

Pool Report for Force One, Andrews to San Francisco

Wheels up at 4:40 p.m. After a while, Nessen came back and said as follows:

On Wednesday's debate: "The President is a man who deals with foreign policy every day. He has dealt with national defense and foreign policy affairs as President and even before that in Congress. The President expects to do well in the debate."

Nessen said Mike Duval was "not entirely pleased by the small amount of time the President has spent in preparing for this debate." Nessen went on to say that everything Ford says in this debate "will be interpreted by foreign leaders as reflecting American policy." Carter, Nessen said, "doesn't have that restraint."

Nessen said Carter had advocated cuts in the defense budget but lately had been taking a tougher line toward Russia. He said the White House would be watching "to see where he (Carter) and his advisers place him in this debate"--that is, tougher or easier.

Mike Duval came back later and added some observations on Wednesday's debate, pretty much along the same line as Nessen. Duval said: "When the President answers questions (on foreign policy), he has got to think about what he is going to say; he has to consider the impact on foreign listeners as well as the domestic audience."

The President, Duval said, has to consider "ongoing multi-lateral and bilateral negotiations. I have one in mind particularly in the nuclear area."

Duval said Ford spent two hours with Kissinger on Sunday discussing various foreign policy matters. He said the debate came up and Kissinger offered some advice, but "the center of gravity, I gather, was not on the debate."

Asked whether Ford would be on the defensive in this debate, Duval said: "Absolutely not. No way. He has a record (in foreign policy) of which he is rightfully proud." Duval also cited what he said was Carter's "total lack of experience" in foreign policy.

Still awake? Back to Nessen, then:

On Earl Butz: Nessen first said he had nothing to add to what Ford said in his statement. Asked whether the White House put pressure on Butz to resign, he said: "As Earl said today, it was his own decision and didn't result from any pressure from the White House. I think Earl answered that question today. It wasn't (any pressure) and there wasn't."

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Recreating a little but not too much of the events leading up to Butz's resignation, Nessen said Butz called him (Nessen) two or three times Saturday and asked Nessen to read him the wire service stories on the furor. Sunday night, Butz called Cheney and asked for an appointment with Ford. Nessen was asked [redacted] whether the White House spent some of the interval checking with farm leaders on the [redacted] reaction if Butz were to resign. "There wasn't anything like that," Nessen replied. He said Butz and Ford met for about 20 minutes in the [redacted] small study adjoining the oval office and Butz then went to Cheney's office for a while before coming out to the briefing room to announce his resignation.

Asked whether there [redacted] would be a replacement for Butz before the end of the year, Nessen said: "Yes."

Other matters: As you probably already know, the President will stay at the home of Mr. and Mrs. John Sutro in San Francisco. Nessen identified Sutro as a member of one of San Francisco's oldest and best-known families. He said Sutro is a leading [redacted] lawyer. He said Ford [redacted] is renting the house for about \$125 a day. Parenthetically, Nessen said Ford rented the house [redacted] in Philadelphia, for about the same amount.

The Sutro house, Nessen said, overlooks the Presidio, in the area known as Pacific Heights. It does not have an ocean view, but it is close to the Fine Arts Theater, where the debate will be held.

At the present time, Nessen said, Ford has no campaign appearances on his schedule Tuesday. He said the President planned to spend the day working on legislation and preparing for the debate. There will, however, be a standby pool in case of changes. Nessen said Ford brought about 20 bills with him to study, and more will be sent out from Washington. Nessen doesn't plan to brief Tuesday but says he will be in his office at the Holiday Inn. Due to lack of presidential activity Tuesday, there is no Tuesday Bible, at least at the present.

Nessen said President signed three bills during the flight: two private relief bills and S. 3651--Amendment to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. On board were Rep. and Mrs. Don Clausen (Rep.), California; Mary Louise Smith; [redacted] Hartmann; Dick Cheney; Brent Scowcroft; Robert McFarlane of the staff; Don Penny; Mike Duval, and [redacted] Butler of the speechwriting staff.

The pool wishes you a happy new year and reminds you that under our system someone will win the election.

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