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NEWS CONFERENCE

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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 12:12 P.M. EDT

APRIL 28, 1975

MONDAY

MR. NESSEN: The President came to the office a little after 7:30 and met with members of his staff, until he departed to go to Constitution Hall to speak to the Chamber of Commerce. You have all seen the speech, and it was piped back here.

At 12:45, the President is meeting with Monsignor Herman H. Zerfas and Ivan E. Zylstra. Monsignor Zerfas is the Superintendent of Education for the Diocese of Grand Rapids, and Mr. Zylstra is the Administrator for School and Governmental Relations of the National Union of Christian Schools in Grand Rapids. These two gentlemen are both old friends of the President. They have a custom of coming to see the President about once a year. They are in Washington and are coming in to see him this afternoon.

At 4:30, the President will meet with Governor James Holshouser, of North Carolina, a Republican. The Governor requested the meeting. I understand that one of the topics is some problems that the Governor wants to bring up concerning natural gas shortages in North Carolina.

At 4:45, the President will meet Miss Lisa Lyons, of New Port Richey, Florida. She is Miss National Teenager. She is coming in with Congressman Richard Kelly of the Fifth District of Florida.

At 5:30, the President will have a meeting with his economic and energy advisers in the Cabinet Room. I think you probably know that Frank Zarb has already said it will be at this meeting that the President will consider what to do about the May 1 expiration of his delay in the oil import tariff increase.

Q Will you have anything for us?

MR. NESSEN: I think what I will do is wait and see how the meeting goes, and then we will either post or brief, depending on the circumstances.

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Q Do you expect to announce what he is going to do?

MR. NESSEN: I have no idea, Bob, because I have no idea whether he will make the decision actually in this meeting or just take it under advisement.

Tomorrow, His Majesty King Hussein, of Jordan, arrives for a private visit in the United States. The President will have a meeting with the King tomorrow morning at 10:30. We will have some information put out after that meeting.

There will be a working dinner in the King's honor tomorrow night at the Residence. We will have coverage plans for that to announce tomorrow. This is a private visit to the United States, so there will be no South Lawn arrival ceremony.

For travel later in the week, I can tell you that the President will attend the 48th annual Shenandoah Apple Blossom Festival in Winchester, Virginia, on Friday. Susan Ford has been selected to serve as Queen of the Festival, and the President will participate in the coronation.

The event is scheduled to begin at 2:30 on the front steps of Handley High School in Winchester. This is a 3-day pageant of community activities. The rough travel plans are for the President to leave the South Grounds shortly after 2:00 on Friday and come back at about 6:00, or shortly thereafter. We will have additional details later in the week, and at this point, it is not clear how the press will travel to the event, but we will have that later.

Q Are we going by helicopter?

MR. NESSEN: That has been decided, and it is by bus.

Q There will be no pool at all?

MR. NESSEN: I assume the President is going by helicopter. We will work out some pool arrangements, Frank.

On Saturday, the President will participate in the commissioning ceremony of the USS NIMITZ at the U.S. Naval Station in Norfolk. The NIMITZ is the second nuclear aircraft carrier of the Navy. The ceremony will take place at Pier 12 of the Naval Station there and will begin shortly after 11:00 a.m. The President will leave the South grounds at about 9:45 and will be back about 1:45. We will have details on that later in the week.

The President has accepted an invitation extended by the Soviet government to send a U.S. delegation to the May 8 commemorative ceremonies in Moscow, marking the 30th anniversary of the restoration of peace in Europe. W. Averill Harriman will lead the U.S. delegation, and we will have the names of the other members later on.

That is all I have in the way of announcements.

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Q Ron, can you give us any information on what the situation is in Saigon? Has the President been advised on whether those were South Vietnamese pilots or North Vietnamese pilots?

MR. NESSEN: At the moment, Bob, there is a certain amount of confusion and the reports are sketchy. It has just not been determined absolutely who they were. The Pentagon is keeping a close watch on it and perhaps can give you firmer information later on.

Q Did the President get any special notification on the events?

MR. NESSEN: Not special, Bob. He does keep up with all the developments from there.

Q Is the President sending a message to President Minh?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I know of.

Q Has any decision been made to get the remaining Americans out immediately?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q No decision has been made, or a decision has been made not to?

MR. NESSEN: There has been no order given to evacuate all the rest of the Americans. As always in cases like this, the final decision rests with the Ambassador on the spot.

Q Do you know how many Americans still are there, approximately?

MR. NESSEN: Approximately 940, I believe it is.

Q Ron, over the weekend Ambassador McCloskey said that 130,000 Vietnamese will be paroled in the United States. Is that accurate, and when was the number raised from 50,000 to 130,000?

MR. NESSEN: That was announced earlier last week. I think maybe it was the same day we went to --

Q No, I believe it was said until Friday that there would be 50,000 that would be allowed in.

MR. NESSEN: You have to add up all the categories. You have 50,000 in the category of high-risk Vietnamese, and then you have various other categories of relatives and wives and so forth. If you add all the categories up, they come to 130,000, but that was announced last week.

Q Ron, isn't that 130,000 figure really something to shoot for? It is my understanding we do not expect to get that many out before Tan Son Nhut shuts down. That is a very optimistic figure.

MR. NESSEN: We certainly hope to get that many out. I believe Ambassador Brown said at his briefing last week really something quite different from what you suggested, John, and that is that these are numbers that have been set at this point, and if it is possible to get additional Vietnamese out, then the Justice Department would go back to Congress and have the 130,000 raised.

Q I am not saying we would not want to get them out. I am just talking about the military conditions, what has happened.

MR. NESSEN: It is not possible to predict the future, as always.

Q Ron, is the President satisfied at this point with what he knows of the arrangements being made to handle the Vietnamese ones that are in the United States?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Ron, did you mean to say that Ambassador Graham Martin has final authority on when to evacuate the remaining Americans?

MR. NESSEN: That is always the case, Peter. In any country where there is danger to American lives, the Ambassador always is the one who gives the order.

Q But is it not a fact that the Ambassador was directed to remove more Americans than he was originally intending to remove up to this point?

MR. NESSEN: There was a directive sent to the Ambassador, as you know -- I think we said that about two weeks ago -- that pinned down the number of Americans, but that had to do with nonessential Americans, and Americans whose jobs are no longer there, and also dependents.

Q I take it then the President has complete trust in Martin's judgment on this matter?

MR. NESSEN: He certainly does.

Q I have a question related to that, if I might. Did the President give the Ambassador, Mr. Martin, any guidelines or specific directives relative to that in whatever communiques have been sent forth? In other words, has he given him, "You have the final orders, but I want you to make sure that this, this, and this is observed"?

MR. NESSEN: Walt, this case is not different than other cases in countries where American lives may be in danger.

Q So, there were no special orders, no special directives here?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know, there have not been.

Q Ron, why is the United States continuing to ship military equipment to Saigon when it appears obvious now that whatever shipment is sent is going to fall into North Vietnamese-Viet Cong hands? There was a piece in the paper this morning about shipments still coming into Vung Tau and they have no way to get them to Saigon.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know the situation on the military shipments. You ought to check with the people who handle that, which would be the Pentagon and State.

Q When would these military shipments be cut off?

MR. NESSEN: I have no information on what the pace of shipments is, or where they are going or whether they are going. I just can't help you on that.

Q Ron, is it possible for you to check and see whether the President has sent any message to Minh?

MR. NESSEN: I will, Lou.

Q Also, you said the information you had on the bombing of Tan Son Nhut was sketchy as to whether it was North Vietnamese or South Vietnamese pilots. The AP has a story out of the State Department, officials, and it says they were definitely disgruntled South Vietnamese pilots, if I can remember correctly.

MR. NESSEN: And the other wire service had a story saying that they were North Vietnamese.

Q That was a much earlier story, and the Barry Schweid story out of the State Department was later in the day. I am wondering if perhaps you did not have the same information that Barry Schweid got out of the State Department, that it was in fact South Vietnamese pilots?

MR. NESSEN: I have talked to people all morning, and they simply don't know, Walt.

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Q Is the President looking forward to working with the new General Minh government as he did with the previous government?

MR. NESSEN: The South Vietnamese have changed their government under their own constitutional processes and we certainly will work with the government.

Q Under that change, Ron, does the President still think it is appropriate for him to request additional military arms in light of Minh's posture and stance within the South Vietnamese political situation?

MR. NESSEN: There has been no change in that particular.

Q Ron, has the President decided on what response, if any, to give the Viet Cong demand for withdrawal of all American Navy vessels off the shore of Indochina?

The papers keep reporting they keep repeating that demand.

MR. NESSEN: That has not come to the United States as any kind of official demand, John.

Q Ron, you mentioned a moment ago the Vietnamese government changed through their own constitutional process. There was a report in Time Magazine that Ambassador Martin sent a letter to President Thieu requesting his resignation. Do you have any comment?

MR. NESSEN: On that, it is not proper to discuss communications, if any, between an Ambassador and a head of state.

Q But this Administration has always denied attempts to change or has been reluctant to attempt to pressure other governments to change heads of state, and what not. Would it not be a change for this government to allow such communication on the part of its Ambassador?

MR. NESSEN: I said, if there were any such communications, we would not be able to talk about them.

Q Ron, do you stand by your earlier statement you made, first, about Cambodia and then later, about Vietnam -- and I am going to have to paraphrase it because I don't have it in front of me -- but to the effect it is not the role of the United States to urge another sovereign government to change its leadership.

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q You stand by that statement?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.



Q Does your answer to Gene Risher's earlier question mean that the President has not ordered a suspension or a slowdown in the shipment of U.S. aid to South Vietnam?

MR. NESSEN: I told Gene I simply don't know enough about where the aid program stands at the moment. You ought to talk to the people who do.

Q I understand that, but you do know what the President has or has not ordered.

MR. NESSEN: No, I don't.

Q If I could follow up, you cannot expect us to find out from the AID people what the President has ordered?

MR. NESSEN: No, Gene. You can find out from the AID people if there is any more aid going and if so, where is it going; if so, how much is going. I mean, they have the information that you are requesting. I don't.

Q Since you say you don't have it and don't know whether the President has issued any orders, could you undertake to find out?

MR. NESSEN: As I say, it is very simple to make a phone call and get all that. Why should I call them and bring it back to you? You can call them directly.

Q Why should we go somewhere else to find out what the President is doing, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: If you feel like not calling over there, I will call for you and bring the information back.

Q Ron, it is not the idea of calling. AID can tell us what is going. They cannot tell us what would have been going and they cannot tell us whether there was any slowdown.

MR. NESSEN: Why couldn't they?

Q What the question goes to, Ron, is what the President's policy is and I don't think we should be referred to AID to find out what the President's policy is.

MR. NESSEN: They carry out the policies, but I will do the call for you if you prefer to do it that way.

Q We prefer you to call the Oval Office rather than AID.

Q To follow that up in another way, does the President assume or have some type of information or assurance that Minh does want the same amount of aid and wants to pursue and continue the relationship with the U.S. to the same extent that Thieu and Huong did?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have anything to indicate otherwise.

Q Is the President telling his friends that he probably won't run for the White House in 1976?

MR. NESSEN: No, he is not. The President does intend to run for President in 1976. He wants it known personally that the story is not true that appears in Newsweek Magazine. The President wants it known that he held no such meeting as described in Newsweek magazine. He definitely plans to run for election in 1976. Any reports to the contrary are wrong.

Whoever the source of the Newsweek story was is going to cause embarrassment to that magazine and at some point down the road, that source, whoever he was, will, I am sure, be no longer considered in the category of a reliable source by Newsweek Magazine.

Q Ron, when will the President announce his candidacy and set up a committee and name a chairman?

MR. NESSEN: In the near future.

Q You mean he is going to set up one of those committees to re-elect?

MR. NESSEN: As required by law, Sarah, until he wins the nomination, he is required to set up a campaign committee outside of the RNC.

Q Is the target date July 1 as reported a couple of weeks ago?

MR. NESSEN: I will just say in the near future, sooner rather than later.

Q Has he made a decision on whether he is going to enter the New Hampshire primary? I know he is supposed to have said he would if there was a contest there.

MR. NESSEN: He indicated to CBS the other night that he would, I thought.

Q Ron, he has made many statements about his intentions to run. Yet, we keep getting these stories cropping up that he is really not going to run, and so forth and so on. Does the President feel there is someone around within his Party who is trying to sabotage his candidacy in 1976?

MR. NESSEN: Some of his advisers do.

Q Do what?

MR. NESSEN: Sabotage his campaign for election?

Q The advisers are sabotaging?

MR. NESSEN: Some advisers agree with the idea Phil has raised that someone is trying to sabotage his campaign.

Q Who is the someone, Ron?

Q Is the someone someone in the Administration?

MR. NESSEN: I think I will just leave it that way.

Q Do they know who it is?

Q Let me ask you, do the advisers feel it is some of the other advisers?

MR. NESSEN: No, not on the staff.

Q Do they know who it is or do they believe they know who it is?

MR. NESSEN: Not in person. I mean, they have not zeroed it down to a single person.

Q Do they think they know where these people are, what organization they are associated with, what category of people they are, something like that? Have they narrowed it down?

MR. NESSEN: They have some suspicions.

Q Are they Republicans or Democrats or both?  
(Laughter)

Q Ron, what is their evidence that someone is trying sabbotage?

MR. NESSEN: As I say, it is a suspicion.

Q Well, what is their evidence?

MR. NESSEN: The evidence on the face of it, that whoever leaked that incorrect story is not a friend of Newsweek and is not a friend of the President, more importantly.

Q Ron, there is one rather peculiar circumstance that came to my attention the other day. You told us that all records of the Nixon Administration have been impounded.

MR. NESSEN: Right.

Q About ten days ago, there was a discussion in this room about whether or not there were secret agreements between messages sent to Vietnam.

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q And the President reported he read those messages and found they were essentially the same as the oral declarations that we know about.

MR. NESSEN: Right.

Q How did he get hold of the copies?

MR. NESSEN: There are some copies of certain things that are essential for the continued business in the White House. But that is the case.

Q Before we go too far afield, there was a proviso, I believe, which the President put upon his own election plans in the interview with UPI with Helen when we were in Vail.

I want to ask if this proviso still holds, that his election plans were contingent upon Mrs. Ford's health, if I remember that interview correctly. Does that proviso still hold?

MR. NESSEN: Mrs. Ford's health is good, and there is no indication that it is not going to be good. I think before we open up the whole subject to this contingency or that contingency, the basic fact is he intends to run for President, period.

Q Ron, what are you doing about these leaks? Are you trying to find out who leaked this story?

MR. NESSEN: I would think Newsweek would want to find out who it was and why he did it to them.

Q Maybe you would have an interest to, given the suspicions of some of the President's advisers that you have given.

MR. NESSEN: Do you mean set up a unit, perhaps, over in the EOB? (Laughter)

Q That is one of the options you have. (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: The President, as he progresses down and announces his candidacy and sets up his committee and names a chairman and runs in New Hampshire, and so forth -- I think Newsweek will become increasingly embarrassed about it.

Q Ron, it isn't just Newsweek. There have been these recurrent reports, as you are aware. Doesn't the President consider that after he has said so many times that he intends to be a candidate and there continue to be reports that he is not going to be a candidate, that this is kind of damaging to him?

MR. NESSEN: It certainly could be, but the proof will be in the eating, or let me say the proof will be in the running. (Laughter)

Q This campaign committee that is going to be set up, there has been talk that Rogers Morton would be heading that and I think --

MR. NESSEN: But that is wrong.

Q You are still denying that?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Phil?

Q My question to you, was does the President feel that he is being sabotaged, I don't think you directed your answer to that. You said some of his aides do. Does the President talk about it?

MR. NESSEN: He is very puzzled by the motivation of whoever did this.

Q Do you mean he does not know?

MR. NESSEN: No, he does not.

Q Is there any feeling that this could have started by someone who is trying to push the Vice President's candidacy for President?

MR. NESSEN: I tell you, I don't like to get too political, and I am going to let you talk to the political people in the White House, who, I am sure, will --

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Q Ron, when the campaign gets moving along, are you going to get more political, or are you going to try to pretend -- (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: I guess I will have to, and lose my virginity. (Laughter)

Q Why don't you start now then? (Laughter)

Q You just avoided a question here. Somebody asked you if he thought the Vice President's people did this, and you did not answer.

MR. NESSEN: No, there is no suspicion of that. I am glad you pointed that out, Bob. There is no suspicion that anybody connected with Vice President Rockefeller had anything to do with this.

Q What about Mr. Reagan and his supporters? He is running a pretty active --

MR. NESSEN: I think I will stop there.

Q Will you point him out as a candidate for the suspicion?

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to go any further. Talk to the political people. I have gotten in up to my knees, and that is about as high as I want to go today. (Laughter)

Q Did the President get a copy of this? I am sure he got it, but I don't know whether it was delivered to him or not. This communication from some Congressmen on the Hill suggests that the refugees from Vietnam be put in Micronesia.

MR. NESSEN: He has gotten some communications about that, yes.

Q What does he think about that?

MR. NESSEN: The plan at the moment is, as these people are processed through the Philippines, Guam and Wake, to bring -- I think Ambassador McCloskey said this yesterday -- them to the United States.

Q Those plans were made before this suggestion was made by the Congressman?

MR. NESSEN: No, he knew about that suggestion.

Q It was because the suggestion made by the Congressmen came after the people, a good part of them, were already in the Philippines and Guam, and I know when it came, so I wondered if the President would take it under consideration. There might still be people to locate. This was the location, permanently, not for just staging it.

MR. NESSEN: I understand. At the moment, the plan is to locate the people in the United States. There has been some talk, as I guess you know, with some other countries, but at the moment the plan is to bring the 130,000 to the United States.

Q Ron, has there been any coordination yet with the Labor Department, as far as finding all these Vietnamese refugees jobs, or are they just going to be wards of the State until they learn English?

MR. NESSEN: I think you need to talk to Ambassador Brown about that. That is his job, to coordinate Labor, Justice, State and Defense.

Q Ron, can you tell us which British Prime Ministers are coming through next week, and what the schedule is at the White House?

MR. NESSEN: On May 7, Prime Minister Whitlam; Prime Minister Rowling of New Zealand on May 7; Prime Minister Wilson on May 7, and then there is a visit we have already announced by the Prime Minister of the Netherlands on May 14.

Q Ron, Sihanouk said today -- apparently in a letter to Mansfield -- that he was willing to establish diplomatic relations between the new Cambodian government and the United States. Granted, Sihanouk's position is tenuous, do you have anything new for us on this Administration's willingness to establish diplomatic relations with Cambodia?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Ron, the other day you indicated the President is going to veto the farm bill. Do you have any idea when that will take place?

MR. NESSEN: Very soon.

Q Today?

MR. NESSEN: Possibly.

Q What about an answer to Sparkman?

MR. NESSEN: It went to the Hill on the 25th, which was Friday. Why don't you get a copy from Sparkman. It is consistent with what we have been saying from here.

Q Ron, would you clear up one thing on this politics business? You say the President will announce in the near future. Would you give us a definition of what you mean by that?

MR. NESSEN: I can't pin it down on a date, but it will be in the near future.

Q Would you say weeks or months?

MR. NESSEN: Let's just leave it at that. I don't have the specific date.

Q Ron, let me point out to you it is rather peculiar to have an Ambassador allocate labor and allocate people to live in certain sections inside the United States, and I cannot believe that the White House does not have some part to say in how we filter or we fix 130,000 or more people into a place where we have eight million unemployed.

The other day I talked to the Immigration Service, and they said, "We are worried sick about this. We don't know what we are going to do." I think in view of the labor demonstration here the other day and the worry of the people, I think we should have something from the White House about this, not from an Ambassador who is dealing with a foreign country.

MR. NESSEN: Sarah, Ambassador Brown's job is not to allocate, it is to coordinate. The basic decision that the people should be relocated here is obviously a Presidential decision.

Q Were here, were here. Where will they go? Where will they work? Who is going to pay for them for food, clothing, shelter and medical care and all that for the months between now and then? The taxpayers? I understand that will be additional burdens on the taxpayers above the money that has already been designated.

MR. NESSEN: As I say, for the specifics of that you do need to talk to the office that is coordinating it, but there is a history of Americans taking in refugees as they did after the Hungarian revolution and after the Cuban revolution, and I think Americans do have a record of compassion.



Q That has nothing to do with my question, Ron. My question is not compassion. My question is just where are we going to fit these people into the labor force of this country, and that is inside the United States. It has nothing to do with the Ambassador.

MR. NESSEN: But, Sarah, it is a question that I don't have the answer to because it is being, as I say, coordinated. The various departments who deal with housing and jobs and whatever, support and relocation and emigration questions and transportation questions, is all centered in the office of Ambassador Brown in terms of coordination, and that is where you can get the specific answers.

Q Ron, last week Ambassador Brown said he was going to look to voluntary agencies to handle this problem.

MR. NESSEN: That is right.

Q On Friday, a bunch of these voluntary agency heads were before the Kennedy subcommittee, and they said they had not even been contacted by Brown's office and, as a matter of fact, Kennedy recessed the hearing for five minutes and made an appointment for them, their first appointment with Ambassador Brown.

MR. NESSEN: I talked to him Friday afternoon, and he said I cannot talk to you very long because I have a room full of voluntary organization heads here, so he did see them Friday, and also the President will be seeing them tomorrow, I believe it is.

Q Ron, I assume the President has not received any request yet from President Minh to remove final Americans from Vietnam?

MR. NESSEN: That is right.

Q And if the President did receive such a request, would he honor it?

MR. NESSEN: Let's see if there is any such request.

Let me give you the rundown on visiting members of the British Commonwealth. As I say, May 7 is the Prime Minister of New Zealand, Mr. Rowling; also, Prime Minister Whitlam of Australia; Wilson also on the 7th; Lee Kuan Yew on the 8th, and those seem to be all the people from the British Commonwealth.

Q Ron, is the President planning a news conference this week?

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard of any plans for one.

Q Ron, in view of the deterioration in Saigon, is he satisfied with the pace of the removal of the Americans?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Senator Mansfield says that the President should have a plan of evacuation. He assumes he does have a plan, but that he does not disclose it. Does the President have a plan, and does he plan to disclose the plan?

MR. NESSEN: I think you see the plan unfolding yourself, and as we said before, to give too many details of the evacuation would endanger the success of it and the lives of people.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END (AT 12:45 P.M. EDT)

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 7:15 P.M. EDT

APRIL 28, 1975

MONDAY

MR. NESSEN: To anticipate your questions, the President is having an NSC meeting now. I cannot tell you anymore about it. It has not started yet. It will be starting momentarily. We will be here for a while, so use your own judgment.

Q     Why the sudden --

MR. NESSEN: I think it is obvious from the wire copy. In response to a question I anticipate, I do not independently have any information on the report two Marines were killed.

The President was given a note during the economic and energy meeting, bringing him up to date on developments in Saigon. I did not see the note myself, but Joe Laitin can handle the factual details, as far as he knows as to what is happening in Saigon.

Q     A housekeeping thing. Are you going to have a decision to disclose to us --

MR. NESSEN: No, and I can do this quickly.

Alan Greenspan opened the meeting with a very brief report on the state of the economy, primarily unemployment. He said the weekly insured unemployment figures, which have, as you know, come out week by week, are interpreted by his staff to point to a probable rise in --

Q     They just went to file.

MR. NESSEN: Let me say the President heard the options on the second dollar and decontrol of oil, took them under consideration and will have a decision later on in the week.

Q There is usually nothing after a NSC meeting. Tonight is an unusual night. Would you advise us hanging around here tonight?

MR. NESSEN: As I say, I am going to be here.

END (AT 7:18 P.M. EDT)

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 8:20 P.M. EDT

APRIL 28, 1975

MONDAY

MR. NESSEN: The NSC meeting is over. It lasted a little less than an hour. I don't have anything to report on what was discussed.

As for later tonight, I simply have no way of telling. If there is anything later tonight, we would get in touch with you through the normal procedures.

Q     Call-outs?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q     No plans to evacuate?

MR. NESSEN: I just cannot tell you anything at the moment.

Q     Before, on the Cambodian thing, you took us into your confidence and that was respected, and you were very helpful. Can you do that this evening?

MR. NESSEN: I cannot.

Q     Do you expect the President to be active tonight on this?

MR. NESSEN: He has gone over to the Residence now.

Q     Do you expect him to stay there?

MR. NESSEN: There is just no way of telling.

Q     Ron, can you say whether any of the Marines who were on the carriers offshore have gone ashore?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q     No, you can't say, or no, they haven't?

MR. NESSEN: No, they haven't.

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Q Can you tell us anything about the format of this meeting? Did Schlesinger or Kissinger brief or did they just sit around, or what?

MR. NESSEN: I just did not attend.

Q Who was there?

MR. NESSEN: The statutory members, and some others.

Q Was the Chairman there, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs?

MR. NESSEN: He is not a statutory member.

Q But sometimes he attends.

Q He is a statutory adviser.

MR. NESSEN: As a statutory adviser, he was there.

Q It was Brown, not somebody sitting in for him?

Q Has the President any reaction to the two Marines that were killed?

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

Q Can you tell us -- there has been no order given for the evacuation?

MR. NESSEN: Correct. There has not been an order to evacuate.

Q Ron, you said no Marines had gone ashore from the aircraft carriers.

MR. NESSEN: Right.

Q Have U.S. troops gone to Vietnam from any other place?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Ron, you said -- I think it surprised most of us -- that the Ambassador makes the final decision.

MR. NESSEN: As is the case in every country.

Q But this is a special situation. It is military. It is a political situation.

MR. NESSEN: In every country it is the same, Ralph, in circumstances where American lives are involved and that is that the Ambassador makes the decision and recommends it to the President.

Q Has the President talked to Graham Martin within the past three hours?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that, Walt.

Q The Ambassador makes the recommendation?

MR. NESSEN: He says, "Okay, the time has come to go."

Q The President must --

MR. NESSEN: The President is Commander-in-Chief.

Q Ron, is it still possible to evacuate the Americans without using the Marines?

MR. NESSEN: Let's just not go any further, I think.

Q Ron, you said this morning 940 Americans were in Saigon as far as you know. Is that figure still true?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know how many got out during the day -- I guess it would have been during the night -- if any. In other words, I don't have a later figure, which is not to say there might not have been some more, but I don't have a later figure.

Q The President has not been able to confirm the deaths of these two Marines?

MR. NESSEN: I did not attend the meeting but Joe Laitin, I am told, is available at the Pentagon.

Q The Pentagon has confirmed it.

Q There was no order to evacuate that came out of this meeting?

MR. NESSEN: Right.

Q Can you rule out the possibility of an evacuation tonight?

MR. NESSEN: I just don't want to go much further than that.

Q Is there a further NSC meeting planned for tomorrow or any follow-up action here?

MR. NESSEN: I just think we cannot go beyond this.

Q Are you going home?

Q Is there a meeting of WSAG going on now?

MR. NESSEN: No. It was not as of two minutes ago.

Q Did you say you were not going home?

MR. NESSEN: I am going to be here awhile.

Q Did the Secretary of State go to the Residence with the President?

MR. NESSEN: No, he is in his office.

Q Do you know whether he plans on staying?

MR. NESSEN: He was here as of a couple of minutes ago.

Q What about the rest of the people like Schlesinger?

MR. NESSEN: I have not seen him. I just don't know. They are not in the mess, the mess is closed.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END

(AT 8:25 P.M. EDT)