

This Copy For _____

N E W S C O N F E R E N C E

#254

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 11:37 A.M. EDT

JUNE 24, 1975

TUESDAY

MR. NESSEN: The President came in at about 7:30 this morning and held his usual staff meetings.

At 11:00, the President met with the new Federal Regional Council Chairpersons and presented them with Presidential certificates. As you may know, the major agencies of the Government which are involved in grants have been broken down into 10 regions, and each one of these regions has a Federal chairperson.

These, as I say, chairpersons were in this morning and the President spoke briefly to them, stressed their role in strengthening the decentralized management of Federal programs and improving the delivery of Federal services through better coordination among the agencies. You have a list of who was there.

At 11:30, the President is now meeting with Vice President Rockefeller. They do have regular meetings, and I don't have the agenda for the meeting.

This afternoon at 4:30, Governor Mills Godwin of Virginia, and Senator Harry Byrd of Virginia, will be meeting with the President in the Oval Office. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss with the President several Bicentennial events to be held in 1976 in Virginia.

Q To invite him or something?

MR. NESSEN: Oh, I would not be a bit surprised, Frank.

Q Can I ask you something on the 11:30 meeting?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

MORE

#254

Q Generally, when you tell us that the President is meeting with the Vice President you tell us, "I do not have the agenda." I wonder if you can look back and tell us on several other meetings what did come up in their conversations?

MR. NESSEN: I have not done that. I could look into it, Cliff, and see whether that is possible.

Q Thank you.

MR. NESSEN: At 6:00 the President will be attending a reception in the East Room for the Republican National Associates. This is a group that goes back through some Administrations -- back to Eisenhower, I believe. 230 people are in town from the group for a half-day meeting at the Statler Hilton. They will be hearing this afternoon from Secretary Morton, among others, the RNC chairman, Mrs. Smith, and other party officials.

The President, as I say, will see them at 6:00 in the East Room. That is open for coverage.

Then he will go into the State Dining Room for a little reception.

Q Ron, why are they hearing from Secretary Morton, who did not plan to have any political role when he took his new Cabinet post?

MR. NESSEN: That is a good question.

Q Why is this reception open for coverage when the others are private? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: The system here, Tom, is the way it is on all the late afternoon meetings. The meeting part and the President's speech in the East Room is open for coverage, as normal, and the reception part of it is not.

Q He is going to make comments?

MR. NESSEN: He will say something to the meeting.

Q Will it be political?

MR. NESSEN: I would not be surprised, Helen.

Q I just wondered whether there was going to be a separation between political statements and so forth from the White House.

Q If it is political, who is paying for it?

MR. NESSEN: It will not be paid for with Government funds, taxpayers' funds.

Q That is part of my answer. Now, who is paying for it?

MR. NESSEN: Well, precisely who picks up the bill is something that has to be decided by lawyers and accountants. The fact that Mrs. Smith requested the reception and that the President is appearing there in his role as leader of the Republican Party leads me to assume that the RNC is going to pay for it, but it is something that specifically will have to be decided by accountants and lawyers, and in any case, whoever pays for it, it will be properly reported.

Q Is it safe to assume he won't make any announcement?

MR. NESSEN: That is a safe assumption.

The President intends today to veto the so-called Emergency Housing Act. I don't have a precise time on the veto; the message is still being worked on. We will have for you a copy of the message and a fact sheet, I hope, in the 2:00 area.

Then, at 3:00 Mrs. Hills, the Housing Secretary, will be here to talk to you on film and sound, and answer your questions and explain to you the President's reasons for vetoing this bill.

MORE

Q Will that message be for immediate release?

MR. NESSEN: It will be. We are working on the embargo because it really depends on when the message reaches the Hill, but it will certainly be mid- to late afternoon on the embargo time.

Q Ron, will Mrs. Hills be briefing also on an Administration alternative? Is that drawn up yet?

MR. NESSEN: The President and Mrs. Hills will be outlining to you some proposals the President will be making to improve the housing industry.

Just to look a little bit ahead until Wednesday, the President is going to meet with 24 Members of Congress tomorrow morning at 8 o'clock. This is the meeting on regulatory agencies, which I have mentioned to you before. There will be 12 Members from the House and 12 from the Senate, and that will be divided into six Republicans and six Democrats from each chamber.

I think the meeting will last in the neighborhood of 90 minutes, and after that, we will have out here for you Rod Hills, the Counsel to the President, and Paul MacAvoy, the new member of the Council of Economic Advisers, along with some Members of the House and some Members of the Senate, to brief you on this meeting tomorrow morning.

Q So, about 9:30 at the earliest?

MR. NESSEN: I would say at the earliest, yes, because I suspect the meeting is going to run on. I think the meeting will go something like this: The President will open maybe for about ten minutes and outline his general regulatory reform proposals. He also will discuss the meeting he plans to have shortly with the regulatory commissioners.

Q When is that going to be, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: That is tentatively scheduled for July 9.

Then, I would think that Mr. MacAvoy and Mr. Hills would speak at tomorrow morning's meeting and, after that, the Congressional Members will give their views.

The meeting probably will discuss three main areas -- economic regulation, safety and health regulation, and administrative procedures.

We do have a list of those attending. If you recall, a week or so ago the President asked the leaders of the Senate and the House to appoint these Members to come and discuss these issues, so that will be tomorrow morning.

Q The President has not sent any firm proposals to Congress yet, has he?

MR. NESSEN: Oh, yes. Already the railroad revitalization has just gone up, which is part of this. The Financial Institutions Act.

Q He is doing this piecemeal then?

MR. NESSEN: That is correct. You have to because each one is covered by a different statute.

Q Do you have any idea when the President may send up a nomination of a new Federal Power Commission chairman?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have anything on that, Cliff.

Q Will there be a text on the President's remarks tomorrow morning?

MR. NESSEN: To the meeting?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: No, but I would think that when we have the briefing after the meeting, the Members, and so forth, would relay to you this. I will make some notes, too.

Q When will you have a list, Ron, of the people who will be attending?

MR. NESSEN: I have it.

Q When will we have it?

MR. NESSEN: I can read it to you now, if you want to write it down, or after the briefing we can post it, whichever you prefer.

Q Post it.

Q Ron, is it possible on an occasion like this if the President has formal remarks there that you plan to put a text out, but you say you may not tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: I don't anticipate that he will have a formal written speech to make to the group. He will be speaking about his ideas in this area.

Q Would it be possible to pipe his remarks back here and to shut off the mike afterwards for the discussion?

MR. NESSEN: I can look into that.

Q Ron, is he going to send up some kind of an overall message to Congress on this, or what form is this whole program in?

MR. NESSEN: As I say, it is being done piece-meal, and two pieces have gone up already and others will go up.

Now, after this meeting on July 9, I think you might hear him speak out in more general terms.

Q This week he is not going to send anything up other than he is just going to have this meeting, is that right?

MR. NESSEN: Airlines and trucking are among the other areas. Didn't we have utility changes not long ago? Also, is the Labor-Management Committee's recommendations, which he endorsed on utilities.

Q You talked about recommending eliminating the ICC, FCC and all these.

MR. NESSEN: I don't think it is a question of eliminating, Helen. He is talking about changes because, as you know, his feeling is that some of these agencies are actually not only not accomplishing the goals for which they were set up, but in many cases are doing the opposite of what they were established to do.

Q Ron, are you finished with your announcements?

MR. NESSEN: Not yet.

The other events of tomorrow include the Cabinet meeting in the afternoon, and I could come out and give you a little report on that.

Q What time is that?

MR. NESSEN: 1:30 or 2:00. It will be over at 3:00.

Then, as you know, the President will have a news conference at 5:00, and the location is not quite set yet because the weather is still in doubt.

Q That has never been a factor before.

MR. NESSEN: What do you mean by that?

Q I am thinking about Salzburg.

MR. NESSEN: Oh, yes, that is what I mean. If it rains, we will have it outdoors. If it is clear, we will have it indoors. (Laughter)

Anyhow, because of the number of events tomorrow, I think we can skip my briefing.

Q Will he have a statement at the head of the news conference?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know of one.

Q Will it be televised?

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard of anything.

Q Ron, he is planning something and he is going to tell us two hours later. Is that the reason for the Cabinet meeting?

MR. NESSEN: No, it is a regular Cabinet meeting that was scheduled before the news conference.

Q But you will brief after the Cabinet meeting?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Since you have said repeatedly that the Middle East reassessment will be held up until the President has had a chance to meet with Mr. Sadat and Mr. Rabin -- and now we have had the meeting with the Syrian Foreign Minister -- is there anything that you know of that would lead us to believe that there won't be the Middle East reassessment tomorrow night? I mean tomorrow afternoon at the press conference.

MR. NESSEN: Do you mean will he announce the results of it tomorrow?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q He will not?

MR. NESSEN: He will not.

Q Do you have any idea when he will?

MR. NESSEN: I asked him this morning, and he said it is getting closer.

Q What is getting closer?

MR. NESSEN: The results of the Middle East reassessment.

Q You say that with a smile, Ron, and I am delighted to have you smile, but I am wondering if you are kidding us.

Q Does that mean it will be after his European trip?

MR. NESSEN: Helen, there just simply is no timetable for the precise date on that.

Q Ron, I hate to remove the smile. This hurts me more than it does you. Can you tell us about the President's secret, private meeting with Mr. Connally?

MR. NESSEN: Why don't you let me finish my announcements first? (Laughter)

MORE

Q You turned on that one.

MR. NESSEN: I think you have a package of announcements today which include an Executive Order exempting from the mandatory retirement age Arthur S. Flemming, who is the Commissioner of the Administration on Aging, and also Chairman of the Commission on Civil Rights. Mr. Flemming was 70 years of age on June 11 and under the present law he would need to retire on June 30 unless exempted, and this Executive Order does exempt him through June 30 of 1976.

You also have the report of the Board of Visitors to the U.S. Naval Academy, and that was received by the President.

Last evening quite late the President was notified of the death of Gene Pulliam, who I think many of you know, and the President has known for quite a few years. The President issued the following statement at that time:

"Mrs. Ford and I are deeply grieved at the death of Gene Pulliam. His dedication and integrity made him a giant in the publishing industry for some 60 years.

"Betty and I send our deepest sympathy to his wife, Nina, his family and friends. A great publisher and a great American, Gene Pulliam will be sorely missed."

Q We will get that on paper?

MR. NESSEN: All right. We will get started making up this list for Tom.

Which one is that? The regulatory reform?

I don't have any other announcements to make today.

Q Can you tell us about the meeting with Governor Connally, please?

MR. NESSEN: I do not know anything about the meeting with Governor Connally, if there was a meeting with Governor Connally.

Q You don't know whether there was a meeting?

Q Why was Governor Evans of Washington here this morning?

Q What is the question up there?

MR. NESSEN: He didn't see the President if he was here.

Q What was the question?

MR. NESSEN: Why was Dan Evans here this morning? If he was here at all, it wasn't to see the President.

Q Carroll asked you if you know enough at least to confirm the fact that there was a meeting between the President and Mr. Connally.

MR. NESSEN: I do not know that.

Q Can we find out?

MR. NESSEN: We will look into the question.

Q Ron, do you know if one of the things the President and Vice President are talking about is the general shake-up in the Vice President's office and some of his people will be either quitting or firing?

MR. NESSEN: That is the first I have ever heard of the subject, Bob.

Q Ron, are you seriously saying that Governor Connally could be in to see the President and the President would not apprise you of that?

MR. NESSEN: I simply don't know whether Governor Connally was in. I have not seen his name on a schedule. We will look into it, though, and find out.

When is this visit supposed to have taken place?

Q Allegedly, Wednesday or Thursday of last week.

MR. NESSEN: We will look into it.

Q Are you informed of these so-called private meetings which are not on the schedule?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q But you were not informed of Governor Connally's meeting?

MR. NESSEN: Well, it did not appear on any schedule that I have seen.

Q Do you think Connally might want to keep it secret?

MR. NESSEN: Helen, let's find out whether there was such a meeting first.

Q Why not put in a phone call and find out now?

MR. NESSEN: Where is somebody?

Q There is the Assistant Press Secretary.

MR. NESSEN: They are all checking out other items.

Q Did you send materials up to the Hill today at all, the CIA?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Some of you were around last night and inquired about Senator Church's complaint.

I think I ought to say, first of all, in some more general terms, that as far as the White House is concerned we don't know of any breach in the good relationship with the Church Committee. The White House would hope that if Senator Church does have a complaint that he would communicate it to the White House. He has not.

The White House has been making available material to the Church Committee on a regular basis, in accordance with the agreement, and as far as we can determine there has been no complaint received at the White House.

This is a continuing relationship that goes on each day. It does seem that periodically once every couple of weeks, Senator Church seems to raise a question and the White House does not understand exactly why.

The President feels that there is a good continuing working relationship between the White House and the Church Committee, and as I said, the President hopes that if there is a complaint by the Church Committee it would be addressed here so it could be dealt with. As I say, we don't know of any complaint.

Now specifically, the entire file of material gathered by the Rockefeller Commission on assassinations has already long since, in fact, been made available to the Church Committee, and let me say it was made available according to a timetable agreed to by the committee and, in fact, the White House met the timetable and made things available before the agreement called for them to be available.

Now in addition to all the material gathered by the Rockefeller Commission, which has already been made available, other documents are being pulled from the files and being made available, and one of the items that Church yesterday indicated had not been available was the files of the so-called Special Review Group. Well, the fact of the matter is that that was made available to the Committee last Friday, so again it is difficult to understand why Senator Church said that yesterday when that particular material was made available last Friday.

Q When you say "made available," it was open for them to come and look at here, right?

MR. NESSEN: In accordance with the procedures that the Committee has agreed to.

Now the NSC files and minutes, I think it should be understood that it was the White House which suggested that the Church Committee take a look at these files and minutes; it was not the other way around. This is basically a searching process, looking through the files and seeing what, if anything, might be applicable to the Church Committee investigation.

Now under the timetable these files or minutes which the White House volunteered or suggested that the Church Committee look for under the timetable, they were not scheduled to be ready for the Committee to read until later this week, and the Committee was aware of that.

However, the counsel's office worked over the weekend and also all day yesterday, and the review of that material is now finished, and that is ahead of schedule -- the NSC files and minutes -- and the Committee has been told that that information material also is available. So that is as much as I can tell you from here.

Q Ron, do you leave back anything secret or classified, or anything?

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

Q You are giving them the complete files; you are not just giving them selected excerpts from these files?

MR. NESSEN: That is not my understanding.

Q They do have free access?

MR. NESSEN: That is my understanding.

Q And they will be sent to Capitol Hill, under guard, as you told us?

MR. NESSEN: On the days when the committee calls witnesses, the committee has agreed to a procedure in which the stuff will go up there under guard and stay for the use of the committee and then be brought back and locked up at night.

Q That includes NSC documents, as well as the Rockefeller --

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q There was confusion last night.

Q Does that give them time to look at it, Ron, just up there while they are having a committee session?

MR. NESSEN: Not only do they have it up there available at the actual committee session, but, of course, they can come here, as I said, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and review it here.

Q What was your answer to Carroll's question?

MR. NESSEN: I am sorry, I missed Carroll's question.

Q I asked if the NSC material --

MR. NESSEN: -- was also going to be trucked up there and back?

Q Was also going to be trucked.

MR. NESSEN: If they need it to interview witnesses, then they can truck it up there and bring it back, also.

Q Ron, I am curious whether the White House has asked Senator Church what it is that is bothering him. You made quite a plausible case that he is complaining that personally he has never complained to you, and you seem to be doing the same thing.

MR. NESSEN: Do you mean complaining about his complaint?

Q Yes, to us without asking him.

MR. NESSEN: He has had this relationship with the Counsel's Office, which has gone on from the very beginning, and it is a good relationship. He is not complaining to the Counsel's Office, with which he is working, and that is why I think somebody said last night, in answer to queries, that there was a puzzlement or perplexity here as to why Senator Church is complaining in public about making complaints in public, which he has not made to the people who he has been working with day in and day out.

Q Have you asked him to see if he can unravel the puzzle?

MR. NESSEN: I assume that we are in touch with the Church committee today, as we have been every day for a very long time. Now, whether we have said, "What is your complaint," I don't know.

Q Wouldn't that be a very much simpler thing than asking us to then go up and ask him and come back here to you in the morning?

Q Has the President been in touch with him personally to see what is up?

MR. NESSEN: He has not.

Q Ron, do I understand correctly that you said that the minutes of the Special Action Group and other material were made available on Friday --

MR. NESSEN: The so-called Special Review Group, yes.

Q And then the minutes of the NSC and other papers are now available?

MR. NESSEN: Now available. They were not supposed to be available until later this week, but they were rushed and are now available.

Q What I am getting at is that the NSC minutes were not available Friday, but they have been made available since then.

MR. NESSEN: Correct.

Q When was that? Today? Yesterday?

MR. NESSEN: The Counsel's Office worked over the weekend, and yesterday, to get them ready for today. They were not supposed to be available, under the agreement with the Church committee, until later this week.

Q Can you explain what this review of the NSC material, the NSC minutes, entailed? In other words, could you tell us if the CIA was mentioned, if assassination was mentioned, and separate those files from all the files?

MR. NESSEN: Basically to find out whether a meeting discussed the subjects that are relevant to the investigation?

Q So the White House made the decision of what files the committee would get?

MR. NESSEN: Only in the sense of pulling out the ones that they need. As I say, it was our suggestion that these files be searched for possible relevant materials.

Q You suggested at one point you thought they could come and go through all NSC files. That is not correct, is it?

MR. NESSEN: I don't remember suggesting that.

Q I thought you did a minute ago.

MR. NESSEN: But this is the procedure agreed upon with the committee.

Q In other words, it is the White House, the Counsel's Office and so forth in the White House that are deciding which minutes and which NSC material are relevant, is that right?

MR. NESSEN: Relevant in the sense that they apply to what the committee is looking into rather than being on some entirely different subject.

Q The White House is making that determination?

MR. NESSEN: That is correct.

Q There is no way in which the Church committee can find out whether something it might think relevant has been omitted from the material that it is being allowed to see, is that right? In other words, there is no check way for the committee to find out if the White House has decided something was not relevant that the committee thinks is relevant? They can only see what the White House decides is relevant, is that right?

MR. NESSEN: Do you have some indication, Jim, that the White House is not making available everything that is relevant?

Q No, no.

MR. NESSEN: I thought that was the implication of your question.

Q No, I am merely expressing what every adult human being knows, and that is that opinions differ and I am wondering if there is any --

MR. NESSEN: I can't imagine why the Counsel's Office would have suggested this procedure and why the Church committee would have accepted the procedure if there was any doubt, first of all, in the Counsel's Office, thinking that they did not want these files to be shown and, secondly, in the Church committee's view that something was going to be withheld from them.

Q Nevertheless, as a matter of fact, the White House is making the determination of what is relevant, and it ends there. There is no further procedure, is that right?

MR. NESSEN: Jack, is there a further procedure?

MR. HUSHEN: Why don't we talk afterwards?

Q No, I want to hear it, too.

MR. HUSHEN: Let's check it. There is a process by which, they have witnesses that are appearing --

Q Ron, is it all right with the White House if the committee makes the search?

MR. NESSEN: Jack has been sticking very close to Rod Hills every day on this.

MR. HUSHEN: That is one of the agreements that was mutually arrived at, that they would not just track through all the files.

MR. NESSEN: That the Church people would not dig through all the files?

MR. HUSHEN: That we would not make available all the NSC files, that we would go through and cut out relevant areas.

Q Are you saying the White House has turned over all relevant materials or made them available to the Committee for its investigation?

MR. NESSEN: Well, with the completion of the review of the NSC minutes and that now being available today, I would say that that is fair.

Q Ron, who determines the relevancy?

MR. NESSEN: Well ---

Q As I take it, the White House does.

MR. NESSEN: Jack will check and see what the procedure is if the Church Committee has the same doubts that Deakin has as to the White House withholding something.

Q I was asking the question of fact, Ron; not questions of doubt.

MR. NESSEN: We are awfully fast these days to seek cover-ups in everything, and I think it poisons the atmosphere of the ---

Q Well, Ron.

MR. NESSEN: Let me finish, Les, if I may.

I think we are awfully damn fast these days to seek cover-ups in everything. I think it poisons this briefing and I think it poisons the atmosphere in Washington.

Q We are told Senator Church complained without really getting very much detail as to what he meant.

MR. NESSEN: What does he mean?

Q Well, he was complaining about gaps.

MR. NESSEN: But not to the White House.

Q That he is not getting all the information that he wants.

MR. NESSEN: Well, he is not to the White House.

Q Is all of the Rockefeller Commission materials being given to the committee?

MR. NESSEN: Long since.

Q Nothing of it is being withheld?

MR. NESSEN: Long since.

Q Has the President looked over the material that is going to be turned over to the committee, looked over the assassination plot?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know whether he has looked over every last scrap of paper, but he certainly has looked at the material.

Q They have given him an index of what they are turning over?

MR. NESSEN: Well, the 86-page summary of facts from the Rockefeller Commission contained a summary of everything they found out and then he is being kept informed on what else is being turned over from the files.

Q Ron, when did the Counsel's office suggest to the Church Committee that it might be useful to look at these materials?

MR. NESSEN: What point was that, Jack?

MR. HUSHEN: That was either last week or the week before last; I am not sure.

MR. NESSEN: Last week or the week before.

Q Ron, in the by-play between the two of you up there, I got the impression that Jack at one point said, and I may be wrong -- I want to get this clarified -- that it was a part of the agreement that the White House would decide what material was relevant.

MR. HUSHEN: As I understand the agreement, the committee would not just be given carte blanche access to the NSC minutes and it was agreed that the Counsel's office would go through the minutes, determine what was relevant to their investigation and would make all of that portion available.

Q Now, may I ask the Press Secretary why it is in his opinion that a question which the Deputy Press Secretary has now answered quite frankly and fully, a question about the relevancy, brings an accusation of poisoning the briefings? Are you accusing me of poisoning the briefing with a question as to the procedure involved in the release of these minutes, Mr. Nessen?

MR. NESSEN: I would not accuse you of that, Mr. Deakin.

Q If you are not, I wish you would withdraw it.

MR. NESSEN: No, I won't, because I think we are too fast these days to seek a cover-up in a lot of things. There is no evidence of ---

Q I just would like the record to show it was you and not me who used the word "cover-up," and it was you, not me, who made an accusation, which you now refuse to withdraw, of poisoning the briefing.

Q Ron, really, seriously, I don't think the gentleman poisoned the briefing. (Laughter) I don't think anybody did, Ron, and I really think you are gentleman enough to -- (Laughter)

Q It took Zeigler 10 months.

Q You are irritated, admittedly, but gee,
Ron ---

MR. NESSEN: Last Wednesday from 1:12 in the afternoon to 1:45, the President met privately with former Governor Connally of Texas.

Q What day? When?

MR. NESSEN: June 18, Wednesday.

Q What were those hours again?

MR. NESSEN: 1:12 to 1:45.

Q Would you repeat that, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: 1:12 to 1:45.

Q What was the meeting about, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: They discussed a range of subjects and I don't have an agenda of what it was.

Q What was the range of the meeting? Who sought the meeting, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have that.

Q Ron, why were you not informed of this? Why was this not on the schedule on your desk?

MR. NESSEN: It could be that the Governor was in town and stopped in.

Q Excuse me, Ron. You are ordinarily informed of all these private meetings, are you not, with prominent persons?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Isn't this unusual that you would not be informed of this one?

MR. NESSEN: As I say, I don't know what the circumstances were, Ted. He could have dropped in when he was in town.

Q Ron, is the President aware of what this does to your credibility?

MR. NESSEN: I am not aware of how it affects my credibility, Bonnie, so I don't know how the President could be aware of how it affects my credibility. How does it?

Q Well, I think it is difficult for you to come out and not know about somebody as politically sensitive as John Connally.

Q It is rather unfair to you.

Q Could this have been a reaction to the meeting in Houston with Connally, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: Oh, boy. You are off on a great track here, I guess, aren't you.

Q Well, you would not rule out the discussion of politics, would you?

MR. NESSEN: Since I don't know what the agenda was, Helen, I don't know how I can rule out or rule in anything.

Q Was he scheduled for an appointment?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I know of.

Q Ron, who else was in the meeting?

MR. NESSEN: I said they met alone which would mean that there were two people.

Q At whose request, if you know?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that, as I said before.

Q Can you find out at whose request, because the man does not just pop in here?

Q Where was the meeting held, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: In the Oval Office.

Q Ron, you have mentioned recently that the President on the average of once or twice a week reads the transcripts of the briefing.

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Do you think it might be useful, and this is what Bonnie has pointed out, if you suggest that he read the transcript of this briefing because then probably they will change this policy that does not let you know when an important man like Connally is coming? Do you think you could do that, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: Anybody have any questions on news items today?

Q Yes, I have a question, although it is not on a news item. (Laughter)

I don't know if the President has been out of doors much lately, but the air is pretty frightfully polluted in Washington these days.

Q What was the question? We could not hear back here.

MR. NESSEN: He has not finished yet, Sarah.

Q We could not hear for the conversations going on.

Q "The air is polluted," is what he said.

Q In the briefing room or outside? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: Well, that is inside.

MORE

Q With the air as polluted as it is in Washington these days, I don't know whether the President has been outside, but would the White House consider telling the drivers of cars that come here on the official visits not to leave their motors running in the driveway?

MR. NESSEN: I will look into it.

Q Ron, the meeting with Rockefeller today, do you know whether on the agenda that the President and the Vice President are going to discuss the Vice President's reported desire that Mr. Colby be fired as soon as these hearings on the CIA end?

MR. NESSEN: Bob, I don't have any idea what the agenda is, so as I say, I could not tell you whether that is on or off. The Vice President has rejected the notion that he has that feeling, if I remember what he has said publicly.

Q Ron, yesterday we asked a series of questions about the flexible nuclear strategy, including whether the President has authorized the redeployment. Were you able to track any of that down?

MR. NESSEN: I certainly talked to him about it this morning, and he can't quite understand what the fuss is all about. This is a year and a half old policy. It simply provides for more flexibility and targeting. It gives the President more options, should he be faced with a situation, and it provides an additional deterrent, which is, after all, the purpose of America's nuclear force in the first place.

He can't quite grasp what it is that is being asked here, and I must say, neither can I.

Q Ron, you were asked a set of specific factual questions that, as far as I can tell, don't have anything to do with any fuss. They are merely specific factual questions as to whether or not the President himself personally ordered the addition of this option or whether it was presented to him and he approved it. These are factual.

MR. NESSEN: It was a year and a half ago when we had a different President.

Q Let's put it this way. The question was based on the assumption that when a new President comes into office at some point, and usually early in the game, these matters are brought to his attention to give him a chance to change anything he might want to, to reapprove, or merely to say nothing and let the policy stay in.

If that was not clear, I apologize, but that certainly was the implication. I merely asked a set of factual questions, whether in any way -- I don't care how -- the President had this matter brought to his attention, approved it, initiated anything, or this kind of stuff.

MR. NESSEN: Yes. I did review the questions, Jim, and what they all seem to boil down to was, did the President approve of a new policy. As I say, the policy is a year and a half old, which would predate this Administration.

Whether this President had the option to veto the policy, he certainly is continuing the policy for the reasons I have stated. It gives him more flexibility, more options, and it serves as an increased deterrent.

Q Can I bring up another specific question, specifically, that other Presidents have assured the world that the United States would not strike first in the event of any nuclear confrontation. Has this President reaffirmed that pledge?

MR. NESSEN: I don't recall what other Presidents have said on the subject, but I just don't think it is a question I can answer today. You will certainly have an opportunity to ask him tomorrow afternoon.

Q You say that this is a year and a half-year old policy, but the instructions that were given to the Air Force units were not given to them a year and a half ago, that they were given to them quite recently with a deadline by which time they were to master them, have them in their ability to be able to do them?

This was not done a year and a half ago. This was done quite recently, and certainly done while this President was President. One of the questions yesterday was whether or not this President ordered that done or whether he had it brought to his attention at all, and if he did, by whom, and if he did, did he approve it?

MR. NESSEN: Jim, I don't frankly still understand what this is all about. Helen asked yesterday why is there so much talk about it lately.

Q Yes, there is.

MR. NESSEN: I would like to ask the same question as Helen did.

Q All right.

MR. NESSEN: It is a policy that has been in effect for a year and a half, has been written and talked about for three to four years, as I said yesterday. Whatever needs to be done to carry out the policy is being done. What has been done, and --

Q With no new initiative, like Korea? We have not had nuclear tactical weapons there, have we?

MR. NESSEN: Helen, that is something that, as I suggested yesterday for more of the nuts and bolts of the thing, the Pentagon is the proper place to answer your questions.

Q No, no. This is in the aftermath of Indochina. Isn't there now a policy?

MR. NESSEN: You mean the questions are in the aftermath of Indochina, the policy is not in the aftermath of Indochina, Helen?

Q The fact that we have had nuclear tactical weapons going to Korea or in Korea now was news at the Schlesinger press conference.

MR. NESSEN: It is a matter that for that kind of detail you need to talk to the Pentagon about.

Q I don't think so.

Q Weren't there tactical nuclear weapons in South Korea at the time of the PUEBLO crisis, and that was one of the reasons they could not get the planes off?

MR. NESSEN: I just don't know whether there were or not.

Q Well, we are saying that there seems to be a new attitude, a new deployment, a new policy, and I think we can air it tomorrow.

MR. NESSEN: You certainly may, and I have told you now for about three days that there is no new policy, no new decisions, no new -- whatever it is you are suggesting there is.

Q Ron, can I ask another question about the Rockefeller meeting? It seems to me, if memory serves me right, that almost all of these meetings have been regularly scheduled on Thursday afternoon, so isn't there some reason that this was called a little emergency?

Q What would it be?

MR. NESSEN: I would have to look at the President's schedule to find out if it was moved early in the week for travel reasons or something.

Q Ron, do we have any coverage yesterday of this productivity big meeting that Rockefeller had? Should we have coverage protection from your office about these meetings when they are of this magnitude and importance?

MR. NESSEN: It is not something we normally announce or cover from here, Sarah.

Q Well, why shouldn't you?

MR. NESSEN: I think Vice President Rockefeller's office does put out his own daily schedule of events, and they have a good press office over there and can help you get in and cover, if that is possible.

Q Ron, is the President going to the Fourth of July fireworks in Baltimore?

MR. NESSEN: The schedule for that whole, long weekend is still being put together, and I hope by Thursday I can announce all of his plans for that two or three-day period in there.

Q Ron, in the course of announcing this meeting tomorrow with the 24 Congressmen, concerning the regulatory agencies, you said that tentatively the meeting with various regulatory commissioners was set for July 9.

MR. NESSEN: Tentatively.

Q Could you just refresh my memory? What agencies are involved?

MR. NESSEN: Okay. Just a second.

MR. GREENER: Ron, if you want to answer that question ---

MR. NESSEN: Why don't you answer that while I look for attendees at the regulatory meeting.

MR. GREENER: This is a posture statement of Secretary Schlesinger, on February 5, 1975. He states: "As I pointed out last year, the flexibility that we are developing does not require any major change in the strategic capability that we now deploy. Some modifications in command, control and communications are necessary and are underway."

Q I thought we were talking about tactical weapons, not strategic.

MR. GREENER: No, you are not talking about tactical weapons.

Q That was the question.

MR. GREENER: No, the question he asked about was the instructions that were written ---

Q He asked about tactical nuclear weapons.

MR. GREENER: I am just getting to Jim's question now, Bob.

Q There are two different elements here -- one that refers to questions of strategic weapons, which we have always disavowed; the other refers to what Schlesinger had to say at his press conference, not in his public statement. That is what Helen is talking about.

There he talked about the use of tactical nuclear weapons in response to conventional attack.

MR. GREENER: I realize that, but all I am saying is that we have mixed the two subjects up and that everything is a little confused.

Q I have a question about the strategic one. He says that this was announced last year, and some command modifications have been necessary. Right.

My question is, when did he present these command modifications to the President, or did he present them to him, and did the President specifically approve them? This is the question I have been asking right along.

MR. GREENER: I understand, but what I am saying is that this was all the probabilities of this thing right here.

Q I understand, but that is not what I have been asking about, Bill. I asked if this matter has been brought to the attention of President Ford or not; when it was timed to put them into effect?

MR. NESSEN: Jim, we have a bad mix here of tactical and strategic.

Q I said I was willing to concentrate on strategic weapons for the purpose of this question.

MR. NESSEN: Bill has spent considerable time yesterday pulling together a rather large stack -- which included this, but it also included press conference statements and policy statements and so forth that date back three or four years on this policy.

Now, Helen's question is about tactical weapons; yours is about strategic weapons. I think most people here are confused as to what we are talking about; I certainly am.

The essential point is that we are not talking about anything new, and that by the mere talking about it, I guess we are going ---

Q You mean applications in command, then?

Q No, those are the instructions.

MR. NESSEN: The instructions to the Air Force to widen its range of targets.

All right. Now, in answer to who is attending the regulatory meeting, the CAB, the CFTC ---

Q What the heck is that?

MR. NESSEN: Commodity Futures Trading Commission.

The CPSC, which is the Consumer Product Safety Commission, the FCC, FPC, the FMC -- Federal Maritime Commission, Federal Trade Commission, ICC, Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the Securities and Exchange Commission. That should be 10.

Q Nuclear Regulatory Commission?

MR. NESSEN: Yes. That should be successor to the AEC.

Q What was the last one you mentioned?

MR. NESSEN: The SEC.

That should be 10.

Q Is the FCC in there?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q On this committee, Ron, you said that the NSC files or minutes are available ahead of schedule?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Has the White House informed the Church Committee that they are?

MR. NESSEN: Certainly.

Q Ron, if I could get back to Governor Connally -- from whom do you get the full list, not just the one that is being made public ---

MR. NESSEN: Look, I don't see any sense running through our internal bookkeeping here at the White House.

Q It is not a matter of internal bookkeeping.

MR. NESSEN: I think it is.

Q Who was it that decided that Governor Connally's name would not appear on the schedule, either the schedule that was made public or the one that was given to you? Was it the President, or is it someone else?

MR. NESSEN: I think you are making a great number of assumptions there, Ted, none of which you or I have any way of knowing are true. As I say, we need to find out whether Governor Connally may have been in Washington and called in the morning and said, "Can I come in and see you?" We need to find out before we make some assumptions on that.

Q Ron, could I follow up on Ted's question? Could you answer his question? He said from whom do you get this list?

MR. NESSEN: And I say that internal White House bookkeeping is a subject that I really don't think ---

Q You don't think, Ron, that is true, but he thinks so and I think so, and I think there are others in the room that do think so.

Now, are you just going to refuse to comment, or what?

MR. NESSEN: I think we have a difference of opinion.

Q Would you please go back inside as soon as possible and give us more?

MR. NESSEN: I would be delighted. (Laughter)

Q Give us more information about the Connally talks.

MR. NESSEN: If possible, I will.

Q Ron, aside from this particular meeting, do you have any kind of indication that the President is interested in having some sort of service for Mr. Connally, either in the Administration or politically?

MR. NESSEN: I think the President's last remarks on the record about Governor Connally certainly stand.

Q When were those made?

MR. NESSEN: Was it at one of the news conferences or one of the interviews?

Last news conference.

Q Ron, is it the policy of the President not to give you information that he thinks you would have trouble handling in terms of answering questions about it, like this Connally meeting?

MR. NESSEN: Quite the opposite, Bob.

Q So in your view this was simply an oversight and not a policy?

MR. NESSEN: I think we are -- you know, I don't know that it was an oversight. For all I know, it may have been on the schedule and I overlooked it.

Q Oh, Ron, you could not have done that.
(Laughter)

Q Ron, if it was and you did overlook it, would you let us know?

MR. NESSEN: I will certainly let you know.

On the evening of June 17, at about 11:30 in the evening, John Connally, who happened to be in town on some business about which I do not know, called Dick Cheney and said since he was in town whether he could stop in and see the President.

It took about 12 hours, until 11:30 the next morning, to first of all arrange the meeting, and then track down Governor Connally and tell him that he could come in at 11:15 -- or 1:15. That is the genesis of the meeting. That is why it did not appear on any schedule, and the subjects discussed were among the two of them, and I don't have any way of knowing what they were.

MR. GREENER: One correction -- we are not sure it was 11:30.

MR. NESSEN: It was late the night before, after the schedule for the next day --

Q It was asked for by Connally?

MR. GREENER: Yes, he asked to drop by and pay his respects.

Q Oh, drop by and pay his respects?

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

(AT 12:26 P.M. EDT)