, why?

THE PRESIDENT: For a long period of time, Mr. DeFrank, we have had tentative plans to visit the People's Republic of China. Secretary Kissinger was there several weeks ago. As far as we are concerned, those trip plans are still on, and the length of the trip will be decided in the negotiations between Secretary Kissinger and the Foreign Minister of the People's Republic.

I don't think there is any significance in the areas that you have raised.

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QUESTION: Mr. President, hasn't there been a good deal of debate between Dr. Kissinger and Mr. Rumsfeld and others about the advisability of adding stops to that trip, and haven't the Chinese indicated that they would not be particularly happy if you did add some stops to that trip?

THE PRESIDENT: As far as I know the answer to your question is no.

QUESTION: Several Members of the Senate are concerned that Secretary Kissinger will still have total domination of foreign policy in part because your national security adviser, General Scowcroft, is regarded as a Kissinger man. How do you answer that criticism?

THE PRESIDENT: I have known Brent Scowcroft intimately for the last 14 months. I have been tremendously impressed with his experience and capabilities. I know that he speaks an independent mind. I know it personally. So I don't think that criticism is valid.

QUESTION: Can you explain what you mean when you say that Secretary Kissinger will have a dominant role in the foreign policy sector?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, as Secretary of State that is his responsibility.

QUESTION: In a military role, will Mr. Rumsfeld have the dominant role?

THE PRESIDENT: That is the responsibility of the Secretary of Defense.

QUESTION: Mr. President, on another subject, if I may, sir, are you still convinced, sir, that the City of New York does not have to default and, if so, do you plan to call Mayor Beame and Governor Carey here to tell them your reasons why you think New York can avoid default?

THE PRESIDENT: I believe that New York City can avoid default. They can take stronger action than they have taken. I believe the State of New York can take stronger action to be of assistance to the City of New York. This is a matter that can be with forthright action taken care of in the City or the City with the cooperation of the State. I hope they will. If they don't, I believe then the proper action to be taken is that which I publicly stated last Wednesday.

QUESTION: Mr. President, in the event they do not, Mr. President, are you still convinced that there will be no domino effect on the American and the world financial markets?

MORE

THE PRESIDENT: Absolutely. I have verified that with a number of experts within and without the Government. And there is no probability, no serious probability that there will be any national repercussions and I am convinced that the market has already discounted the possibility of any financial problems in New York City and I think the actions of the last three or four days verify that correct assumption.

QUESTION: Mr. President, there are persistent reports that Hugh Scott is under consideration for appointment to Peking. Can you say if you are thinking about him?

THE PRESIDENT: As I said a moment ago, we haven't thought about replacements for George Bush and Elliot Richardson. I can say this, that Hugh Scott is a great student of Chinese culture and history. He has been to China on a number of occasions but I have not had an opportunity to focus in on the replacement for Mr. Bush.

QUESTION: Mr. President, did Vice President Rockefeller decide to step aside either because of differing views with you over the New York financial situation or to give you a greater degree of maneuverability as you move politically toward the nomination?

THE PRESIDENT: Our differences over the handling of New York City are minimal, as I said once before. The difference is his interpretation of what might be the money market reaction if and when New York City defaults. Those differences are a matter of judgment. Certainly he did not take the action that he did because of that difference.

I think the letter speaks for itself and I greatly respect his judgment in all matters, and I have been proud to have him on the team and he will continue to do a first class job in many important responsibilities.

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QUESTION: Mr. President, does that mean, sir, that he did decide to step aside in order to give you a greater degree of maneuverability? The letter does not explain why he stepped aside.

THE PRESIDENT: I think that he will have to answer that. I think the letter in effect answers your question but if you want to pursue it further, you should do it with him.

QUESTION: Mr. President, we were told this morning after your meeting with Mr. Rockefeller that you were in an exceptionally good mood. (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: I have been in a good mood all day.

QUESTION: I suggest perhaps a feeling of relief.

I wonder if you could tell us in your own words what your feelings are now and were then?

THE PRESIDENT: I believe that the decisions that I have made and the announcements that I have made officially give to me the people and the team and organizational structure to continue to carry out an affirmative, successful foreign policy on a global basis and to keep our national security forces second to none. I, therefore, feel very pleased with the acceptance on the part of individuals for these new responsibilities. They are important, not for me, but primarily for the country.

QUESTION: Mr. President, you recently have had two resignations.

QUESTION: Don't make a speech, Walter. (Laughter)

QUESTION: You recently have had two resignations from your campaign committee and some of your aides have said you are having problems in your primary organization, especially in New Hampshire and perhaps Florida. I was wondering, is your campaign in trouble?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think it is. I was in Florida yesterday and talked to Lou Frey. He is very encouraged. We have some very encouraging news about the organization in New Hampshire. I am very happy about it.

QUESTION: Could you tell me, please, the basis for your optimism going into the election year? Why are you confident that you will not only be your Party's nominee beating Reagan and why you will beat the Democrats?

THE PRESIDENT: You could not have asked a better question, Wally. I am happy and I am optimistic about the nomination and the election because I am convinced the American people feel that we have been successful in foreign policy, the Middle East, Europe, et cetera. I am convinced that we are well on the road to a good economic situation in 1976. So when you combine peace and prosperity, any incumbent President ought to be very happy.

QUESTION: Mr. President, you will be concluding talks with Egyptian President Sadat on Wednesday. Can you tell us whether the President will be going home with a commitment or what he thinks is a commitment for future military aide for his country?

THE PRESIDENT: The final decisions in these areas will be made on Wednesday and properly announced. We have had very successful negotiations but I think it is premature for me to make any announcement at this time on those matters.

QUESTION: Mr. President, with Vice President Rockefeller out of the picture for 1976, you have indicated that you don't want to give us a name tonight, but maybe you will give us some kind of idea as to what kinds of qualities you will be looking for in your Vice Presidential running mate? Specifically, are there any perimeters with respect to age, political philosophy, what region of the country he comes from?
(Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: There will be plenty of time for me to think about and discuss with others the answer to the question that you have asked and it is certainly premature for me to make any comment at this time in that very important area.

QUESTION: Mr. President, in addition to the differences you mentioned between yourself and Vice President Rockefeller, did he talk to you at all about the effect of your position against aid to New York and other cities on your campaign for next year?

THE PRESIDENT: He has not.

QUESTION: Mr. President, you gave no indication of exactly what you were unhappy with in terms of the dual roles of Secretary Kissinger. He has stated publicly that he considers those dual roles of great importance to the execution of foreign policy.

THE PRESIDENT: I indicated that the team I put together will affirmatively satisfy the way I want an organizational structure set up. That is the way I wanted it, that is the way it is, and I think it will work effectively.

QUESTION: Another question in that regard, Mr. President. There have been charges that the Secretary is stretched too thin or that by having the dual roles he is able to have an undue influence over the course of foreign policy. Were those problems?

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THE PRESIDENT: I don't like to answer speculative comments or rumors. I have done what I did because I, as President, wanted the organization and the people that I have selected. That is the answer to the question.

QUESTION: Mr. President, why has it taken you 15 months to form your team and set up your structure in national security and foreign affairs?

THE PRESIDENT: I felt it was very important at the outset because of the unusual circumstances under which I became President to have continuity, to have stability in the area of national security and foreign policy. That was absolutely essential and as a result of that we continued a successful foreign policy. As time went on I felt that in this area once we had confirmed with our allies our assurances, once we had confirmed with our potential adversaries that we were in a position to continue a relaxation of tensions, that then I could select, without any rupture of those relations, the kind of people, the individuals that I wanted to work with very, very intimately, and I have so selected them.

QUESTION: To follow up with a slightly repetitious question: Are you saying and intending to be understood to say that neither personal nor policy differences between Dr. Kissinger and Mr. Schlesinger contributed to this change?

THE PRESIDENT: That is correct.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much.

END (AT 8:03 P.M. EST)