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NEWS CONFERENCE

#408

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 11:32 A.M. EST

JANUARY 6, 1976

TUESDAY

MR. NESSEN: The President went over this morning to the funeral of Richard Welch, and he will be back at 12:20. I think the plan is that there was a pool that went inside the chapel, including the two wires and one other writer, Phil Shabecoff, and Phil will come in. I guess the best way to do it would be to have Phil come up here to the podium and give you his pool report.

When the President saw Dr. Kissinger and Brent Scowcroft this morning, he asked them to join him at the funeral, and they rode over with him.

We are announcing today that the President is pleased to announce that he is appointing Dr. Myron B. Kuropas as Special Assistant to the President for Ethnic Affairs. We will have a biography after the briefing.

He will be working in the Office of Public Liaison, under the direction of Bill Baroody. His major responsibility will be to maintain and to strengthen the White House liaison efforts with major ethnic, fraternal, religious, social, cultural and educational organizations around the country.

Since December of 1972, Dr. Kuropas has been serving as the Regional Director of ACTION in Chicago. As I say, we have a biography which will be passed out after the briefing.

Q Is DeBaca leaving?

MR. NESSEN: No, DeBaca is not leaving.

Q What is he going to do?

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MR. NESSEN: He is going to continue to work in the same area he has been working in, which is to deal with Hispanic affairs.

Q This would not fall under Dr. Kuropas?

MR. NESSEN: No, but I expect that Dr. Kuropas and DeBaca, and also John Calhoun, will be working together with the various ethnic and minority groups.

Q Will this have any political action involved?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q It is all nonpartisan?

MR. NESSEN: Right.

Q Has this man had any ties with the Republican National Committee or its ethnic --

MR. NESSEN: He was, as I say, Regional Director of ACTION, and before that Deputy Director, and he was a school principal in Chicago before that.

Q Who is this?

MR. NESSEN: Why don't you come on time, Peter?

Q I didn't know you were holding this.

MR. NESSEN: It is a big story for you.

Q Is he a Republican, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: There is no political affiliation. This is not a political post.

Other than that, I want to announce that Margaret Earl, who many of you know -- she has been working in Margita White's office, helping to arrange out-of-town press conferences and briefings and taking care of interview requests, editorial board meetings and briefings on Presidential policies and proposals -- will be taking over the duties that John Carlson has been performing over the past couple of years.

She will be, as I say, doing the work that John has been doing in the area of specializing in domestic programs in order to help you with your stories. Now, obviously, it is going to take Margaret a little time to sort of acquire the same expertise that John did over the years, and so it is going to be a phasing operation, with John kind of phasing out and Margaret phasing in, but do feel free to start calling Margaret because she has been working in this year and she knows a good deal about it already.

Q Will she be a part of the press? Will she be a press officer?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, she will be working in the Press Office. She has been working in the Press Office.

Q Deputy Assistant?

MR. NESSEN: No, she will be a Staff Assistant.

Q What is the pay for that job?

MR. NESSEN: It has not been quite decided yet, Phil.

Q She will be a Staff Assistant rather than an Assistant to the President?

MR. NESSEN: Right, she will be a Staff Assistant.

Q Does she have any newspaper or press background?

MR. NESSEN: Her background has been that in 1971 she graduated from Stanford University. Before coming over here to the White House Press Office to work with Margita, she was in the Federal Energy Administration, the Director of Research for Frank Zarb, and then she had another job at the FEA in which she was the liaison with the ten regional offices of the FEA dealing with public affairs.

Let me give you her phone number so you can start calling her for detailed information on domestic programs. Margaret's phone number will be 456-2876.

Q Are you ready for questions?

MR. NESSEN: Not quite.

Q What is her home town or age or salary?

MR. NESSEN: Let me get her over here and you can talk to her after the briefing yourself.

I think she will do a really good job on this. Margaret is very bright. She has, as I say, worked in the domestic area on Margita's staff, and she will be here shortly. She especially knows the energy area because she worked at the FEA, and I think you will be very pleased at the kind of information she will be able to help you with.

I don't have any other announcements.

Q Ron, the Senate Armed Services Committee -- and I am talking about one of its Members -- has legislation on calling up 50,000 reservists, and I asked Mr. Fumsfeld what was the significance of that and he kind of ducked the question.

I would like to ask you. Does this relate to any crisis or the President's war powers or anything? What is the significance of it, if you know?

MR. NESSEN: This is the first I have ever heard of it.

Q The question, please?

MR. NESSEN: It is a question relating to a piece of legislation which supposedly the Armed Services Committee of the Senate is considering involving a call-up of reservists. I had not heard of it before.

Q He had heard of it but --

MR. NESSEN: There is no international crisis that would require any call up of reserves. I will look into it, but I don't know. As I say, it is the first I have heard of it.

Q Ron, has the President heard from Secretary Dunlop yet about whether he is going to stay or resign or what?

MR. NESSEN: He has not heard that Secretary Dunlop is leaving.

Q Has he heard that he is staying?

MR. NESSEN: He is here, so I would not expect that he would hear anything about him staying since the President still wants him to stay, expects him to stay.

Q When was the last time he talked to the Secretary?

MR. NESSEN: I think when he called him on New Year's Day to wish him a Happy New Year.

Q Like when Nixon called John Dean on Easter and wished him a happy Easter? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: What was that?

Q The last time we heard something like that was when Nixon called John Dean on Easter and wished him a happy Easter. (Laughter) He said, "You are still my counsel."

MR. NESSEN: I didn't remember that.

Q Do you expect to hear one way or another on what Dunlop's plans are?

MR. NESSEN: I think there is enough public attention focused on it that John, at some point, would want to indicate to the President, but as I say, the President has not heard from Dunlop that he wants to leave.

Q Is there a Cabinet meeting tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, there is.

Q Ron, we carried the story the other day that the CIA is providing covert support to non-Communist political parties in Western Europe with Italy apparently a prime target.

Can you tell us, is this going on and, if so, on how big a scale?

MR. NESSEN: I think you know that we just don't talk about what the CIA may or may not be doing.

Q Ron, yesterday the President indicated to the executives in St. Louis that things were better in Angola than they had been yesterday -- better today than they had been yesterday. I am wondering if they are better today than they were yesterday?

MR. NESSEN: Phil, I basically don't have anything new to report on Angola. There is really just nothing new to report on it. The President has laid out, I think, the various efforts that the United States is making and what the United States' goals are there, and nothing has happened since yesterday to change really what the President has said.

Q Can you elaborate any on his statement where he didn't expect the Russians to continue to provide equipment and money?

MR. NESSEN: I would like to see exactly what words he used. I don't think they were quite those words.

Q The word I got from John was that he did not expect the Russians to continue to provide money and equipment.

Q He was asked what action would he take if the Russians continue to pour arms and equipment into Angola, and his answer -- according to John Carlson -- was: "I don't assume that is going to happen. I don't think that will be the result. The situation there is better today than yesterday."

Q This has obviously got quite a number of us wondering if there are any further implications in this.

MR. NESSEN: Such as?

Q Does it mean that he is indicating that there has been some progress in some contact, some movement vis-a-vis the Russians over the Angolan situation?

MR. NESSEN: No, I think he was voicing a general optimism and hope, but I don't have anything to report in the way of any step that has been taken.

Q Ron, you can't say that these off-beat remarks for two days in a row don't mean something. I mean, the President's spokesman says he is encouraged, and better, yet something has happened.

Q Really, the question is just what is better today than yesterday? What did he mean that it is better today than yesterday?

MR. NESSEN: I think you know what the United States wants in Angola, which is a cease-fire; a solution in which the three Angolan parties resolve their differences and form a Government of national unity and the withdrawal of all foreign elements from Angola.

That is the goal of the United States. Now, that is being pursued in a number of ways diplomatically, both with the Soviet Union and other interested nations around the world, and certainly with the African nations because of the OAU meeting that is coming up later this week.

As the President said, we are providing some assistance to offset the massive influx of Russian and Cuban help.

Now, those are the means the United States is using to achieve those goals, but I can't tell you today that those goals have been achieved and I can't tell you today that any additional progress has been made toward those goals.

Q The President said something is better today than yesterday. So, what is it that is better?

MR. NESSEN: The outlook, I think, in his mind is better than it was previously.

Q Did something happen that we don't know about, that we don't see?

MR. NESSEN: No. The United States is pursuing, as I say, those goals with those means, and those means have not yet resulted in those goals yet.

Q Why is the outlook better? Now, is Kissinger in contact with Dobrynin? Is something happening?

MR. NESSEN: You know that Kissinger was in contact with Dobrynin yesterday. That is no secret, and these diplomatic contacts are continuing with the Soviet Union and with the other countries in Africa and elsewhere.

Q Ron, that Dobrynin meeting happened after the President talked to media types in St. Louis yesterday. Was the President further encouraged by what Dobrynin had to say to Kissinger?

MR. NESSEN: I would say that after the Dobrynin meeting I would not want to make any further indication of progress toward the goals.

Q Ron, the Secretary of State said the other day that the United States would be willing to accept a Marxist solution in Angola.--

MR. NESSEN: Who said that?

Q The Secretary of State, Dr. Kissinger.

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q -- was willing to accept a Marxist solution in Angola, provided the Soviets didn't try to impose it.

MR. NESSEN: Right.

Q In other words, the Popular Movement would be all right with us. You have said that we favor three elements resolving their differences in the coalition. Have we changed now from if the Angolans opt for a Marxist solution?

MR. NESSEN: No. The President has said all along, and so has Dr. Kissinger, that what is really needed here is to allow the Angolan people to determine their own form of Government without this massive Soviet and Cuban effort to impose a Government by armed force, and so whatever the Angolan people decide without this outside interference obviously is one of the goals of the United States.

Q So, our position remains the same on that?

MR. NESSEN: That is correct.

Q After ruling out an embargo or withholding the grain sales to Russia yesterday, the President said that the answer is to take other limited measures necessary to block and stop Soviet action that we find unacceptable.

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q What does he have in mind?

MR. NESSEN: He has in mind the things that I have mentioned, Tom, which are diplomatic efforts directly with the Soviet Union, with other countries in the world which share our interest in an Angolan solution without outside interference, obviously diplomatic efforts with the members of the Organization of African Unity, which are approaching an important meeting and, as I said, this assistance that is being provided to offset the influx of Soviet and Cuban manpower plus what the President said yesterday quite publicly, which is that the Soviet Union should know that providing this kind of military assistance 8,000 miles from its border in an area where it has no legitimate interest is not going to be helpful or conducive to the progress which has been going on of lessening tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union, and that combination of steps the President hopes will persuade the Soviet Union to allow the Angolan people to make their own decision.

Q Ron, principally then, diplomatic effort and limited only to assistance that is now underway through countries in Africa, presumably Zaire.

MR. NESSEN: I am not going to be specific about the assistance other than to say obviously it is assistance that has been previously approved.

Q But no other appropriate measures in other parts of the world or economic measures or military moves?

MR. NESSEN: Certainly no American military measures. I mean, the President has flatly ruled that out.

Q Can you explain why, if we feel the Soviets have no legitimate interests in Angola, that the United States has?

MR. NESSEN: The United States' legitimate interest in Angola is twofold, Peter, or maybe onefold with two points to the fold. One is the United States' interest in Angola is to see to it that the Angolan people have the ability to choose the Government that they want and then the broader context of that, which is that that is a belief that the United States has, which applies all over the world, that foreign countries should not come with troops and military equipment and try to impose a Government on any country, and it is in the interest of the United States to stand behind that belief.

Q Ron, without going into any detail on any CIA operations, is it the policy of this Administration to allow or to prohibit any U.S. involvement in the political or the electoral process of another democratic society?

MR. NESSEN: I am just not going to talk about what the CIA may or may not be doing.

Q May I go back to Angola for one minute?

MR. NESSEN: Sure.

Q Did Kissinger discuss his talks with Dobrynin today with the President, and since you say there was no progress as a result of that meeting, are we sliding backwards in terms of the optimism?

MR. NESSEN: I would not say sliding backwards, no. I think it is certainly fair to assume that the President and the Secretary did talk about Angola today and about the Secretary's meeting with Dobrynin.

Q Can you tell us anything about that meeting?

MR. NESSEN: About the Dobrynin meeting or the Kissinger meeting with the President?

Q Did he ask for a definition of the Pravda and Tass --

MR. NESSEN: Well, I think we have said that publicly, that we would like to know more precisely what they meant by that.

Q Do we know now?

Q I mean, have you gotten any enlightenment on that?

MR. NESSEN: I would say that it is still not clear to the United States exactly what the Pravda article meant.

Q Ron, the Moroccans have stopped a Soviet ship loaded with arms and are holding it in one of their ports. Are they cooperating with us in this? Are they one of the countries that have agreed to cooperate with us?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know the answer to that, Howard.

Q Ron, would the President regard it as useful and conducive towards the settlement of the Angolan problem for the South African troops who are fighting there to withdraw at this point?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I thought he emphasized in his speech when he said "all, all," all that he wants is all outside elements to leave and let the Angolans settle it themselves.

Q Ron, you seem to indicate that the President is encouraged or the President, by his own words yesterday, said that it was better than it was before, yet after the meeting yesterday with Kissinger and Dobrynin he did not think that was very encouraging. There seems to be a contradiction.

MR. NESSEN: I don't see the contradiction. I think my description of the outcome of the Dobrynin meeting was probably accurate and I think I will just leave it the way it was.

Q Ron, would you say it again?

MR. NESSEN: I think I tried to pick those words so carefully I am not sure I could pick the same words again. We could have the stenographer read them back.

Q Ron, can you provide me another assessment of the meeting?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I don't think there has been any additional change in the outlook as a result of the Dobrynin meeting.

Q Either way, negative or positive?

MR. NESSEN: Correct.

Q Ron, has anything happened publicly or privately to encourage the President and Dr. Kissinger beyond the Pravda editorial or is that the sole basis for that?

MR. NESSEN: I think when the President spoke of the outlook being better yesterday than the day before, he was speaking of more than the Pravda editorial.

Q Can I ask if the President has had any other contact other than through the Kissinger-Dobrynin level? Has there been any contact with Moscow above that; that is, any communications with Brezhnev?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I am aware of.

Q Does this optimism include knowledge of the claim by the MPLA that they have captured the headquarters of the FNLA, one of the factions that the U.S. is supporting?

MR. NESSEN: My understanding is that that claim was made overnight or this morning or after the President spoke, but I think his remarks were unrelated, really, to the military situation and we are speaking more of the diplomatic situation.

Q Ron, so we won't misinterpret what is subject to misinterpretation about the Dobrynin meeting, is it fair to say that Dobrynin stonewalled Kissinger in their meeting?

MR. NESSEN: No, I don't think it is fair to say that, Peter. I think what I told Phil, which was that there was -- whatever I told Phil -- that there was no further change in the outlook as a result of the --

Q Was it encouraging or non-encouraging?

MR. NESSEN: There was no further change--no further change in the outlook as a result of the Dobrynin meeting.

Q Was it discouraging?

MR. NESSEN: I would not say it was encouraging or discouraging. There was not any change.

Q Ron, would it be fair to say that both men simply restated the views that had been expressed before? Just nothing new was said?

MR. NESSEN: No, I would not say that.

Q Ron, can you confirm the Anne Armstrong stories, and as a follow to that, is there any reason for the delay in the naming of an envoy to Peking?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I don't want to deny the Anne Armstrong story or confirm it, but, you know, we have to do these things in an orderly way. It does take time to get the various papers done and the various checks made and so forth. I would think we would have something for you on that particular post within a few days.

Q Do the British have to make some kind of a statement to you as to whether that is acceptable?

MR. NESSEN: Well, that is true of any Ambassadorial appointment. Obviously, as part of the procedure for naming a new Ambassador you seek the approval of the country to whom you are sending the Ambassador.

Q Is she under consideration -- can you tell us that -- for the post?

MR. NESSEN: I am just not going to deny or confirm the story.

Q Do you know where she is? Is she in Washington?

MR. NESSEN: No, she is in Texas.

Q Is anyone else under consideration?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think it is fair to say who is and who is not. We will have the name for you in a couple of days.

Q How long do you think it will take for the British to give you some kind of an indication of who they would approve?

MR. NESSEN: I would think in a few days.

Q Ron, was the statement in that same report about Anne Armstrong that the White House has insisted to the State Department that political rather than career appointees to the diplomatic posts be selected now?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't even see that in the story, John.

Q It is at the very end of the story.

MR. NESSEN: I did not, I guess, read that far, but to my knowledge, I have not heard that.

Q Ron, may I ask you two unrelated questions?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q First, can you assure us, to the best of your knowledge, that as of now -- not weeks ago when he answered the question at the press conference, but as of now -- the President knows everything the CIA is doing and approves whatever they are doing?

MR. NESSEN: I can give you the same assurance, I think, that we have always given, which is that the President has directed that he be kept fully informed of everything the CIA is doing.

Q Does he have the feeling of assurance, or do you, that he has been kept fully informed whether it be this question you won't comment on or whatever that the CIA is involved in?

MR. NESSEN: Yes. I mean, I don't see where all this is going, but certainly he has given that directive and he has confidence in the people who are working for him. I don't know quite what point you are raising.

Q The point I am raising is that it is four days now at least that you have been asked the question about the United States Government, whether it is involved in mercenaries. We don't have to go into details of one form or another -- out of the country, in the country and all of that -- but whether our country is involved in mercenaries regarding Angola and you will not comment on it, and I am just asking for assurance.

MR. NESSEN: Certainly. I have said that the United States Government is not involved in the recruiting, training or hiring of American mercenaries; that the President himself has said that the United States in fact is not training any mercenaries of any nationality.

Q In or out of the country? Has he commented on that?

MR. NESSEN: Yes. I think he said flatly the United States is not training any mercenaries of any country. So there have been answers. There are other questions which I have said that I can't answer, but that should not, in any way, be connected to the President's knowledge.

Q Why not? Why can we not assume that he knows everything that they are doing? He said so weeks ago at the press conference.

MR. NESSEN: And I say he has given directions that he is to be kept fully informed.

Q My other question -- unrelated -- was John's question about is there any change, any development, anything on an Ambassador from us to the People's Republic of China?

MR. NESSEN: No, I don't have anything on that.

Q Thank you.

Q I would like to go back to Angola for a minute. Yesterday in New Hampshire Mr. Reagan said that his position on Angola was that the United States should say to the Soviet Union "out" and if they didn't get out they would have us to contend with. Does the White House have any comment on that statement?

MR. NESSEN: No.

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Q Does that coincide with the President's position?

MR. NESSEN: You know the President's position, Marty. You know, all through this season we are not going to be responding to or reacting to every bit of rhetoric by the 14 or 16 or however many candidates there are. The President has the responsibility of acting and running foreign policy, as well as domestic policy, and so you see his policy day by day as it is made and decided.

All the others are free from that responsibility, and so I just don't think it makes any sense all through this year to be contrasting or commenting on the various people's campaign speeches.

Q Are you saying that the White House considers Mr. Reagan's statement, as you put it, a piece of rhetoric.

MR. NESSEN: No, I am just not going to comment on it.

Q Are these candidates going to get intelligence briefings?

MR. NESSEN: In the past, there has been that arrangement, and I don't know what the arrangement will be for this year, but I will check on it for you.

Q Also, can you tell us what the President has done today on the CIA decisions?

MR. NESSEN: He didn't work on that this morning that I know of, although he did have a meeting with Jack Marsh. He spent the morning in staff meetings, from the time he arrived until the time he left for the funeral.

Then each afternoon -- I think I told the pool yesterday -- from now until the State of the Union there will be two or three hours set aside each afternoon to work on the State of the Union speech and decisions.

Q I am curious about your lack of information or lack of knowledge on Secretary Dunlop. Some members of the President's Cabinet are making it fairly evident that they know that Mr. Dunlop is going to resign and it does not seem to be a matter of particular mystification to them.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know who that is, Jim. I have not seen any of that.

Q In view of that, why doesn't the White House know or have some indication of Mr. Dunlop's intentions?

MR. NESSEN: Are those the same people who knew that Joe Pulitzer was not going to come and meet the President yesterday?

Q No.

MR. NESSEN: I frankly have not heard any Cabinet members saying they know that John Dunlop is going to leave because the President does not know that and --

Q I didn't say that. I said they seem fairly convinced and it does not seem to be a matter of much mystery to them.

MR. NESSEN: Jim, if I knew or the President knew that he was leaving, you would know. As I say, he is a valued member of the Cabinet. The President has repeatedly said that he wants him to stay in the Cabinet, expects him to stay in the Cabinet, and I have no knowledge that would lead me to believe that he is not staying in the Cabinet, and neither does the President.

Q Do you expect him to be at the Cabinet meeting tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, I do.

Q Did the President call all the Cabinet members to wish them a Happy New Year?

MR. NESSEN: All he could get ahold of. There were one or two who were out of the country. I think Ed Levy was out of the country, and I think Morton -- was that the other one? Whoever could be found on the telephone.

Q Ron, you said that when he called Dr. Dunlop to wish him a Happy New Year, that is, as far as you know, the only conversation they have had since the common situs decision was announced.

MR. NESSEN: That I am aware of. Yes, that is right.

Q It seems that in view of all this speculation that he might resign, if the President wanted him to stay, would he not phone him personally on that subject to urge him to stay?

MR. NESSEN: As I say, the President has no reason to believe that he intends to do anything but stay. You know, there is speculation and then there is the reality, which is that Dunlop has never said to the President that he was going to leave.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END (AT 12 NOON EST)