

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FEBRUARY 9, 1971

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE
PRESS CONFERENCE
OF
SENATOR HUGH SCOTT
AND
CONGRESSMAN GERALD R. FORD



THE BRIEFING ROOM

AT 10:23 A.M. EST

MR. ZIEGLER: The Leadership Meeting this morning lasted from eight o'clock until 10 o'clock.

Senator Scott and Congressman Ford are here to give you a briefing on this. Senator?

SENATOR SCOTT: We had a briefing on Laos and on the forthcoming General Health legislation from Secretary Richardson.

The purpose of the action of the ARVN in Laos is certainly well-known. And the interdiction of the Ho Chi Minh Trail and tributaries to it is proceeding. After all, over the past six years, some 630,000 troops have come down that Trail, 400,000 weapons, other than rifles, and some 400 million rounds of ammunition.

Therefore, the attempt to deter this flow of supplies is extremely important in aid of the Vietnamization program and to protect the continuing withdrawal of American forces.

I would like to note that the criticisms of each of the decisions made by this Administration in regard to Indochina have fallen of their own weight. I think the steam is out of a good deal of that criticism for the simple reason that what the President has said on each occasion he will do has indeed been done and if there is any lack of credibility, it is on the doom-sayers who predicted results contrary to those which have occurred.

CONGRESSMAN FORD: I would simply comment on the health discussion that there was a very free give-and-take between the Secretary of HEW and those who were there.

We made suggestions and some observations which I think will be cranked into the final decision-making.

Secondly, on the briefing related to the incursion into Laos, it was pointed out, and I think it ought to be repeated throughout the country, that the decision relating to Cambodia last year resulted in the cutting of the supply lifeline for the North Vietnamese in the southern part of Vietnam.

And this operation will be the cutting of a lifeline from the north. The operation in Cambodia last year had the effect of a substantial drop in American casualties over the

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last nine months or more.

And the success of this operation will result in, I believe, a reduction in the military capability of the enemy and a reduction in American casualties.

Q Congressman Ford, there is another supply source in North Vietnam. Was there any discussion about going after that?

CONGRESSMAN FORD: There was no discussion of any other military operations other than the ones that are currently in operation.

Q Was there any indication of how long the current operation will continue?

CONGRESSMAN FORD: There was no discussion of any terminal date. We are just in the initial stages of it. I suspect that the length of it will depend upon the kind of resistance that is met as far as the enemy is concerned and the need to mop up, if it is as successful as we hope it will be. But there was no discussion of precise days or weeks.

Q Could you explain the timing of this operation? Why, if this has been going on for so long, did the President decide now to undertake the operation?

CONGRESSMAN FORD: There was no discussion of that.

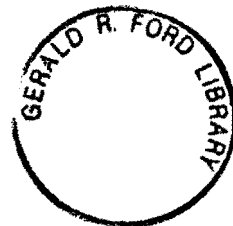
As I am sure all of you know, this is a very major operation for the South Vietnamese military forces. And I suspect that the timing did relate to the competence of them to undertake such an operation, plus the need and necessity to get it done prior to the end of the dry season and the beginning of the monsoon season.

I might make one observation that I don't think is generally known. I am told that approximately 30 Members of the House and the Senate, including all of the leadership, were briefed prior to the operation, its beginning. So there was consultation and there was a briefing for those that do have certain specific responsibilities in the Congress.

SENATOR SCOTT: There were more than two dozen Members of Congress who were briefed and consulted prior to the operation.

The purpose of the operation, to repeat, is to aid in the continuing Vietnamization program and to protect withdrawal of American forces. And I might suggest that if you will go back in your records, you will find that the President in the period between 1965 and 1967, frequently pointed out to a previous Administration the importance of cleaning out sanctuaries and supply depots.

Q Senator, when you say the beginning of the operation, do you mean the beginning of the airlift and the imposition of the blackout or are you speaking of the actual crossing of the border?



SENATOR SCOTT: They are all related. As you know, the news embargo was at the request of General Abrams for the protection of our forces. The military operation, of course, began in, I should say a technical sense, at the crossing of the border on Route 9.

Q When were the Congressmen briefed?

SENATOR SCOTT: They were briefed prior to the military operation, prior to the crossing of the border.

Q What date were they briefed?

SENATOR SCOTT: There are different dates. I heard Gerry say that he was briefed at one time on a Thursday. I had some earlier information and I was finally briefed on Sunday. But it was at varying times for different Senators and Congressmen.

Q Was the opinion of the lawmakers sought or was it a typical Johnson briefing where they were told?

SENATOR SCOTT: You don't get typical Johnson -- you don't get that kind anymore. (Laughter.) I would say that when a military operation is in progress you don't ask Senators how to conduct the battle of Vicksburg. But you do tell them what is going on and you do respond to their questions or their concerns or their problems.

Q So nothing catastrophic has been suggested, really?

SENATOR SCOTT: It hasn't happened. And I assume that if something of a catastrophic nature had been suggested, that might have affected the outcome. But I see no evidence that that occurred.

Q Were there any Congressmen who suggested it might not be a good operation to undertake?

SENATOR SCOTT: That I am not in a position to say since they were in individual briefings. I will point out to you that Senator Church said on Sunday that the Cooper-Church inhibitions were being observed and pointed to the line that barred the forward movement of U. S. personnel.

Q You point out, Senator Scott, that in an earlier period Mr. Nixon had advocated the cleaning out of sanctuaries in Indocina. Did the impetus for this operation in Laos come from Washington or did it come from Saigon?

SENATOR SCOTT: That I am not in a position to say. You had better ask that of someone else.

Q Was there any indication of when the health message will go to the Hill, Congressman Ford?

CONGRESSMAN FORD: There was no specific date indicated. I would say generally sometime prior to the first of March. But nothing any more firm than that.

Q Were Senators Fulbright and Mansfield consulted?

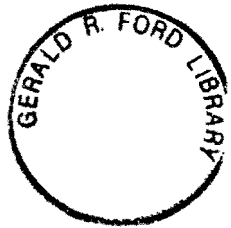


SENATOR SCOTT: They were both, and Senators Cooper, Church and Aiken, Senator Smith and a number of others, including the Democratic side.

CONGRESSMAN FORD: I understand that the Speaker was also briefed as well as other Members in the leadership on the House side.

Q Congressman Ford, why were not the Members of the House and Senate briefed before the logistical part of the operation started?

CONGRESSMAN FORD: I think you had to bear in mind the major part of the operation, the part that was most serious. The part that was most serious was the one involving the crossing of the border. And at the time of the logistic buildup, I am not positive personally that there was a firm decision as to exactly the date and the precise movements.



But as far as I was concerned, I was briefed on a Thursday because I was going to be out of town on Friday and Saturday. And I had so informed the White House and it was decided to give me that briefing at that time because of that problem.

Q I don't mean to pursue this unnecessarily. But I believe Senator Scott mentioned something about credibility and apparently most of the criticism that arose during that six-day period was because no one knew exactly what was going on, at least, the leadership here in Washington.

What is your response to that, Senator?

SENATOR SCOTT: I don't think that that goes to the issue of credibility. A buildup of logistics and supplies is not a matter which is essential for the Congress to know until some action is about to be taken that affects our disposition of forces, for example.

The news embargo is not all that unusual. There was an 18-day news embargo at the time of the A Shau Valley enterprise. I personally am in favor of news embargoes that protect lives. And I can realize the necessity for the people of this country being informed as soon as they can be.

I think the right to know is a little different from the right to jeopardize.

Q Senator Scott, you indicate the lack of public outcry, including public and on the Hill. Was that a determining factor for the President to go in?

SENATOR SCOTT: I don't think so. I think the lack of public outcry followed the entry into Laos of ARVN forces. The lack of public outcry, I think, comes from an increasing confidence in the President's undertakings. When he says something is going to happen, it does. And the critics are finding out that he is keeping his promises. And I think that explains the lack of public outcry, plus, of course, the reforms of the draft.

Q Senator, there are two moves on the Hill right now, one to reopen Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings on Laos, public hearings; and two, move toward some resolution which would prohibit the use of any more appropriations in Indochina except to get us out of the war.

What is the Administration's position on both of those moves?

SENATOR SCOTT: Would you repeat the first part?

Q To open up Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings on Laos.

SENATOR SCOTT: The decision of whether or not Cabinet officers are to testify is, of course, for the President and the Cabinet officers, as far as open sessions are concerned. Secretary Rogers is testifying this morning currently before Foreign Relations. The second part was?

Q On the proposal to restrict the use of funds to anything but to get out of Indochina.

SENATOR SCOTT: I think that would transfer the executive function to the Congress. I personally question very seriously whether it would be constitutional for the Congress to control the Commander in Chief's position of forces for the defense and security of the United States.

But aside from that, I think it would be the height of folly to use the power of the purse to endanger the removal of troops from a foreign enterprise.

CONGRESSMAN FORD: If I might add to that, I don't think this suggestion is anything new. In effect, that is what some people were trying to do in 1970 and they were conspicuously unsuccessful in the House of Representatives last year and I think they will be just as unsuccessful in 1971.

Most Members of the House realize that they are not capable of making military decisions and the suggestion --

SENATOR SCOTT: And some Senators.

CONGRESSMAN FORD: -- and the amendment or the action that you have mentioned would in effect be substituting political decisions for a military decision. The House of Representatives knows that the President has kept his word about withdrawing troops.

The Members of the House or majority recognize that the operation in Cambodia was successful and certain beneficial results have taken place.

MORE



And I am confident that they will find the same in this particular case. It will be successful. It will insure that we will be able to make or at least open the door to additional withdrawals beyond the 284,000 that are scheduled to be there on May 1 of 1971.

Q Hasn't the President also said he wouldn't widen the war and isn't putting South Vietnamese on three fronts widening the war?

CONGRESSMAN FORD: I don't think so at all. The action that is being taken by the South Vietnamese forces into Laos is to protect the U.S. forces and the South Vietnamese forces. It is a legitimate extension for the protection of the some 335,000 U.S. military personnel still there and half a million or more South Vietnamese forces that are protecting their country.

This is a legitimate military operation as a defense move, not as an offensive action.

SENATOR SCOTT: The North Vietnamese have been on three fronts all along, except for too long two of the three fronts have been privileged.

Q What did you say about further withdrawals?

CONGRESSMAN FORD: I said yesterday, and I said here today, that the success of the operation will certainly open the door to the distinct possibility of an extension of withdrawals beyond the figure of May 1 of 284,000. But there is no committment at all.

It is simply an operation that in my personal opinion will definitely give the President more options than he would have had otherwise.

Q Was your personal opinion reenforced in there today?

CONGRESSMAN FORD: My personal opinion was reenforced by what was said in my briefing last Thursday and what I heard this morning. I am definitely encouraged.

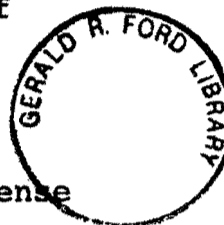
Q Has anyone in the Administration said that if the thing is a success that they might be able to better the number of troops they are planning to have out by mid-May?

CONGRESSMAN FORD: No. My own impression is what I have indicated. But I have gotten no specific views from the Administration, as such.

Q In the last two or three days, a group of students met at the University of Michigan, a meeting I am sure you are aware of, to discuss plans for large anti-war demonstrations here in Washington in May.

Do you believe that there is still enough steam left in the anti-war movement to mount large demonstrations here in Washington?

CONGRESSMAN FORD: I am not certain that we can look forward to college campuses being entirely peaceful



this spring. But I didn't see much publicity coming out of that meeting in Detroit or at the University of Michigan. I don't think they are the ones that are going to be able to generate the kind of student activity that took place during the Cambodian incursion.

Furthermore, as we progress in the withdrawal of forces and as casualties go down and as the success of this particular military operation is proven, I think most students will realize that we are on the right track and they don't have to meet and protest as they did a year ago.

Q Can we move to health for a minute? Did you get the impression at all that the decisions are made on the Administration's health package?

CONGRESSMAN FORD: No. I thought I made that quite clear, that there was some give and take between the Congressional people there and the Secretary of HEW. It was to a substantial degree a consulting session where he indicated some basic concepts and asked for our observations and comment.

Q What is the problem?

CONGRESSMAN FORD: I think it is better if we wait until the final solution rather than to talk about alternatives at this point.



Q Did the President say this morning anything about his plans to take his program to the country?

CONGRESSMAN FORD: The President did say quite specifically that he was going to really reenforce the efforts that have been made already for revenue-sharing, et cetera, and the other five points in the State of the Union Message.

As I understand it, he is having now a series of breakfasts for the Democrats in the Congress to make sure that they understand that this is a substantive action rather than any political move.

And I might say that the revenue-sharing bill is going to be introduced in the House and I guess in the Senate today. And we have, I think, an excellent number of individuals who are going to co-sponsor it.

In the House, it is 135 at this point.

SENATOR SCOTT: It is 37 in the Senate; some from each Body.

Q What do you mean by "reenforce" this action?

CONGRESSMAN FORD: By the series of meetings with Democrats, and there are other efforts that are going to be made by those of us in the leadership throughout the country.

And I think you are going to get some bipartisan support from the bill.

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Q What are the efforts?

CONGRESSMAN FORD: The Vice President held a meeting in Indianapolis, as I understand, over the last weekend where lots of local officials were present. Every speech that I think a Republican is going to be giving in the next few months will include an affirmative sales job for revenue sharing and the other programs.

This is going to be a very substantial effort on the part of the President and others.

Q Did you discuss the Mayors testimony yesterday on the Hill on revenue sharing and particularly their resentment on the pollution timetable?

SENATOR SCOTT: It was not brought up in this meeting today at all.

Q Senator Scott, I would like to ask you about Laos again.

Any military planner that is worth his salt considers what his option will be in event things take a turn for the worse.

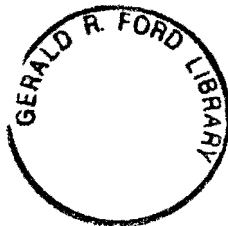
At this morning's meeting was the President asked about, or did he comment, on what he can do if the South Vietnamese get licked in Laos?

SENATOR SCOTT: It was indicated that General Abrams knows what he is doing. It was not indicated as to what alternatives exist. I have no doubt that a good general always knows what he should do under situations favorable or adverse. But we did not anticipate defeat.

And it is not, I believe, the custom of the Administration to anticipate defeat.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END (AT 10:45 A.M. EST)





Thursday, January 21, 1971

ELECTION OF SPEAKER

By a record vote of 250 to 176, Carl Albert of Oklahoma, was elected Speaker of the House of Representatives over Gerald R. Ford of Michigan. Representatives Hays, Devine, Sullivan, and Reid of Illinois acted as tellers on this vote. The Speaker was escorted to the Chair by Representatives Gerald R. Ford, Boggs, Arends, Teague of Texas, and Steed.

Representative Patman administered the oath of office to the Speaker, who subsequently administered the oath to 428 Members-elect, and the Resident Commissioner of Puerto Rico en bloc.

PARTY LEADERS

It was announced that Representatives Boggs and Gerald R. Ford were selected as majority and minority leaders, respectively.

ELECTION OF HOUSE OFFICERS

By voice vote, the House agreed to H. Res. 1, electing the following officers of the House of Representatives: W. Pat Jennings, Clerk of the House of Representatives; Zeake W. Johnson, Jr., Sergeant at Arms; William M. Miller, Doorkeeper; H. H. Morris, Postmaster; Reverend Edward G. Latch, D.D., Chaplain.

NOTIFY SENATE

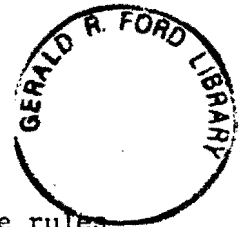
By a voice vote, the House agreed to H. Res. 2, to inform the Senate that a quorum of the House had assembled and had elected Carl Albert, a Representative from the State of Oklahoma, Speaker; and W. Pat Jennings, Clerk of the House of Representatives.

NOTIFY PRESIDENT

By a voice vote, the House agreed to H. Res. 3, authorizing the Speaker to appoint a committee of two Members to join with a like committee of the Senate to notify the President that a quorum of each House has been assembled and that Congress is ready to receive any communication that he may be pleased to make. Subsequently, the Speaker appointed Representatives Boggs and Gerald R. Ford.

INFORM PRESIDENT

By a voice vote, the House agreed to H. Res. 4, authorizing the Clerk of the House to inform the President that the House of Representatives had elected Carl Albert, a Representative from Oklahoma, Speaker; and W. Pat Jennings, Clerk of the House of Representatives.



Thursday, January 21, 1971 (continued)

HOUSE RULES

The House considered H. Res. 5, providing for the adoption of the rules of the House of Representatives for the 92d Congress, but came to no resolution thereon. The House agreed to a motion by Mr. Colmer that further consideration be postponed until tomorrow, January 22.

MINORITY EMPLOYEES

By a voice vote, the House agreed to H. Res. 6, announcing the selection and fixing the salaries of the following minority employees: Joe Bartlett, Robert T. Hartmann, William R. Bonsell, Tommy Lee Winebrenner, Walter P. Kennedy, and John J. Williams.

STATE OF UNION MESSAGE

By a voice vote, the House agreed to H. Con. Res. 1, providing for a joint session of Congress on Friday, January 22, to hear the President deliver his State of the Union message. Also made in order the calling of a recess by the Speaker on Friday.

HOUSE RECORDS

By a voice vote, the House agreed to H. Res. 9, relative to compliance with subpoenas duces tecum in connection with House records, documents, and papers.

HOUSE BUILDING COMMISSION

The Speaker appointed as members of the House Building Commission, Representatives Celler and Harsha, to serve with the Speaker.

Friday, January 22, 1971

CONDOLENCE RESOLUTION

By a voice vote, the House agreed to H. Res. 10, providing for expressions of sympathy and condolences on the death of Senator Russell. The Speaker appointed as members of the funeral committee the following Members on the part of the House: Representatives Landrum, Boggs, Gerald R. Ford, Flynt, Davis of Georgia, Hagan, Stephens, Blackburn, Brinkley, Stuckey, Thompson of Georgia, Mathis, Colmer, Hebert, Holifield, Sikes, and Price of Illinois.

WHIPS

It was announced that Representative O'Neill had been selected as Democratic Whip, and Representatives McFall and Brademas were selected as assistant whips. Representative Arends was selected as the Republican Whip.



Friday, January 22, 1971 (continued)

HOUSE RULES

By a record vote of 226 yeas to 155 nays, with 1 voting "present," the House agreed to H. Res. 5, relative to adoption of the rules of the House of Representatives for the 92d Congress.

The House rejected a motion to order the previous question by a record vote of 133 yeas to 254 nays; opening the measure for amendment. An amendment by Mr. Sisk was offered that strikes out language relating to the 21-day rule.

By a record vote of 213 yeas to 174 nays, the House agreed to a motion to order the previous question on the measure as amended. Subsequently, by a record vote of 233 yeas to 152 nays, the House agreed to the amendment.

WAYS AND MEANS MAJORITY ELECTIONS

By a voice vote, the House agreed to H. Res. 12, electing certain majority Members to membership on the Committee on Ways and Means

WAYS AND MEANS MINORITY ELECTIONS

By a voice vote, the House agreed to H. Res. 13, electing certain minority Members to membership on the Committee on Ways and Means.

HOUSE ADMINISTRATION MAJORITY ELECTIONS

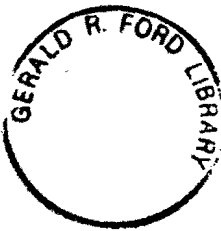
By a voice vote, the House agreed to H. Res. 14, electing certain majority Members to membership on the Committee on House Administration.

HOUSE ADMINISTRATION MINORITY ELECTIONS

By a voice vote, the House agreed to H. Res. 15, electing certain minority Members to membership on the Committee on House Administration.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE ON STATE OF UNION

Before a joint session of Congress, President Nixon delivered his state of the Union message. He was escorted to and from the House Chamber by a committee composed of Senators Ellender, Mansfield, Byrd of West Virginia, Moss, McClellan, Scott, Griffin, Smith, Allott, and Aiken; and Representatives Boggs, O'Neill, Teague of Texas, Gerald R. Ford, and Arends.



Monday, January 25, 1971.

NO LEGISLATIVE BUSINESS

Tuesday, January 26, 1971

COMMITTEE EMPLOYEES

The House agreed to H. Res. 17, authorizing payment of salaries to certain committee employees.

CAPITOL POLICE

The House agreed to H. Res. 150, relating to positions on the U.S. Capitol Police force under the House of Representatives.

HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

The majority leader announced the following holiday schedule for the House of Representatives for 1971:

Lincoln's-Washington's Birthdays--from the conclusion of business on Wednesday, February 10 until noon on Wednesday, February 17;

Easter--from the conclusion of business on Wednesday, April 7 until noon on Monday, April 19;

Memorial Day--from the conclusion of business on Thursday, May 27 until noon on Tuesday, June 1.

Independence Day--from the conclusion of business on Thursday, July 1 until noon on Tuesday, July 6; and

Summer Recess--from the conclusion of business on Friday, August 6 until noon on Wednesday, September 8.

Friday, January 29, 1971

NO LEGISLATIVE BUSINESS

Monday, February 1, 1971

NO LEGISLATIVE BUSINESS

Tuesday, February 2, 1971

NO LEGISLATIVE BUSINESS

Wednesday, February 3, 1971

NO LEGISLATIVE BUSINESS



Thursday, February 4, 1971

MAJORITY COMMITTEE ELECTION

By a voice vote, the House agreed to H. Res. 193, providing for the election of Democratic Members to standing committees of the House.

By a record vote of 258 yeas to 32 nays, with 42 voting "present," the House agreed to order the previous question on the measure.

MINORITY COMMITTEE ELECTION

By a voice vote, the House agreed to H. Res. 194, providing for the election of Republican Members to standing committees of the House.

Monday, February 8, 1971

NO LEGISLATIVE BUSINESS

SCHEDULE AHEAD

No legislative business scheduled until after the Lincoln's-Washington's Birthdays recess.