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

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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 10:40 A.M. MDT

AUGUST 21, 1976

SATURDAY
(Vail, Colorado)

MR. NESSEN: We have some announcements to give you today: The travel pool for today's golf, which has already left; a notice to the press; two bills the President has signed -- they are ready to go right now -- one is the membership on the National Archives Trust Board and the other is S. 2642, the Ninety Six National Historic Site, South Carolina.

The President also has declared a major disaster for the State of New Jersey as a result of storms, high winds and flooding associated with Hurricane Belle. That is also printed and ready to hand you with all the information, plus a note of where to seek further information. That is all on its way down from the mimeograph room. There are also a number of minor bills, some of them private relief bills, a list of those, and that is that.

Q When did he do all this, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: Some of these were signed in Kansas City. Most of these were signed in Kansas City.

Q Including the disaster things, so the New Jersey people already know about that sort of thing?

MR. NESSEN: It was signed yesterday, and we didn't have any facilities or way to get it typed up and distributed.

Q This is still news?

MR. NESSEN: It has never been announced. The Governor has been notified, but we have never announced it publicly.

Just to run you through the President's schedule a little bit, I think the pool report arrangement that we were able to work out with the local poolers supplying the pool report was very well done, and I think they deserve our thanks for that.

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Q I hope it doesn't eliminate the third helicopter --

MR. NESSEN: No, we usually ask for four helicopters up here from Grand Junction. Two were taken for Mrs. Ford's flight, and they were taken from the President's flight and left only two for coming up here yesterday.

After the golf yesterday and a private dinner at home last night with the family, the President took a little walk around the neighborhood about 10:30 last night with his friend, Jim Brown, and then went to bed at 11:00.

This morning the President got up at 8:00.

Q What time did he go to bed?

MR. NESSEN: 11:00 is when he went to bed.

The President got up at 8:00 this morning, read his daily intelligence report and other official documents, as well as the newspapers and so forth.

At 9:05 Governor Lamm arrived for about 30 minutes. It was a brief courtesy call. That is Governor Lamm of Colorado. His first name is Richard.

At 10:05 the President departed to play golf. The foursome consisted of Ted Kindel, who I think you know is a long-time friend of the President who lives at least part of the year in Vail; John Purcell, another local resident and friend; and the golf pro at the course, Bob Wolfe.

This afternoon after golf the President will just take it easy and probably will be having a private dinner this evening.

At 6:00 we will post the President's evening plans and as much of tomorrow's schedule as we can get at that time.

Just to lay out some thoughts about how the Press Office operation will run while we are out here, I think what we will do is we will have every day a posting at 10:00 and a posting at 6:00. The 6:00 posting would normally cover the President's activities for that night and the next day in the way of a schedule announcement.

There is a bulletin board over here in the back where we will post the 10:00 a.m. postings as well as put them on the press release table over here.

We will have a briefing each day, except tomorrow. No briefing on Sunday, but starting Monday's briefing at, let's say, between 10:30 and 11:00. Sheila Weidenfeld also will be here in time for the morning briefing, and also in time for the evening posting to help take care of your questions on Mrs. Ford's activities and the family activities and give you more details of some of the social events the President will be attending.

For tomorrow only, just Sunday, there will be no briefing and if there is anything to post, it will be posted at 10:00 and 6:00, so just check here at 10:00 and 6:00 and see if we have anything.

The office, as you probably know, is one floor up. The Press Office will be open normally from 8:00 in the morning until 6:00 in the evening.

If after 6:00 you have any problems or questions, John Carlson, Bill Roberts, Thym Smith and myself all are living in the hotel and you can reach us there.

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Q One question, Ron. Since the message center here closes at 9:00, how do you propose to get in touch with us in case of an emergency at night when we are all out to dinner? We didn't have that problem in California. The message center was open pretty late.

MR. NESSEN: This one closes at 9:00 p.m.?

Q Yes.

MR. CARLSON: We will call out.

Q Who can we tell where we will be?

Q Why don't we leave a sign-up list on the bulletin board where we are?

MR. NESSEN: All right, we will do that.

Q Is it possible to get the number of the White House so we can, for instance, phone the Press Office here?

MR. NESSEN: I will check. I don't know it myself.

Q What is this dinner tonight? Is it private, at home?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have all the dinner plans for tonight. He is getting together with friends. I will post it later.

Q Can you tell us what the President's attitude is and how is he watching the Korean situation?

MR. NESSEN: As you can probably surmise, the meeting with Henry and Brent in Kansas City yesterday morning was largely focused on the plans to go in there and cut the tree down. That is what it amounted to.

Are you familiar with the entire activities of yesterday?

Q No.

MR. NESSEN: I probably shouldn't give you that from here because I don't have the full and official chronology of what happened.

Q Are you saying the President knew in advance the tree was going to be cut down and he gave the order to do that; approved it, or what?

MR. NESSEN: He approved the operation, that is correct. Then he was kept posted on it by Brent as the day went on and into the evening.

Q Why was the tree cut down?

MR. NESSEN: Jim, since I don't have the background and chronology with me and many folks here had not heard of the episode, I think it is silly to try to tell that story from here. I talked to Alan Woods a number of times last night and he is keeping his press corps informed and so is the State Department.

Q Apparently the invective in what is being said by the North Koreans is very sharp, much sharper than at any time since there has been any serious difficulty there. Do we consider that to be a serious indication of potential trouble?

MR. NESSEN: I can only refer you to Alan Woods or Bob Funseth.

Q Is the President handling any of this here or is it being handled by Secretary Kissinger and by Secretary Rumsfeld and the Joint Chiefs and the President just reviewing what they do or is there any direction coming from here?

MR. NESSEN: Of course, there is direction coming from here.

Q Could you give us some idea of the extent of that direction?

MR. NESSEN: All the final decisions on yesterday's activity were taken during the meeting yesterday morning with Brent Scowcroft and Kissinger in Kansas City. After that, the operation went off smoothly and the President was informed of it.

Q Ron, what about the MIDWAY and the other ships? Are they steaming toward Korea?

MR. NESSEN: Ralph, I can't give you any of that from here. The Pentagon and the State Department are the normal places to go for that.

Q Is the President concerned? He seems to be running off to golf, and that kind of thing. We have not heard that he was really even monitoring the situation.

MR. NESSEN: I told you in Kansas City, Helen, people asked what the President was doing, had he dropped official business. I said, of course not, he is doing all the things he has to do.

Q Sirce he arrived in Vail, has he been in touch? We need a pictorial view of what is his involvement. There is a big build-up in the Far East and we think the American people ought to know more about it from here.

MR. NESSEN: I will get you what I can. Obviously, he is being kept constantly informed on the situation and is making all the decisions that have to be made.

Q Ron, on another subject, as you know, the Vietnamese government has applied to the United Nations for membership. There is a report the United States will veto that. I wonder, could you tell us whether the decision to veto or accept Vietnam membership has been made yet?

MR. NESSEN: I will check, Bob. I don't have any information on that.

Q Was there ever any motive established for the murders in the DMZ? When you initially read your reaction statement you said there was no motive determined. Does the President now have any idea what the motive was on the provocation?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know, but I will check.

Q The film released yesterday, was that the Army film or was that taken by somebody in the media?

MR. NESSEN: Somebody told me -- I just heard this on the television -- that it was some American soldier using his own 8 millimeter camera that took those pictures. It wasn't any official film.

Q When will the political strategy meetings begin, Monday?

MR. NESSEN: Probably early next week, yes.

Q When is Rog Morton coming in, Tuesday?

MR. NESSEN: I think Rog came with us.

Q He is here?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Could you tell us all the staff people, both political and White House, who are here?

MR. NESSEN: There are not many people here.

Q Could you read them off?

MR. NESSEN: Dick Cheney, Mike Duval, Alan Greenspan, Bob Hartmann, Rogers Morton, Nessen --

Q Who? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: -- Ron Nessen, remember him? (Laughter) General Scowcroft and Sheila Weidenfeld.

Q When is Dole coming in?

MR. NESSEN: Probably Tuesday or Wednesday of next week. It is not completely set yet.

Q How about Spencer?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have any arrival times on the rest of the people.

Q When does he actually start his political plans?

MR. NESSEN: I think Monday we will begin to focus more on that.

Q Ron, bring us up to date, if you will --

MR. NESSEN: I don't want you to think that no thinking has gone into the fall campaign yet, Helen.

Q How much has?

MR. NESSEN: There have been various strategies reviewed, the possibility of different options have been reviewed, different papers have been pulled together for his study, and so forth.

Q Has the President named anybody to get into the debate planning with Carter?

MR. NESSEN: Not yet, no.

Q Is one option that the President will remain most of the time in the White House and let Dole do the road work, the low road, as it were? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: The final decisions have not been made on how the campaign will be conducted.

Q Ron, at what point will somebody on the President's campaign staff contact somebody on the Carter campaign staff and nail down a place and time for the first of the debates?

MR. NESSEN: We will want to discuss it among ourselves, first.

Q Do you anticipate that next week?

MR. NESSEN: The discussions among ourselves?
Next week, yes.

Q What about the contact?

MR. NESSEN: First, we will discuss it among ourselves.

Q Is there a chance these debates will never come off because you won't get together for the ground rules on it with the Carter people?

MR. NESSEN: It is hard to speculate on that. The President wants to do it, has challenged Carter to do it.

Q Carter already has offered the date of September 28th. What is the White House reaction?

MR. NESSEN: As I said, we will sit down next week, Russ, among ourselves and discuss the debates, when, and so forth.

Q Are you suggesting that the President publicly challenged Jimmy Carter to debate without having thought through when the debates might be set, when, where and how? You still have to decide that?

MR. NESSEN: That is correct.

Q Is there going to be a side trip on Tuesday?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I know of. You are thinking of the American Legion Convention in Seattle?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: I think it is possible Senator Dole will go to that.

Q And come back here?

MR. NESSEN: That is one possibility, yes.

Q The President won't go?

MR. NESSEN: No, there is no plan to.

Q Is Dole going to be his stand-in? Did he turn the invitation over to him?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know how the invitation worked or who the invitation came to, Helen.

Q What about the trip back? What can you tell us about that next Sunday?

MR. NESSEN: Nothing has been arranged yet. I will give you plenty of notice when it is.

Q Do you expect a stop?

MR. NESSEN: I think it is possible we might make a stop.

Q Is there an overnight somewhere out of Vail?

MR. NESSEN: We just don't have it nailed down, yet, Ralph.

Q Will we leave as early as Friday?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have it nailed down yet.

Q Is Stu Spencer coming in?

MR. NESSEN: I think some of those people will be coming in next week.

Q Has Dr. Lukash asked the President to take it easy?

MR. NESSEN: Does it look like he has?

Q It doesn't matter what he does. I am asking, has Dr. Lukash recommended that he take some rest?

MR. NESSEN: Dr. Lukash hasn't recommended it, but we are all out here to get some rest.

Q Dr. Lukash has not said the President looks tired?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't say that. Quite the opposite. In fact, everybody is tired. I am, aren't you? In fact, that is why he is playing golf, that is how he relaxes.

Q Ron, on the business of campaign plans, you say they are not all finalized. Hasn't the President already decided and told you he will do very little campaigning for the next eight weeks or so, going out only a few times to make speeches before major and important groups?

MR. NESSEN: We haven't really made those important decisions yet, Ted.

Q Hasn't he made that decision?

MR. NESSEN: I think when we are ready to announce how the campaign will be conducted, we will. I don't have that to give you today.

Q You are not saying he has not made that decision?

MR. NESSEN: I said earlier, I thought he had made some tentative decisions on the campaign.

Q Weren't those decisions made before he selected a running mate? Wasn't that part of the thinking that went into the process of choosing one?

MR. NESSEN: I think he made tentative choices on how to conduct some of the strategy for the campaign.

Q Ron, is the President, or any of his representatives, going to Travis Air Force Base where the bodies of those two Americans are coming in?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think anybody from here will be going.

Q Ron, can you tell us anything further about the request for the meeting at Panmunjom? Has that taken place Has a date been set?

MR. NESSEN: I will have to check for you, Walt.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

(AT 10:58 A.M. MDT)