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

#329

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 11:35 A.M. EDT

SEPTEMBER 25, 1975

THURSDAY

MR. NESSEN: I don't have anything to tell you beyond what is in the morning posting and the schedule, so we can go right on to the questions.

Les.

Q Ron, has the President expressed any thanks to this ex-Marine that deflected the gun out in front of the St. Francis?

MR. NESSEN: Two things have happened so far. One, on the way to the airport in San Francisco, the President asked Jack Merchant or Ron Pontius, I forget which one, I think Ron, to broadcast over one of the radio circuits used by the Secret Service and the local police, broadcast on all the circuits, the President's personal thanks. That was done a few moments after the episode.

Q They didn't know about the Marine?

MR. NESSEN: I am saying that is one thing he did immediately, broadcast his thanks on the way to the airport, or had Ron do it.

Second, all the people involved in the episode will be receiving a word of appreciation by the President. I don't have what the exact form will be on that yet.

Q Does that include the Marine?

MR. NESSEN: I think everybody involved in the episode who helped.

Q How come we are just learning about this now, four days later, about the broadcast? We asked for every detail from the time of the shooting.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. There is no secret about it.

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Q I asked that because our station got a report from San Francisco this Marine is gay and there is some speculation out there that this may have some effect on it -- but I am just simply inquiring, I don't know. (Laughter)

Q Is the President going to Northwestern University Wednesday morning?

MR. NESSEN: We have not announced any plans for a trip next week.

Q Does that mean there will be no trip?

Q Ron, you did say yesterday there would be two fund raisers?

MR. NESSEN: That's right.

Q Can you tell us if he is going to Northwestern Wednesday?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have any further plans to announce, Aldo.

Q You said yesterday it was premature to comment on OPEC, they hadn't made up their minds, but apparently now OPEC is going to have a price increase. Can you comment on that?

MR. NESSEN: The way I read the wires, so far they are unable to make any decision on that, Walt.

Q The way I read the wires, or the way I heard it on the radio this morning -- I listen to radio --

MR. NESSEN: So do I.

Q I never heard that before -- but anyway, some sort of price increase was almost inevitable, a two-stage price increase before the end of the year?

MR. NESSEN: I would say three things. One, they do seem to have some difficulty agreeing on what they want to do. As I told Jim yesterday, the President feels any price increase is unjustified on economic grounds. The only third thing I would add to that today is if they raise their prices, whatever the amount is, Congress is going to have to share the blame for that price increase.

In effect, Congress has more or less provided an incentive for OPEC to raise its prices. Congress has refused to pass an energy policy that would enable the United States to control its own fate in terms of energy, oil, that would enable the United States ten years down the line to be rid of dependence on foreign oil and in that sense Congress has really the need to share the blame because it leaves the United States in the position of having its oil prices set by these people who are having their meeting today.

Q Ron, do you think if they had passed the energy bill the President wanted earlier in the year, there would be no price increase now?

MR. NESSEN: The President has said publicly himself if Congress had demonstrated to the world, especially the oil producing nations, that the United States had embarked on a course of ending its dependence on Arab oil, that there would have been very much less incentive to the OPEC countries to raise their prices, if they do.

Q Are you blaming the Congress also, or sharing the blame with the Congress for the possible rise in prices on natural gas since you have told us --

MR. NESSEN: The President has clearly placed the blame on Congress for that and so have most of the editorialists and writers I have read. There is no sharing of the blame on that.

Q What kind of pressure have we put on Iran with the constant flow of arms to Iran, yet she seems to be one of the instigators in these price increases. What is the quid pro quo, if any?

MR. NESSEN: I can't give you anything on that, Helen.

Q Ron, has the United States, through the CIA, been providing money to democratic forces in Portugal?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have any comment on that matter.

Q Is there any inclination here in the White House in addition to blaming the Congress for some of the responsibility on the price increase, to criticize the Arabs for gouging the American consumer?

MR. NESSEN: I have said over and over for months the United States sees no justification for a price rise and on pure economic terms there ought to be a price reduction.

Q Can I get you back to the trip to Chicago, which you said was on yesterday. Do you mean to say now there are no plans for travel next week?

MR. NESSEN: No, I didn't, Peter. We have announced this trip to Chicago for the fund raisers, beyond that I don't have any additional travel to announce.

Q Is the President going to Omaha after Chicago?

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

Q Can you tell us if this is a security measure? Are we going to stop getting official announcements as far in advance as we have in the past?

MR. NESSEN: Let me give you the guidance to this extent. I think little bits and peaces of proposed travel, tentative travel, travel under consideration, has dribbled out all over the place for the past year and that is the way we have done business. In part, it has been to help people people plan their lives and their vacations and their feeding points for TV and that kind of thing. And I just think in the interest of keeping the thing tidy, from now on I think we will not talk about where he might go or where he is tentatively scheduled to go or trips that are under consideration and I think we will stick to the rule of when the trip is firm and on and all the arrangements have been made, we will announce it.

Q This is a security matter, is it not, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: Not from my point of view. It is a matter of trying to run my office in a more orderly way.

Q Did you talk to the Secret Service before you did this?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q How has it been disorderly in the past? It seemed more orderly --

MR. NESSEN: Trips that are under consideration and then don't take place or trips that are tentatively on which are changed or cancelled, I think we will just stick to official announcements.

Q Have you been burned on this by somebody?

MR. NESSEN: I have not. I just feel it is a sloppy way to do business.

Q If it is not a security consideration and nobody has burned you with information to help plan lives and logistics, it seems to me there is no reason for doing it.

MR. NESSEN: This is the way we are going to do it.

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Q We frequently get reports from all over the country when the Secret Service --

MR. NESSEN: And those reports are frequently wrong and this is my reason for doing this. From now on we will announce trips when they are official and ready to go.

Q How many days in advance do you think that will be?

MR. NESSEN: It will vary, Fran.

Q What do you mean by official? Does that mean the day before when the bible comes out?

MR. NESSEN: As I said to Fran, it will vary. Some trips are all nailed down and arranged far in advance; others are not.

Q Sometimes we may just have unannounced things?

MR. NESSEN: We will have from time to time mystery flights where we all go out to the airport at 7:00 --

Q I am serious.

MR. NESSEN: I know you are, Bob, and I am trying to answer you seriously.

Q I would like to know. When do you plan to announce the trips?

MR. NESSEN: At this moment, the one trip we have announced is to make a fund raising trip to Chicago.

Q The President has announced he is going to Omaha?

MR. NESSEN: I am not announcing that.

Q Ron, what are you going to do about the local newspapers in, say, Omaha, when they turn up a complete schedule of his appearances in Omaha?

MR. NESSEN: I don't deal with those local papers and I don't know, but I know from here we will stick to official announcements of trips.

Q Are you talking about the whole question of the element of surprise?

MR. NESSEN: Helen, believe me, as I told Aldo, I never talked to anybody that had anything to do with security. This is an arrangement I have made for my own people just to kind of get this back on some kind of orderly method of operating on trips.

Q Will there be any change in how soon and in what detail the White House will divulge the President's whereabouts at certain times when he is away from Washington?

MR. NESSEN: I myself don't have any plans to make any changes of that kind, and I haven't heard of anybody else's desire to make that change.

Q What occasions this change in policy? Was there a trip cancelled or some kind of problem that arose?

MR. NESSEN: No, Bob, but, for instance, there was a story printed yesterday that had a long list of places where the President would be going in October and the list was partly incorrect. I know that the way we have done business in the past is that a few days before the trip we make the official announcement, but weeks and weeks before that people know that he is probably going here, or is thinking about going there, and that sort of thing, and I just think we ought to return to a method where when the trips are all set we will announce them. Otherwise, we shouldn't get all these various categories sort of mixed up together.

Q In a free society, what is the problem?

MR. NESSEN: Bob, I don't think we ought to escalate this to that level of discussion because it is simply a way that I have decided to run my office.

Q Ron, will you say whether they are under consideration, for example?

Q What is the objective?

MR. NESSEN: The objective, Bob, would be to let people know when there is actually going to be a trip rather than what has been done before, which is to let people know when there might be a trip or when a trip is under consideration, and that sort of thing.

Q Ron, what you are saying flies in the face somewhat of the experience I have had there, because prior to the problems in California I would go into the office and talk to your staff and say, "Listen, on an off-the-record basis I am trying to plan something a couple of weeks from now. What does the schedule look like?"

Heretofore, before the California problems, they would open up the schedule book and say it looks okay, or it doesn't look okay. Now they are not doing that any more. It certainly appears that even on an off-the-record basis talking to the staff they have been told, "Don't tell them anything any more about future trips." That hasn't got anything to do with broadcasting or printing the stuff at all.

It certainly appears from my experience that this has something to do with security.

MR. NESSEN: It doesn't, I can assure you.

Q You yourself have forecast travel almost until Christmas.

MR. NESSEN: I used to. (Laughter)

Q You did yesterday.

MR. NESSEN: I know but, starting today, not any more.

Q What happened?

MR. NESSEN: Look, Helen, we have people writing about California a month and a half from now.

Q You confirmed that in California.

MR. NESSEN: Believe me, I am the biggest culprit in my office.

Q It was on; is it still on?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know, the status is exactly as I described it to you that day, which was he was invited; he was considering it, and has made no decision.

Q Have you discussed this with the President? Have you asked him to stop announcing trips?

MR. NESSEN: I don't really feel that the kind of day-to-day nitty-gritty way the Press Office does business is something that needs to be discussed with the President.

Q Ron, don't you think the timing of this in conjunction with the events in California can lead only to one logical conclusion -- it has to have something to do with security?

MR. NESSEN: It may be the logical conclusion but it is the incorrect conclusion, as is so often the case. (Laughter)

Q Ron, this morning for the first time in two years, at the gate they asked to check my bag. Now I don't know whether it happened to other people but it is the first time in two years --

Q Mine is checked often, Les.

Q There is no change in this, then?

MR. NESSEN: Right.

Q Ron, you mentioned mystery flights and then Schieffer said something.

MR. NESSEN: That was a joke.

Q You were not serious?

MR. NESSEN: I was not serious. That was one of my bad one-liners.

Q Ron, do you expect us to believe the explanation you have given about travel? It has no connection whatever to the security problem?

MR. NESSEN: Peter, my instructions to the people in my office and to myself, since I have been the biggest culprit, had nothing to do with intelligence -- (Laughter) -- because we don't have much -- it has nothing to do with security and, as Dick said, the logic leads you to another conclusion, but in this case logics does not lead you to the correct conclusion. I would hope, Peter, you would accept my explanation because it is the true one.

Q I think it would have been fair to expect us to accept it two weeks ago, but today --

MR. NESSEN: I am not noted for my timing, but the truth of the matter is that is why I have done this.

Q To carry this one step further, we all have different dates -- Michigan, and so forth; West Virginia, and so forth. Are these just not on the books now, or where do we stand with it?

MR. NESSEN: When a trip, any trip, is completely arranged and firm, we will announce it.

Q Is Michigan firm?

MR. NESSEN: We have not announced any trip to Michigan, Ted.

Q Excuse me, I think you did a couple of days ago.

Q I think something has been said about a football game.

MR. NESSEN: You see, that is precisely what I am aiming at, Peter, that some people think he is going to a football game and some people think he is going to Omaha, and some people think he is going to California because somebody in the Press Office has said, "You know, I would leave that weekend free. He is thinking about it," or "I think he is going," or something like that, and those are the kinds of things --

Q It isn't just the Press Office.

MR. NESSEN: Well, the Press Office is going to shape itself up starting today.

Q Ron, is it possible that the past practices on trip announcements which you have decided to discontinue did create a kind of security problem?

MR. NESSEN: It just created a sloppy journalistic problem.

Q Why don't you announce such matters off the record?

MR. NESSEN: I wish I had put all this off the record.

Q Seriously, why don't you announce it off the record?

MR. NESSEN: I am going to announce trips on the record when they are firm and the President is committed to going.

Q Ron, is it firm he is going to Camp David this weekend?

MR. NESSEN: We have not announced any trip to Camp David this weekend. (Laughter)

Q Ron, did you say you had not discussed this change in your policy with the President?

MR. NESSEN: Correct.

Q Did you discuss it with Don Rumsfeld?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q You are not going to give any guidance for planning purposes, then?

Q We have a problem, too, you know.

MR. NESSEN: We will not from now on, no.

Q In other words, while it may have been administrative sloppiness for you, I think you probably would recognize -- I don't know, but I would hope you would -- that it did in some cases make it possible for television coverage of these things, because I assume you know that those cameras, those lines, they don't appear by magic.

MR. NESSEN: Bob, we are not going to, you know, announce two hours before a trip that the President is going somewhere. We are going to announce it in an orderly way and a timely way so you have ample opportunity to make your plans, but we are not going to have it dribbling out in various forms any more.

Q When could we expect the Midwest trip to be announced?

MR. NESSEN: We have announced part of it, which is a stop in Chicago.

Q That leads back to the question I have already asked you. When are these things going to be announced, and are we going to have time to plan our coverage?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, you will.

Q Official announcements you have made in the past would not have left time.

MR. NESSEN: Official announcements will be made in time.

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Q When Congressman Anderson left this morning, Ron, he said one topic that was discussed at the Bipartisan Leadership meeting was the Pershing missiles.

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q And he said the President, during the discussion of the Pershing missiles said, as Anderson put it, with emphasis, that the United States is not committed to the sale of those missiles to Israel.

MR. NESSEN: That is correct.

Q I wonder if that is correct and, if so, if you can recall precisely how the President put that and, also, if you have any late mail counts on public reaction to that particular proposal?

MR. NESSEN: To the Pershing missile? I haven't gotten any mail counts on that. But I would say that it is precisely, and the President used very similar words to the ones he used to the L.A. Times, was it, and you can get a transcript of it, Tom.

Q He talked about it in the press conference in the Oval Office.

MR. NESSEN: I know he has talked about it several times and uses the same words generally all the time, which is that the only commitment the United States had was to study a request from Israel for Pershing missiles.

Q With favorable consideration.

MR. NESSEN: The President emphatically has said that the only commitment is to study the proposal, the request.

Q Ron, did the President tell the Congressional leaders this morning that if OPEC raises prices, Congress will share the blame?

MR. NESSEN: The OPEC price increase didn't come up at the Congressional meeting this morning.

Q So the statement you gave earlier in the briefing is yours or the President's?

MR. NESSEN: The President's views.

Q Why didn't he tell them that?

MR. NESSEN: It didn't come up.

Q Energy was discussed?

MR. NESSEN: Energy was discussed --

Q An integral part of energy --

MR. NESSEN: The President, without referring to an OPEC price increase, certainly made clear what he thought about Congress' lack of action.

Q Governor Mandel is being investigated by the U.S. Attorney's Office --

MR. NESSEN: I feel a "no comment" coming on. (Laughter)

Q I know, but I feel a question coming up. (Laughter)

So, Ron, did the President know ahead of time that the Governor was being investigated and, if not, did he say anything to you about this?

MR. NESSEN: He did not say anything to me and I don't know if he knew about it ahead of time, but we will check.

Q Do you have an up-to-date count on the number of letters and other communications, wires, telephone calls, relating to the President's campaigning and whether he should curtail it or not?

MR. NESSEN: As of 11 o'clock this morning -- well, this list is broken down separately into telegrams and phone calls, which makes it a little more complicated but let's do it that way since this is the way it is presented.

Telegrams, as of 11 o'clock this morning, totalled 719; 329 of those consisted primarily of, say, you know, thank goodness you have escaped and so forth; 199 have congratulations but also urge a curtailment of public appearances, 199 telegrams; 63 are for increased gun legislation; 30 are against increased gun legislation, and 98 have assorted suggestions like wear a vest, and so forth.

Q Do you have a counter-figure for the 199, those urging him to curtail it as opposed to those who say continue to go out and meet --

MR. NESSEN: For some reason I don't have that breakdown on the telegrams, I do have it on the phone calls.

Q Why don't you give us the rest?

MR. NESSEN: The phone calls total 179, 88 of which are primarily just congratulations and assorted comments, 76 of the phone calls urge curtailment of public appearances and 15 say continue your public appearances.

Q Ron, may I ask you this? Is there any breakdown of letters, if there were any, asking him to -- this is a more narrow subject -- to discontinue his practice of plunging into crowds? Is there anything on that?

MR. NESSEN: Not on this list, there isn't, no.

Q Are the 15 being investigated? (Laughter)

Q Ron, are you able to talk about Soviet assistance to the Portugese Communist Party?

MR. NESSEN: No, I would only direct your attention to Dr. Kissinger's remarks recently on that subject.

Q Ron, speaking of Dr. Kissinger, the House, as you know, sent back that Senate bill which had eliminated the Snyder Amendment thus leaving the House still on record that they do not want any expenditures for negotiations of our basic rights in the Panama Canal. What was the President's viewpoint on this?

MR. NESSEN: The President's viewpoint is, as I gave it to you the last time, which is that he views the Snyder Amendment as a constitutional issue and he separates out from that the question of negotiations with Panama. And on the constitutional issue, he feels that it is really improper under the Constitution for the House to attempt to play this role in treaty organizations.

Q Is the President prepared to discuss the Panama issue with the Colombian President?

MR. NESSEN: I, frankly, don't have the agenda for their meeting but I do expect that we will have a report on the meeting, probably within a half hour.

Q To go back to the Pershing missile, when you say the United States is not committed in any way to the request, isn't that a change from the memorandum which Dr. Kissinger recently signed to the effect that it would give like a positive response to the request for Pershing missiles?

MR. NESSEN: As I said, Peter, the President firmly, on several occasions, has stated the only commitment the United States made was to study the request from Israel for Pershing missiles.

Q Ron, I understand the Senate Foreign Relations Committee is asking the Administration to publicly state all commitments of this type to either Egypt or Israel. They are doing so because of the commitments in the understandings of Israel have leaked but very few of the ones towards Egypt have leaked?

MR. NESSEN: Let me say, first, that the question of the Congressional approval of the sending of American volunteer civilian technicians to the Middle East was discussed at the Congressional leaders meeting and the President made the point that speed is quite important in this, and that very much further delay could jeopardize the Sinai Agreement. As you know, one of the most difficult parts of that negotiation was the timetable.

As we said initially, the President told Congressional leaders the very first morning after Dr. Kissinger returned that this force really needed to be in place at that time in about two or two and a half weeks in order for the timetable that had been very, very painstakingly negotiated to begin operation. Now, time is getting quite critical because the timetable can't start until the American volunteers are sent and they can't be sent until Congress gives it approval.

So he made that point this morning. Now, to finish the second part of your question, Dr. Kissinger has stated the President's position on this both to Congress and to reporters, which is that certainly we are going to make available to the appropriate committees up there all the pertinent agreements between and among the parties involved.

Q This statement by Senator Case seems to indicate they have been aware but they want the Administration to make the same information public?

MR. NESSEN: I am aware of that and I think that is one of the matters that Dr. Kissinger is talking to the committee about. But, whatever the state of negotiations is on that issue, the overall Administration position is that we are going to make available to them everything and as for how much is to be made public is being negotiated now and there is expected to be a satisfactory resolution of that.

Q When did the concurrent resolution go to the Hill?

MR. NESSEN: I am not sure that concurrent resolutions originate here. Do they?

Do we send them a draft of concurrent resolutions?

MISS TROIA: We send all the documents up to them.

MR. NESSEN: But they have to draft their own resolution, don't they? Do we send a draft resolution up to them?

Q There was some talk here a couple of weeks ago, however, about sending a draft up, wasn't there?

MR. NESSEN: Why don't you check that, Kathy?

Q Ron, have you made any progress in your discussions with Congress about a temporary extension of oil price controls while working out a longer term solution?

MR. NESSEN: Well, if this morning's meeting with Congressional leaders was any example of or indication of where they stand, there was virtually no agreement among any of the leaders there as to what course to take and this is one of the things that produced the later views of the President concerning Congress' partial responsibility for an OPEC price increase. I mean, you had, I forget how many leaders in there and each one of them seemed to have a different idea of how to go. I would say that, based on what I have heard, the outlook is not encouraging that Congress can get itself together and follow through on the compromise that Senator Mansfield and the Speaker proposed here to the President on a Saturday a month or so ago.

I think the situation is beginning to look as if the decontrol is here and that Congress now needs to get busy passing the legislation the President has sent up there to soften the impact. The President was especially concerned and mentioned it this morning to the leaders, and, again, could not seem to get anybody there to agree on the urgency or the need to pass it, but the special legislation he sent up there relating to propane and its important role, with winter coming on, for farmers to dry their crops and heat their homes, and for people who live in mobile homes, which was specifically mentioned, and almost entirely heated by propane.

The President has a feeling that the outlook is certainly growing dim for Congress to be able to pull itself together and do anything in the way of a phased decontrol which is his first choice. Therefore, Congress may better now turn its attention on an urgent basis to the four pieces of legislation he sent up there to soften the economic impact of decontrol, which is here.

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Q Ron, let me get back to this travel thing. What you are telling us today is you are going to change your procedures but you don't mean to say that the President in any way is reassessing his travel plans or changing his plans or cancelling any appearances?

MR. NESSEN: Bob, I would say this: Some of the trips that have been rumored or speculated about or have been reported as being under consideration or tentative, some of those may not actually be on the President's schedule.

Q Like what?

Q Are you saying fewer trips? Is there a possibility some of the trips that had been considered are now being discarded because of California?

MR. NESSEN: From now on, Dick, I am going to announce trips when they are official and we will then not be in this situation where we have all sorts of categories of trips that people think he is going to make or think he is considering or have heard he is going to make.

Q Are you saying they may not be scheduled now, or they may not take place?

Q He may not be going to the places we may have thought, but that is just because the stories weren't accurate; it is not because he is changing his travel plans. That would be the right way to say that, right?

MR. NESSEN: I would say he is probably not going to as many places as you thought he was going to go.

Q Not because he is changing his plans; is that what you are telling us?

MR. NESSEN: I think I will just stop with --

Q Did Rumsfeld express any security concerns when you talked to him and told him about your change of plans?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Is the President cutting back his travel schedule then, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: No, he is not cutting back on his announced travel schedule because we have only announced one trip.

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Q Is he cutting back his travel schedule?

MR. NESSEN: Bob, he is not going to as many places as some of you think he is going to.

Q Why?

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

Q Yesterday, after Hugh Scott had said there was going to be a hiatus, you indicated he was going to go through the schedule as planned up until about November or whenever we thought the hiatus was coming, anyway. Now you seem to be saying short of that he might not be going to the places that everybody around here has talked about for weeks.

MR. NESSEN: I know more today than I did yesterday.

Q Is he cutting back on the places he wanted to go to, Ron?

Q Why don't you just tell us?

Q There is an air of mystery.

MR. NESSEN: Is there? We always like to lend a little air of mystery to things.

Q No, it is crystal clear.

MR. NESSEN: I am glad to hear that.

Q Is he cutting back on the places he wanted to go to?

MR. NESSEN: We are going to announce the trips when they are official and firm. We wouldn't be in this mess if we had stuck to that, which we didn't.

Q Has there been a new meeting in the White House to discuss the travel plans that are upcoming?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q And the result is a new decision?

MR. NESSEN: No, these have never been official.

Q You just said you know more today than you did yesterday.

MR. NESSEN: I do and I know some of the things that were tentative and under consideration and in other ways have been bandied about, some of those are not in fact going to be trips.

Q Were you wrong when you agreed with Senator Scott yesterday?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Is that for security reasons? You said the news --

MR. NESSEN: I may not have been wrong yesterday but if I said the same thing today I would be wrong.

Q You denied the fact that you are not announcing trips in advance or you are not going to give us as much advance warning is a security thing. Is the fact that some of the trips which were tentative and under consideration are not now going to be taken, is that a security decision?

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

Q Back to energy --

MR. NESSEN: Let me clear up one question I think maybe Jim had concerning the joint resolution on the American volunteers. The draft resolution which is now under consideration was put together jointly in consultations between the State Department and the staffs of the committees that are dealing with the matter.

Q When did it go?

MR. NESSEN: It didn't in a sense go. They sat down and worked it out together.

Q In the interest of clarity, could you say where he is not going to go since those places have been mentioned?

MR. NESSEN: No, because I am going to start my new policy today. I have started it.

Q Can you tell us, Ron, whether the deletion --

MR. NESSEN: Look, I don't really mean to lend this an air of mystery and my change of policy in the Press Office truly is somewhat abrupt, and as Dick said, looks on the face of it to be related to security matters, but let me say I don't mean to be abrupt, I don't mean to be mysterious and my own change of operating methods in the Press Office is not related to security.

Q Has the method of operating in terms of travel changed at all? Is there an impact as a result of these two attempts on his life?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Then how can you say no?

MR. NESSEN: Wait a minute. Let me hear the question again.

Q You have changed your modus operandi and he now seems to be wiping out a lot of the present scheduled things he was thinking about. This is security, isn't it?

MR. NESSEN: As I told Walt, I frankly don't know all the reasons that went into it, Helen.

Q Is it correct to say that of all the trips that have been rumored about and mentioned, that a substantial number are not going to be made now?

MR. NESSEN: No, that is not correct.

Q Senate Majority Leader Byrd told a few reporters this morning he thought there was a pretty good chance of getting a 48-month phased decontrol plan through Congress. Would the President accept that compromise?

MR. NESSEN: Let me answer it in two ways: First of all, from what I heard in there among the Congressional leaders, I can't see how they are going to get together on any energy bill. Secondly, 48 months, if by some miracle they were able to do it, it would not be acceptable.

Q Ron, yesterday you said there has been no White House announcement on Poland being asked by the State Department --

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q But you really did not say whether in fact Poland has been asked.

MR. NESSEN: Here is the situation on Poland. Poland is a fairly regular purchaser of American grain -- both wheat and corn. They did make their regular purchases this year which totalled somewhere around 1,600,000 tons combined, of wheat and corn.

They also normally buy grain from the Soviet Union and this year, with the shortage in the Soviet Union, it appears that Poland may not be able to buy its normal share from the Soviet Union and so indicated that it was considering buying more grain from the United States. So the normal sales, which I believe have already been made of somewhere around 1,600,000, are going through.

What has happened is that Poland has really been more or less asked in a kind of low key informal way to just hold up on these additional purchases until the October 11 crop report is issued.

Q Ron, could I go back to this problem we are dealing with here?

MR. NESSEN: I had a feeling we would.

Q And try to put it in this way to you -- your operation aside -- can you tell us whether the President, in view of the public reaction and of the pressures from Congress on him, and of the security problem, all of these factors, may be reconsidering his statement of the night that he arrived back from San Francisco and may now curtail to some extent his projected travels?

MR. NESSEN: As I told Helen and Walt--and it is a true statement--I don't know completely all the reasons that have gone into what I said before, which is that I don't anticipate he will be making all the stops that some of the people out there thought he was going to make. But as for the central thrust of that statement the other night that he is going to go out and talk to people and listen to people, he certainly stands by that.

Q That is not what I asked.

Q Ron, is there a re-examination underway in the White House, not so much of where the President might go, but of what sort of event he might take part in?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q You say you don't know all the reasons. Is security one of the reasons?

MR. NESSEN: I would just as soon leave it where it is, Helen, I really would.

Q Then we are going to have to say it on our own.

Q What does the President think of Mrs. Ford's advice that while she expects he should continue to travel, that he not get in among uncontrolled crowds as much?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think I really ought to elaborate or expand on Mrs. Ford's statement.

Q Does he agree?

MR. NESSEN: I think you know his own views and I think you know what we said here yesterday, which is that the President is fully aware of the dangers and to suggest that he is insensitive would be wrong.

Q Is Chicago the only officially confirmed trip now?

MR. NESSEN: I am told that about 45 minutes ago Mr. Baroody confirmed that he ~~is~~ going to attend the White House Conference in Omaha on the first of October.

MORE

Q Where is he going to spend the night?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know.

There is another White House Conference on the 7th in Knoxville, Tennessee.

Q Can you tell us what the President's reaction was to the latest Gallup Poll that indicated people think Mrs. Ford is doing a better job in her role than the President is in his?

MR. NESSEN: He thought Mrs. Ford would be the best candidate. He saw the poll and he is aware of it.

Q Does he get mail?

MR. NESSEN: He gets a fairly large sampling, I forget how many letters, each week to look at. Of course, he gets all his personal letters and a lot of time when he is traveling around, I have had the experience -- Terry has, other people in the Press Office, Don -- of people giving letters to us addressed to the President and he normally reads those when he gets back on the plane.

Q Ron, maybe I misunderstood you on another subject. On the Sinai volunteers, you said that delay could jeopardize the agreements. I thought you meant, in answer to the question, the mechanics and logistics of organizing the volunteers required immediate approval now. But isn't it because the Israelis just may say no?

MR. NESSEN: No, what I meant was, Dick, I thought I indicated the timetable was one of the most difficult parts of the negotiations and if the volunteers are not in place in time for the timetable to begin on schedule --

Q That will take six months for the whole thing, won't it?

MR. NESSEN: But it is supposed to start at a certain point and I think it has been delayed somewhat in the start as it is. As you know, Israel would only initial the agreement in Geneva rather than sign until the Congress approves the force.

Q I am not sure we got an answer as to when it was this draft language went down?

MR. NESSEN: The State Department began working with Congress almost immediately after Kissinger came back with the agreement.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

(AT 12:20 P.M. EDT)