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NEWS CONFERENCE

#82

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 12:10 A.M. EST

NOVEMBER 27, 1974

WEDNESDAY

MR. NESSEN: Some of you know the President dropped in at a reception at the State Department last evening in honor of retiring Congressman John Rooney, and we had a pool on that. I guess you have seen the pool report.

This morning the President came in to the office at a quarter of eight, and the staff members he has met with this morning include General Scowcroft, Dick Cheney, Bob Hartmann, Ken Cole, Bill Timmons and myself.

The President also met with Russell Train, the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. As you know, he has been having a series of meetings with the Administration officials, and this was one of them. The subjects today included a legislative discussion of what might be included in the environmental area in the President's State of the Union Message. They also discussed the views that environmental groups have expressed to Russell Train. They also discussed a trip that Mr. Train is making to the Soviet Union, December 9th to 12th. He is going there to discuss environmental matters with the Soviet officials.

The President met with his economic advisors to discuss the current state of the economy and the prospects for the legislative proposals he made in his message to Congress on November 18th. Attending that meeting were Secretary Simon, Bill Seidman, Roy Ash, Allen Greenspan, Bill Eberle, and Bill Timmons.

This afternoon at 5:00 the President will meet with George Meany. The purpose of that is to give him a briefing on the SALT talks.

Q Why?

MR. NESSEN: Why not? He is a leader of a great number of Americans.

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Q Is this a continuation of the President's efforts to woo Mr. Meany away from Senator Jackson?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have any indication that it is, Jim.

Q Would the President object if Mr. Meany passed the briefing along to Senator Jackson, since he did not get one personally?

MR. NESSEN: What makes you think he did not get one personally?

Q He did not get one from the President, did he?

MR. NESSEN: He got one from an NSC member personally.

The economic meeting was over at 12:07, having lasted one hour.

Q Did Mr. Meany ask for this briefing with the President? How did it come about?

MR. NESSEN: We will check and find out.

Q Does he have any other briefings scheduled for private citizens?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I know of at the moment, but I assume there are going to be a lot of briefings on SALT.

Q Just for example, will he be briefing the head of the Chamber of Commerce or the Manufacturer's Association, and the auto workers.

MR. NESSEN: As I say, I don't have his schedule of briefings, but he will be passing along details of his negotiations to others, and I will give you the names when they are scheduled.

Q When does he plan to tell the American people?

MR. NESSEN: As I mentioned yesterday, as soon as we get the communication from the Soviet Union.

Q I understand that, but is there any schedule on that?

MR. NESSEN: There are some ideas under consideration. We have not settled on one yet.

Q You have not gotten a communication?

MR. NESSEN: Not yet.

Tomorrow is Thanksgiving, and we don't plan to brief. Sheila Weidenfeld is taking care of giving out the details of how the family plans to spend Thanksgiving.

I think we will have a briefing and a regular business day here on Friday.

The 30-30 Club Brunch is going to be covered by a pool, but there will be full coverage of the arrival and departure of the guests at the South Portico.

At 11:15 tomorrow, the start of the brunch in the Blue Room will be covered by a photo pool consisting of a network camera crew, photographers from the AP, UPI, Post, Star, Grand Rapids Press, Time Magazine, Newsweek Magazine, and WOTV of Grand Rapids. The reporters pool will consist of the AP, UPI, Washington Post, Grand Rapids Press, and a network correspondent. The pool will stay there for a while to take some pictures, and then at the end of the brunch will go back for toasts and other remarks.

The 30-30 group will get a tour of the White House after they have had their brunch, not conducted by the President or the First Lady, at least at the moment. No coverage is planned for that.

At 3:00 the group will depart from the South Portico, and that is full coverage, and obviously you can interview the team members when they go.

Q Ron, 30-30, what is that?

MR. NESSEN: 30-30 was 30 men on the team, and they played in 1930.

Q Maybe we can talk about this later, but aren't you going to let each of the networks have their camera there instead of just one? You said just one network. You normally would let us all have one. It is a lot easier to do that.

MR. NESSEN: Bill Roberts is doing the arrangements for that. Ask him what the answer is to that.

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Q Will we be taken around to the South Portico?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

On Saturday the President goes to the football game, leaving the White House about noon. He is going up in a helicopter. We have had a fairly small signup for this game coverage, and it is going to be economically unfeasible to take an airplane. So, we are taking a press helicopter. And we would hope that the signup would be small enough to get everybody on one helicopter.

Q What time?

MR. NESSEN: We will let you know.

Have you got the exchange of letters between the President and Anne Armstrong?

Q No.

MR. NESSEN: I think the letters are self-explanatory. Mrs. Armstrong is leaving because of important family responsibilities. The President understands that, and is accepting her resignation with deepest regret.

Q Do you have anything you want to tell us about a news conference?

MR. NESSEN: No. Thanks for asking, though.

Q Will the news conference wait until the exchange of letters is completed between the President and Mr. Brezhnev? Is that it, or what?

MR. NESSEN: I just don't have anything to announce on the news conference at the moment.

Q You don't expect one this week?

MR. NESSEN: I just don't have anything to announce.

Q You would not rule one out for this week?

MR. NESSEN: For guidance?

Q Guidance.

MR. NESSEN: I would not rule one out.

Q What about today?

MR. NESSEN: I would rule one out today.

Q Tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: I would rule one out tomorrow.

Q You ruled out today, tomorrow, and Saturday, right?

Q What about Friday?

MR. NESSEN: Very good thinking.

Q Is Gwen Anderson going to succeed Ann Armstrong?

MR. NESSEN: We don't have any current plans to replace Mrs. Armstrong.

Q You mean you are just going to leave it unreplaceable?

MR. NESSEN: As you know, the resignation takes effect on December 21. I think that is in the letter.

Q It is not in the letter.

MR. NESSEN: It takes effect on December 21.

The President is hoping to reduce the size of the White House staff. The present plan is to reassign her duties to several other staff members.

Q What progress, if any, is being made on his plans to reduce the White House staff?

MR. NESSEN: It has already been reduced, and I would think that some time before the end of the year we will give you a comprehensive statement on the White House staff composition and numbers, and a comparison with previous numbers.

Q How much has it been reduced so far?

MR. NESSEN: I just don't have the count at the moment. I am aware of the reduction in my staff, and Anne Armstrong, and some others, but I don't have any overall numbers right now. But we will get that to you.

Q You wouldn't have any women now in the Cabinet?

MR. NESSEN: There are other women who have leading jobs in the Government, Sarah.

Q She said in the Cabinet.

MR. NESSEN: Oh, in the Cabinet.

Q At the White House.

MR. NESSEN: Let me think who the women are. I guess not at the Cabinet level at the moment.

Q Is there any plan to put another woman at Cabinet level?

MR. NESSEN: I think you all know the President's feelings about giving women top jobs in the Government, and as we announce the changes I think you will see some women getting jobs.

Q At Cabinet-level jobs?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know, because I don't know what Cabinet changes are coming.

Q Have you decided where the Spanish-speaking will go out of her department, out of her office?

MR. NESSEN: Fernando DeBaca, and he will take over that aspect of her job. His title is Special Assistant to the President dealing in the area of Spanish affairs.

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Q Who is going to take her Bicentennial --

MR. NESSEN: Her Bicentennial Commission will go to Jack Marsh; her women's affairs, Patricia Lindh and Karen Keesling, who already are working in that area, and Bill Baroody will help out as necessary.

The Federal Property Council will be taken over by the Domestic Council. Youth Affairs will have Pam Powell, who is already working on youth affairs. The Committee to Reorganize the Government's Conduct of Foreign Policy, no final decision has been made yet on that, but I think probably Bob Hartmann will be doing that, and liaison with Governor Rockefeller's Critical Choices Group.

Q Is that what Anne Armstrong was handling?

MR. NESSEN: Liaison with Governor Rockefeller's Critical Choices Group?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: I am told she was. I don't have anything specific on that, but I think perhaps Jack Marsh will be taking over that, at least he will for the time being. And the White House Fellows Commission, Dick Cheney will be overseeing that.

The President initiated the meeting with George Meany, and in answer to the question about the camera crews for the 30-30 brunch, we are only going to have one crew because it is pretty tight in there, the Blue Room, and there is just not space for everybody.

Q How about just one still photo crew?

MR. ROBERTS: The camera crew is three people. That is the problem.

Q You have never done it that way.

Q Will the press conference Friday be televised?

MR. NESSEN: I think you make a mistake, Helen, if you leap to the conclusion that there is going to be a news conference on Friday. I hope we are all talking on guidance about the news conference. I am just trying to be helpful. I would not rule it out, but I certainly would not leap to the conclusion there is going to be one.

Q Does that mean, Ron, you are in doubt about it, again on guidance?

MR. NESSEN: It has not been scheduled is what I am saying.

Q But if it is scheduled, will it be televised?

MR. NESSEN: You will have to ask the networks that. If we make it available, then they can carry it or not, as they choose.

Q Are you thinking about an afternoon or evening one?

MR. NESSEN: I am not thinking about anything because it is not scheduled, Dick.

Q If you were thinking about it, what would you be thinking about?

MR. NESSEN: Why did I ever start this? There is no news conference scheduled at the moment.

Q Ron, who is the White House liaison with the D. C. government?

MR. NESSEN: Andre Buchels.

Q Is Dean Burch also resigning?

MR. NESSEN: We do not have any other personnel announcements today.

Q Ron, what is Rumsfeld doing in China. Why isn't he here?

MR. NESSEN: Mr. Rumsfeld is doing in China just what we said --

Q Why isn't he back here with the President working on White House matters?

MR. NESSEN: Rumsfeld is doing in China just what we announced he would be doing in China when we made the announcement. Don Rumsfeld on the plane over to Japan said to Henry, "Why don't you take me along some time to China," and Henry said, "Why don't you come this time," and they asked the President and he said, "That is a good idea. Why don't you take Don along."

Q That is not my question. My question is, why is the man not here working at his position with matters so vital pending? Why is he just taking a little willy-nilly side trip just because he thought of it and said, "Why can't I go along"?

MR. NESSEN: It is not a willy-nilly sidetrip. It is something the President felt would be useful for him to do, which is also part of our announcement. The fact that Don is not here certainly does not stop the White House from operating and the President, if you look at his schedule, is dealing with all these vital areas that you have in mind.

He had his meeting with the economic advisers today. He has had other meetings on energy matters and so forth. The White House does not stop when Don is not here. Just to elaborate a little bit --

Q Is he being groomed to take either Kissinger's place or Schlesinger's place?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I know of, Sarah. The White House is organized in such a way that each of the senior staff members has a deputy who is totally interchangeable. When Don is not here, Dick Cheney serves in precisely the same capacity that Don has. When I am not here, Jack is the Press Secretary, in effect, and the same is true of each of the other senior staff members here. It is organized just to take care of situations where the senior member is not here but nothing stops.

Q This is a question I hate to be asking, but why are we cutting 729 persons out of the heart of the Federal Energy Administration at this time?

MR. NESSEN: I did not know we were. Is that part of yesterday?

Q Several people in Government at the top do not seem to be aware of that, but it is pretty vital.

MR. NESSEN: Is it true?

Q Yes, it is true.

MR. NESSEN: We will have to check on it.

Q I would not be asking you if it was not true.

MR. NESSEN: This is the first I have heard of it. I will check and find out if it is happening and if so, why.

Q While we are on the subject of -- or we were a minute ago -- Cabinet changes, Commerce publications report that Secretary Simon is on his way out and will be out in about a month. I think they said a month or by the end of the year. Is that correct?

MR. NESSEN: Jim, I think, as you know, probably every Cabinet member has been speculated about at one time or another in print as leaving. I just do not think it is profitable to get into a position of going through the list one by one and saying he is leaving, is he leaving, and if so, when.

Q What was his question about?

MR. NESSEN: Bill Simon. I think we are just going to have to stick to what I consider to be the proper way to do it, which is if and when anybody leaves, we will announce it. I just don't think we ought to get into every speculative story.

Q You are not denying it, in other words?

MR. NESSEN: I said I just don't think we ought to handle it on a piecemeal basis based on speculative stories.

Q Are there a number of changes contemplated in the Cabinet?

MR. NESSEN: We are just going to announce any Cabinet changes when they come up, or any other personnel changes when they are made.

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Q Has the President asked for any pro forma resignations?

MR. NESSEN: He has not.

Q Ron, I have a couple of questions about the inflation impact statement release you have out.

MR. NESSEN: Could I see it so I know what I am talking about?

Q Meanwhile, can you say whether the President is taking a new look at the economy in view of these meetings? And is he more perturbed now?

MR. NESSEN: Well, Helen, you know the point I have tried to get across all along is that the President's legislative package -- and as he has tried to get over -- actually dealt with both aspects of the economy, inflation and recession. Congress has done nothing about either half of it, but I mean his economic advisors could see the softening of the economy coming. So, you know, this does not come as any great surprise. And his economic program dealt with that, through the unemployment insurance program, and through the public jobs program. And if Congress is interested in fighting recession it seems to me they would get on and pass these two measures to help the people who have been hurt by the recession.

Q Is the President giving any new thought to wage and price controls?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I am aware of, Bob.

Q Ron, are any of the President's energy people, beginning with Secretary Morton, and running on down the line, letting him know in one way or another that they feel they need some time with him that they have not been able to have to tell him the facts about the problem?

MR. NESSEN: John, let's start off with the facts. The facts are that Frank Zarb in his capacity as Energy Resources Council has spent three hours with the President yesterday. So any idea that the President is not hearing anything about energy is just totally wrong. He is. Most recently from Frank Zarb yesterday and today.

Phil?

Q This requires a determination of inflationary impact of Federal programs and legislation, but it does not seem to go anywhere from there. Suppose a Federal program is found to be inflationary, what action is taken? What is the next step? You find it is inflationary, so what?

MR. NESSEN: You mean if it turns out to be inflationary then is there some legal mechanism to stop the program, or something like that?

Q Is there any kind of mechanism, legal or otherwise, to follow through?

MR. NESSEN: There is, and let me find out what it is.

Q One other question on this then. When President Ford first took office, his transitional team recommended that the Office of Management and Budget be stripped of some of its powers because it could become too powerful viz-a-viz the Federal agencies. Now this new statement seems to give it a kind of veto power on legislation.

MR. NESSEN: By having the impact statements go into the OMB?

Q Yes. He sets the standards and he makes the determination. Isn't this a major increase in the powers of the Director of OMB?

MR. NESSEN: Let me check out both aspects of the inflationary impact statement. We should not have dumped this out today without any background.

Q When you say you will check this, are you going to put out some kind of statement, or how are we going to know? This is out today ---

MR. NESSEN: Well, I don't think we should have put this out without having adequate briefing or something on it. Maybe we can arrange something this afternoon. We should not have done that.

Q Ron, in this briefing that the President received from Mr. Ash, did he get any indication as to how the voluntary approach to the energy conservation problem is going, and does he have any feeling that we may have to move to controls of some kind on energy and gasoline and oil consumption?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I saw Frank this morning and talked to him a little bit about this meeting, and he did not mention that he received any statistics. I talked to somebody else yesterday, because I was just curious myself, and there is a little lag time on measuring consumption and so far there are no firm figures that I can find out about how the consumption is going down.

Q Ron, we asked this question of Mr. Zarb when Anne Armstrong had her recent meeting with women on the economy, and he said the blueprint -- I think there is a blueprint going around that is not available to the press, as I understand -- he wanted these women to all read it and study it. Well, they did not have a copy, and they did not get a copy. Then he said that the plans would be ready, I believe he said -- I may be wrong --

MR. NESSEN: You mean the blueprint, "Operation Independence" blueprint? That is available.

Q To the press?

MR. NESSEN: I'm sure it is. I have seen a lot --

Q Because we asked for it the other day and didn't get it.

MR. NESSEN: FEA has copies, and I'm told that there was a three ---

Q We asked Mr. Zarb for it, and we could not get it.

MR. NESSEN: Mr. Zarb is not in charge of FEA.

Q I know that, but he was headed that way, and he was talking at the time of this subject. I would not be asking you if you were not talking on this subject.

MR. NESSEN: Let me just say, Sarah, there was a three-hour briefing, and plenty of paper material handed out, and it is still available at FEA.

Q No, sir, the reading material had nothing in the world to do with what I am talking about. The reading material was terrible at that conference. I am asking you a question put to Mr. Zarb at that time as a man in the OMB who should know these things about the energy problem of the Ford Administration, and for conservation, and it was not going to be ready until the end of February. Now the end of February is pretty well, for me anyway, as well as over, and we have had this thing before us for some time.

MR. NESSEN: The energy problem goes beyond this immediate winter, Sarah.

Looking at my notes in talking to Mr. Zarb, the energy, total energy program, is not quite ready to present to the President, although it is very close to being ready, and Frank plans to ask for a meeting within the next two weeks with the President in which he and Secretary Morton will outline to the President the current state of energy problems in the United States and start to put the energy program into final form.

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Q Ron, could I ask a question related to that? Some time ago you told us the President had begun calls for and receiving figures on oil imports in order to determine whether or not what the situation appeared to be on meeting his one million barrel a day reduction, and at that time you said -- this was several weeks ago -- you said there was a lag here and these did not yet show one way or the other.

Has he continued to receive them, and are they showing now what kind of progress we are making?

MR. NESSEN: This is what I said I had not been able to locate in the past day or so, but I am going to pursue it and find out what the figures do show.

Q Ron, Senator Jackson, after he got his briefing from senior NSC members, said that the Vladivostok agreement would add, to quote him, "billions and billions to the cost of arms." Does the White House agree or disagree with that assessment?

MR. NESSEN: Disagree.

Q What is your view as to its effect on the cost of our arms program?

MR. NESSEN: I can only quote to you what the President told the Congressional leaders yesterday, which is that left without a ceiling, we would be off on a new arms race, and I think I mentioned to you that arms races go in five-year cycles, so we would be in for at least a five-year spiral of arms building, which would indeed cost billions and billions of dollars, and then if there were nothing done, we would be off on the next five-year cycle.

So, you could look forward to ten years of increasing arms costs, and a raise to develop new and more weapons. This does exactly what the President said it does, which is to put a rigid ceiling on the number of weapons delivery systems, and that does save money because if you have a limit of what you can build, you do not have to spend on an almost infinite number of new and better weapons.

Q Is the magic figure 2400 and 1200?

MR. NESSEN: Helen, I am just not going to be able to give the figures until the President announces it.

Q Ron, didn't you say yesterday this limit was above what the United States planned it to be?

MR. NESSEN: I said about the same or slightly above.

Q Then how are you going to save money if you have a limit that is higher --

MR. NESSEN: What I am talking about is saving the money that you would have to spend if there were no ceiling at all, and you would increase the numbers indefinitely, just piling up weapons. If the United States decides to go up to the ceiling, it is a very slight, if any, increase over the planned numbers that we have now.

Q If I could follow right on that point, on that point yesterday you were asked if this was going to be at about or slightly above what the United States had been planning as of 1977 or 1984, and you did not know. Do you know now?

MR. NESSEN: No, I don't know now.

Q That makes a whole lot of difference, doesn't it, because that would be eight more years. If you are just putting a ceiling on what we would have built by 1985, it is a very high figure.

MR. NESSEN: Wait a minute now.

Q We have been planning to add 50 or more land-based missiles and 50 more submarine-based missiles for each of the next several years.

MR. NESSEN: This sets a limit that would hold until 1985. Now you are asking, when I said it would be above or slightly above what we had planned, whether I am saying planned for 1977 or planned for 1985?

Q Yes.

Q Does it mean we are going to have to MIRV a lot more missiles?

MR. NESSEN: Let me just answer this question. I don't know the answer yet. I have not been able to find it out.

Q What about the answer to Bob's question?

MR. NESSEN: The MIRVing question. I really don't think I can answer that, Bob, since I am not at liberty to give the number that would be allowed to be MIRVed.

Q Ron, one of the central points under debate over this business is the verification.

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q And we were told yesterday by you and I think by some of the people coming from this meeting with the President that President Ford told them that we had intelligence means to verify the MIRVing.

MR. NESSEN: Right.

Q That was better than on-site inspection. Can you tell us to any degree at all what sort of means these are?

MR. NESSEN: I really can't. I know what they are, but I cannot tell you.

Q Do you expect people simply to accept on faith that we do indeed have an adequate verification system?

MR. NESSEN: I think the fact that the President and Secretary Kissinger and Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs have all agreed to this would indicate that they have confidence in the verification system.

Q Ron, let me ask you this way. Can we now, by satellite reconnaissance, tell whether a missile is MIRVed?

MR. NESSEN: Bob, you know I cannot get into the intelligence methods.

Q We all know. It is an acknowledged fact that that is how we know how many missiles there are. We do it through satellite reconnaissance, but never before have we been able to tell by the satellite whether or not the missiles are MIRVed.

MR. NESSEN: I just cannot go into methods of intelligence.

Q Are you saying when the Congressman quoted the President and Dr. Kissinger as saying they were satisfied on the verification issue, that the President was referring specifically to MIRVs or are you merely saying as you already said that he was referring just to numbers of missiles; that is, missiles and silos?

MR. NESSEN: He was referring to the total agreement with the Russians.

Q Including MIRVs?

MR. NESSEN: That is in the agreement.

Q One more question along those lines. Will we assume, through our intelligence means, satellites, et cetera, that if we determine that the Soviet Union has the capability of MIRVing a particular type missile, will we then assume that all of these missiles that are deployed are MIRVed?

MR. NESSEN: I know what you are asking, and it just gets too close to the question of intelligence methods, Gene. I know precisely what you are saying, and I cannot answer it. I know the answer, but I cannot give you the answer.

Q Ron, your answer suggests that verification has been agreed upon as well, and it is not a negotiable point.

MR. NESSEN: I did not mean to give that impression. All I am doing is quoting the President yesterday as saying, "We have the methods to verify that are very sophisticated, and meet what the American officials consider to be the necessary verification."

Q So, we have the methods, and if they meet the criteria, therefore, it seems to me it follows that it is not negotiable; in other words, not necessary to negotiate verification?

MR. NESSEN: I think Dr. Kissinger said that one of the subjects to be discussed in the remaining talks is verification and other technical matters. And the President told the leaders yesterday that he is satisfied that we have adequate methods of verification to assure that the agreement is being lived up to.

Q Ron, when the President reports to the American people on the numbers, however he does it and when, is he going to discuss this verification thing in any more details, or are you going to just give the numbers and assume that people will think we have the intelligence methods to make the verification and that these should not be discussed?

MR. NESSEN: I would think he would give the same assurance to the American people that he gave to the Congressional leaders, which is that he and the others are satisfied that we have adequate verification methods.

Q Are the U.S. bombers included in the total number, the U.S. bombers in Europe? The ones based in Europe.

MR. NESSEN: No, I think we said yesterday that the forward planes are not counted in this agreement.

Q Ron, was the future sale of U.S. grain to Russia discussed at Vladivostok?

MR. NESSEN: I don't recall that being in the final communique. Was it? I don't think it was. I guess it was not discussed. I have not heard about it being discussed.

Q Do you have any new estimate of when this piece of paper will be available on the numbers, how soon?

MR. NESSEN: It is not a new estimate. It is the same one we had before, that would get here in about a week.

Q A week from when?

MR. NESSEN: A week from the end of the conference, which was Saturday Russian time.

Q Is it a chance it will come, on guidance, by Friday?

MR. NESSEN: I just don't have any way of knowing that.

Q Ron, has the President said anything to you about your widely reported statement in Vladivostok that he was able to accomplish in three months what former President Nixon was not able to do in three years?

MR. NESSEN: I think I said the other day that it came up briefly the other day, and --

Q I am sorry I missed it.

MR. NESSEN: It did come up when I was talking to him, and he did not indicate any criticism.

Q What did he say about that, though, Ron? You said he was not critical. You never did tell us what he did say.

MR. NESSEN: Well, I don't really think I should tell you what he did say because it was not critical.

Q You are characterizing it. Was he praising that? Was he happy you made the statement?

MR. NESSEN: He did not indicate that, either.

Q Did you perhaps explain something to him that put a meaning on it, that just a quick glance at the statement might be different from the way some people are reading it?

MR. NESSEN: No, because there was not that much time spent on it. I think, you know on my own, since Saturday or whatever day that was, I think it was probably a hasty and oversimplified remark, and I think, upon reflection, without anybody really having said anything to me, except my own thoughts on the matter, it is clear to me now, looking back, that what happened in Vladivostok was really kind of a culmination of steps that have been taken over the years.

Q Ron, has President Ford talked to former President Nixon since he returned?

MR. NESSEN: No, he has not.

Bob?

Q Can I go back to Mr. Zarb's briefing of the President? Could you tell us what that briefing was about and maybe give us some of the details of what he told the President?

MR. NESSEN: Just a wide range of energy subjects, Bob, is all I can tell you.

Q Are the President's energy advisers telling him he is going to have to rethink the business of the gasoline tax?

MR. NESSEN: No, the President is still opposed to an increase in the gasoline tax.

Q Ron, did you discuss that quote with Secretary Kissinger?

MR. NESSEN: No, I did not. Do you mean after I made it?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: No, I did not.

Q Did Secretary Kissinger tell you that the President, as reported, should play this down, be humble about this?

MR. NESSEN: I think whoever was the reporter standing there heard exactly what the exchange was. I think as far as I know, it was accurately quoted.

Q Was there any kind of briefing of former President Nixon in any form on the SALT agreement?

MR. NESSEN: A member of the former President's staff was given pretty much the same briefing that the Congressional leaders were yesterday.

Q Who was that?

MR. NESSEN: By a member of the White House staff.

Q Who was the former staff member, the member of the former President's staff?

MR. NESSEN: We don't really need the names, do we?

Q In this case, wouldn't it be appropriate? He does not have that large a staff.

Q Was he given that with the clear intention that he was going to go to San Clemente or call on the telephone to San Clemente and brief Nixon, or was he in San Clemente?

MR. NESSEN: He was in San Clemente.

Q He was in San Clemente, and he was briefed over the telephone, or one of the lines?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Was it Ziegler?

MR. NESSEN: He does not have that many people out there, does he?

Q Could you identify him for that reason?

MR. NESSEN: Ziegler.

Q Did he give it over a public telephone?

MR. NESSEN: It was by secure communication.

Q It was not in person?

MR. NESSEN: No, it was not.

Q Can you tell us who on the White House staff
did it?

MR. NESSEN: No, John.

MORE

Q I am going back to the verification for a moment. Does the President in what he told the leadership yesterday intend to differ from or alter the thrust of what Dr. Kissinger said at his final press conference in Vladivostok about the verification problem as a factor in the future of the negotiation of this agreement?

MR. NESSEN: No, John, I really don't think he did. I think Dr. Kissinger was talking about the kinds of technical discussions that are going on or that will go on in Geneva, and I think what the President was doing was giving a general assurance that he felt confident that the intelligence methods were sufficient verification for the agreement.

Q Am I wrong in my recollection that Kissinger named the verification problem as one of the more serious problems still to be worked out?

MR. NESSEN: No, I don't recall that he put it that way. I think he was listing some technical matters that needed to be ---

Q That was my reading of it anyway.

MR. NESSEN: I don't recall that he said it was a serious matter.

Q I did not say he used that language. I said was not that the thrust of his remarks.

MR. NESSEN: I did not get that feeling, John.

Russ had a question.

Q Ron, when did the Ziegler briefing take place, and can you tell us how long it lasted?

MR. NESSEN: It took place yesterday and lasted about ten minutes.

Q Ron, why can't you say who did the briefing?

MR. NESSEN: I just would rather not.

Q Who initiated it, the President?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q He requested it --

Q -- on the basis of your remark.

MR. NESSEN: No, I don't think that had anything to do with it.

Q Whoever did it, did it also include an explanation to Ziegler of your remarks and assurance to Ziegler to relate to the former President that you did not intend to downplay Nixon's role here? In short, did it include something along the lines of an apology, and as a matter of fact, was that really the bulk of the conversation?

MR. NESSEN: The answer is no to every question.

Q Ron, if they took the initiative on wanting this briefing, why? On what grounds is he entitled to such a briefing?

MR. NESSEN: You would have to ask them out there.

Q Why did you respond, or why did the White House respond?

MR. NESSEN: I think we said before that traditionally former Presidents receive briefings on major international developments.

Q They asked for it.

MR. NESSEN: I think I said that.

Q Is the President up to receiving these kinds of briefings, the former President, I mean.

MR. NESSEN: You will have to check out there, Helen. I don't know what the state of his health is.

Q Or did Ziegler relay it to him?

MR. NESSEN: That is my understanding.

Q One more question on the arms agreement. You said yesterday that the numbers for both sides would be equal for missiles.

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Can you tell us whether the warhead numbers will be equal as well as the number of missiles?

MR. NESSEN: What do you mean "the warhead numbers"?

Q The Russians have the capability of putting a lot more warheads on some of their missiles than we can. We can put 8 or 9.

MR. NESSEN: I think we went through that yesterday, Bob. The MIRV limit has to do with missiles and not warheads.

Q Right. So conceivably then they can wind up with a lot more warheads than we have, is that right?

MR. NESSEN: Conceivably. But I do think you ought to remember Dr. Kissinger's remark, which was that what you are talking about here is basically whether one side can destroy the other side eight times over rather than seven times over.

Q That is a very serious argument that people make.

MR. NESSEN: Under the agreement the MIRV limit is on missiles and not on warheads.

Q Not on warheads?

MR. NESSEN: That is correct.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

END

(AT 12:57 PM EST)