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NEWS CONFERENCE

#509

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 11:35 A.M. EDT

JUNE 16, 1976

WEDNESDAY

MR. NESSEN: Let me mention a couple, first of all, of personnel appointments here at the White House. One is a new member of the legislative staff in Max Friedersdorf's office. His name is Patrick Rowland. We will have biographies to hand out here after the briefing. Pat will be focusing on legislative affairs in the House, primarily. Mr. Rowland was an administrative assistant to Congressman Charles Wiggins of California from 1969 to 1975. Then, he went with private industry briefly, the Glass Container Manufacturers Institute, before joining the White House Staff. We will have a biographical sheet on Pat Rowland.

Q What changes have taken place in the legislative staff?

MR. NESSEN: Well, there has been a certain shift over there, but the main departure was Vern Loen, as you probably know.

In the Press Office -- this is really just sort of to bring you up to date on something you already know about, and that is that our new Director of the Press Advance Office is Doug Blaser. I hope that you are as happy with Doug as I am because I think he is a super guy. He has had advance experience previously and also was Executive Assistant to the Director of the National Park Service.

A couple of others who have joined Doug on the Press Advance Staff, who I think you have also had experience with by now, are Jack LaCovey, who is a native of Washington, and Jim Hunter, who is from Salt Lake City, Utah, and now lives in Arlington, Virginia. I think they are great additions to the staff and, as I said, I hope you are as pleased with them as I am because I think they have done great work and will continue to do that.

On the President's schedule today, I think you know that in the late afternoon the President will be meeting with Prime Minister Trudeau. There will be a small arrival ceremony -- not exactly an arrival ceremony, but a ceremony in the Rose Garden to welcome him.

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They will hold their meetings beginning at 5:30 and lasting until 6:30, and then almost immediately will depart for the SEQUOIA for a working dinner. There will, of course, be a travel pool going along in the motorcade to the SEQUOIA and I expect to have at least a written report of the meeting shortly after it concludes.

There has been one addition to the President's schedule today. At 12:30, the President has called the Vice President; the Director of Central Intelligence; Bill Clements, the Deputy Defense Secretary; Brent Scowcroft, the National Security Adviser; and Secretary Kissinger, to a meeting here at the White House to review what information is known at that time concerning the disappearance of Ambassador Meloy and the Economic Attache, Mr. Waring, and to discuss the situation.

In addition, the President has indicated that he would like to personally contact the next of kin of these two diplomats. I believe Mr. Meloy has a brother in New York --

Q In what sense do you mean next of kin?

MR. NESSEN: Next of kin in the sense of his relatives, and no other sense than that.

I think Mr. Meloy has a brother in New York and Mr. Waring has a wife in Athens.

Q Do you know his brother's first name, by any chance?

Q Can you tell us what you know so far?

MR. NESSEN: Just a second.

The brother is Daniel, and Mr. Waring's wife's name is Irene.

Q Is that New York City?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, it is.

Q What is the purpose of contacting them?

MR. NESSEN: To indicate that the President views the matter with great seriousness and that the United States will do all it can to have them returned safely.

Q Well, what do we know about it?

MR. NESSEN: Let me indicate to you one other step that the President has taken, and that is at the President's direction the State Department has communicated with a number of Governments to express the extreme seriousness with which the President views the situation.

Q Which Governments?

MR. NESSEN: I am not able to tell you the names of the Governments. I don't think it would be proper to do that at the moment.

Q Is the Soviet Union one of the Governments?

Q How many?

MR. NESSEN: A number. Roughly a half-dozen.

Q Can you answer Jim's question whether the Soviet Union is included?

MR. NESSEN: OFF THE RECORD.

Q Why is that off the record?

MR. NESSEN: Because I don't want to get into a guessing game as to which Governments were contacted.

Q Does the United States think Governments are involved in this?

MR. NESSEN: This is just part of the President's effort to indicate the seriousness with which he views the situation and his desire to have the two men returned safely.

Q Ron, are these Middle Eastern Governments? Can you in any way be specific about it?

MR. NESSEN: I would say that is about as specific as I would be.

Q You say that these are primarily Middle East Governments?

MR. NESSEN: Primarily Middle East Governments.

Q Ron, does the presence of Secretary Clements indicate that we might use force to get these men back?

MR. NESSEN: It does not really indicate anything, Saul, other than that the purpose of the meeting is to review the information available and to discuss the situation.

Q Can you tell us what you know or what the President has been told about this disappearance?

MR. NESSEN: I think the State Department has given a fairly up-to-date factual report on where it stands. As you know, the two men were on their way to a meeting with the President-elect Sarkis and they did not arrive at the meeting. Basically, that is pretty much all that is known at the moment.

Q Ron, I got you saying the U.S. will do all that it can to have them returned safely. That is a rather broad statement. Are you ruling out the use of U.S. force here, or is that intended to include that possible threat?

MR. NESSEN: I think you are way, way ahead of the game, Walt. The President has called this meeting to review the information that is available and to discuss the situation. I mean, it is not even known --

Q Excuse me. Let me finish my question.

The President views the matter with either great or grave seriousness and the U.S. will do all that it can to have them returned safely.

Now, that is a very broad statement and I was wondering if you could be more specific?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I certainly would not go down the track that you are going. It is just very early. Nobody knows what has really happened to the men at this point.

Q Have there been any kidnapping notes or demands made, or do you even know whether they are alive? You say you want them back safely.

MR. NESSEN: I have given you pretty much all that is known about the situation.

Q Ron, when you talk about contacting Governments, the United States does not regard PLO as a Government, does it?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Well, is there any effort being made to contact the PLO leadership?

MR. NESSEN: OFF THE RECORD.

Q Who is Geraldine Brown?

MR. NESSEN: She is with the State Department, as far as I know, but I have to check. I don't know.

Q Can I pursue Phil's question?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Has the President or the State Department given any Government a message and asked them to relay it to the PLO?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I think I am really going too deeply into diplomatic exchanges, Dave. There has been contact at the President's direction with some Governments and there has also been some contact with some of the political factions in Beirut, and I think I ought to stop there. It is, after all, a delicate situation in which people's safety could be at stake and I don't think I ought to -- and very little is known, frankly.

Q Can you say categorically that no messages have been received from any group, political group or other kind of group, by the United States Government? You were asked some question and I don't think you gave a categorical answer.

MR. NESSEN: There has been no note or demand made at all.

Q Ron, you say no note or demand but you did hesitate.

MR. NESSEN: There has been no contact, Jim.

Q No communication from any group?

MR. NESSEN: I think, as some of you have reported, there was a phone call made to the wife of the chauffeur indicating that the chauffeur had been kidnapped, but no indication who that phone call came from and there has been no contact at least up to three minutes ago when I came out here -- five minutes ago.

Q Except that one call to the chauffeur's wife?

MR. NESSEN: That is the only contact.

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Q Have there been ordered any special security measures for the Embassy in Beirut?

MR. NESSEN: I am not familiar with that, Dick.

Q Has the Ford Administration ever reiterated the Nixon policy of no ransom for envoys?

MR. NESSEN: Well, there has been no change in the policy on that.

Q Ron, is this considered a meeting of the National Security Council?

MR. NESSEN: This is not a formal meeting of the National Security Council.

Q They are all members of.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. Let's see--the Vice President, Kissinger, Bush, Clements, Scowcroft. I don't know. It is a meeting of his advisors in this area to review the information that is available.

Q Do you expect an announcement afterwards?

MR. NESSEN: I just have no way of knowing, Helen.

Q Has the President given any information to suggest that this was either, one, a plan and deliberate act, or, two, an inadvertent act that was rather spontaneous.

MR. NESSEN: Walt, there is just so little information available that at least right now it is not possible to make those kinds of judgments.

Q Where did it take place?

MR. NESSEN: Helen, literally they got in their car and they drove off to a meeting with Sarkis and, you know, they have not been seen or heard from since.

Q Ron, they had a guard part of the way. Do you know anything about where the guard left them?

MR. NESSEN: I only know what I read on the wire about that. I don't have any information on that.

Q Ron, what is the purpose of Trudeau's visit here?

MR. NESSEN: Did we not announce the purpose of the meeting at the time that it was --

Q Before you go further, could you give us an update this afternoon on the situation vis-a-vis Ambassador Meloy -- say, 4 o'clock?

MR. NESSEN: Okay. Let's not set a specific time. Let's just say that we will get back together when there is something that seems to have changed in the situation.

I will have to get you the details of the --

Q Isn't it to present Canada's Bicentennial gift to the United States?

MR. NESSEN: That is the purpose for coming here, is to give this album which is a Canadian Bicentennial gift to the United States, and while he is here they will take this opportunity to have some talks also.

Q What is the album?

Q Why is he bringing his Finance Minister along?

MR. NESSEN: Why is he bringing his Finance Minister along? I will have to check on the details of the meeting.

Q What does that album consist of? Do you know anything about it?

MR. NESSEN: I have forgotten now.

Q It is a picture of the U.S.-Canadian border.

MR. NESSEN: It is a picture along the border, isn't it?

MS. TROIA: Yes, it is the mutual border. It is a book Trudeau wrote.

Q It is between Canada and the United States?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Would you describe the talks as substantive; that is to say, it is going to be more than just a little chat? It will be substantive bilateral talks?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q How will you get this readout tonight?

MR. NESSEN: On what, Phil?

Q On the Trudeau thing.

MR. NESSEN: As I say, it will probably, at the very least, be a brief written report on the meeting.

Q To be issued to the pool or to be issued --

MR. NESSEN: No, it will be issued here before they go to the dinner.

Q Before the dinner?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, on the first hour of their meeting before they leave.

Q How many discussions will they have?

Q So we will get it about 6 o'clock? They go at 6:30.

MR. NESSEN: 6:30, I would think.

They didn't plan to do anything after the boat meeting, did they -- the dinner, I mean?

They do not plan anything further.

Q Does the President intend to bring up the natural gas price increase that the Canadians agreed upon?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have an agenda for the meeting, Walt. I really do need to look into the meeting more and kind of get back to you on that.

Q What are the President's political plans for the rest of the week?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I think it is likely that, as was announced in Iowa, that the President will go to Iowa sometime on the early afternoon of Friday and meet with some of the State delegates there and come back Friday night.

Q Isn't he going to the dinner for Mary Louise Smith?

MR. NESSEN: That's right, he will.

Q He will go?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, he was invited and he accepted the invitation.

Q You didn't mention that.

MR. NESSEN: Oh, I'm sorry. Yes, he was invited and has accepted.

Q Where?

MR. NESSEN: It is in Des Moines, Iowa.

Q Did the President get some reports from his people in Iowa that said a personal appearance might be able to claim a victory there? He held off so long that I am just wondering on what basis did he finally agree to go.

MR. NESSEN: I don't, frankly, know what the basis was, Phil. I hadn't heard of any such report coming in as the one you mentioned.

Q Does he think he will carry a majority of the Iowa delegates?

MR. NESSEN: You really need to ask Jim Baker and Rog Morton on those kinds of details.

Q Ron, Ronald Reagan will be at that dinner. Is there any plan for the President to see Reagan while he is in Des Moines?

MR. NESSEN: Well, the President is going to the dinner. Who the other guests are, I don't know.

Q Would President Ford change his schedule at all to either make sure that he sees or does not see Mr. Reagan?

MR. NESSEN: He has accepted an invitation to go to a dinner and expects to go to a dinner.

Q Is he a guest of honor? I mean aside from Mary Louise Smith?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what his role is other than having accepted the invitation to attend.

Q Will he have any remarks at the dinner, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: He is expected to make remarks there but I am not sure whether it is at the dinner or elsewhere. I will have to check on the exact schedule.

Q Will this be the first time that he and Reagan have shared the same platform?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know.

Q Can you find out for us if they are going to meet and talk?

MR. NESSEN: I have no way of getting that information, Helen. I can speak for the President and say that the President has accepted an invitation to that dinner and will be there, and who else is there and what other guests' plans are I can't speak for.

Q Some other guests are planning to have that opportunity, is that right?

MR. NESSEN: I only say that I don't know because I don't know. I will have to check.

Q Ron, does the President have any reaction to that Senate Judiciary Committee vote on divestiture?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I think you know that the President's view on that -- or if you don't I will tell you -- the President just does not see that that bill can either, number one, do anything to increase the supply of domestically-produced petroleum, or, number two, he does not see that that bill can in any way lower the price that Americans pay for petroleum and in the absence of any evidence that that bill would do either one of those things, he is opposed to it and in fact it could have a negative effect because it creates or could create in the minds of Americans the idea that this is somehow a magic formula -- that if you break up the oil companies it is going to solve the oil problem and that is not true, it won't.

The only way to solve the oil problem is the way the President has outlined, which is to increase domestic production of petroleum and to develop other sources of energy so that the United States is no longer dependent on overseas supplies of oil. That bill does not move in that direction at all, it only holds out the false hope that it will do either one of those things and, therefore, he is opposed to it.

Q Does that mean he will veto the bill?

MR. NESSEN: Well, it is very early in the legislative process. It has passed only a committee of one chamber.

Q On oil and gas, has the President ever -- perhaps I missed it -- has he ever taken a firm stand about dropping prices? I know his position on a supply, but would it be natural gas or fuel oil? Has he ever spoken on that?

MR. NESSEN: What do you mean dropping the prices?

Q I mean prices going back to what laughingly is called normal?

MR. NESSEN: I don't exactly understand the question, Cliff.

Q Well, in gasoline, the prices for the past year or so have gone all the way up and now they are in the mid-sixty cents for a gallon and things like that.

MR. NESSEN: Because we are now importing about 40 percent of our petroleum from foreign countries which control the price.

Q Well, does he say --

MR. NESSEN: They charge us what they will and as long as we are dependent on that foreign petroleum there is nothing we can do about it.

Q Is it inherent that if we are not dependent on the foreign source the prices will go down? Is that the President's plan?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know whether they would go down or not but we would have our own fuel supplies under our own control and we would have alternate forms of fuel beside petroleum to run our industries and we would have our own supplies and not be at the mercy of foreign countries to set our prices or control our supply.

Q As long as we are on the subject of prices, does the President, who I understand believes in the free enterprise system, believe that competition tends to decrease prices?

MR. NESSEN: Let's see. I have to think one step ahead of you, Deakin. Could you go on and ask me the next question and let me come back to that question?

Q Since the purpose of this bill, as I understand it, is to increase competition, I am asking whether the President believes that competition tends to decrease prices.

MR. NESSEN: Well, I don't want to get into a philosophical argument about it. The President is opposed to it for very practical reasons. It would not increase the supply, it would not lower the prices and would only give Americans a false sense of having done something about the energy problem when it does not do anything about the energy problem.

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Q Ron, going back to Cliff's question, if I recall correctly, one of the cornerstones of the Administration's energy program was to cause petroleum prices to increase, to discourage consumption, and I wonder if this statement --

MR. NESSEN: Not only to discourage consumption but to encourage the domestic production and the development of alternate means. I mean, you know what the basic Ford energy policy is and it has been out on the table for, what, almost a year and a half. The Congress has passed bits and pieces of it and modified a major part of it, and I am not certainly going to change what the basic policy is. That is the policy.

Q Ron, the last time the President took off by helicopter from the South Lawn the press was not permitted to watch from their usual spot near the Cabinet Room on that portico. What is the reason for that, and is that going to continue?

MR. NESSEN: When was that?

Q Yesterday.

MR. NESSEN: I will have to check on it, Fran.

Q There has not been a policy change on that, has there?

MR. NESSEN: On the which?

Q On where the press will meet when the President takes off on the South Lawn?

MR. NESSEN: I have to check and see what the story is.

Q Ron, does the President support the lobbying regulation bill that was approved by the Senate yesterday?

MR. NESSEN: Well, we have not looked at the bill yet in a thorough way, but basically the White House feels that it is primarily a concern for Congress to deal with. It would have little, if any, effect on the Executive Branch.

Q That is a good point. One of the contentions or arguments that has been made by lobbying over the years is that the lobbying statute, whenever it was revised and approved, ought to be applied to the Executive Branch as well as to the Legislative Branch; that is to say, to lobbying for Government contracts in the departments--Department of Defense and so forth. Does the President support that concept?

MR. NESSEN: I have not gotten into that particular question, Jim, with him.

Q Does that mean that these corporations that filed those memberships at Burning Tree are wasting their money?

MR. NESSEN: Yes or no?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: Or none of the above.

Q You still have not said whether the President was going to sign or veto or what this lobbying bill. All you have said was that he does not feel it has affected the Executive Branch.

MR. NESSEN: We have not had time to analyze it thoroughly, Carol.

Q It does because contacts with the Executive Branch on pending legislation --

MR. NESSEN: It has a logging procedure which would be the only real effect on the Executive Branch.

Q Are you in favor of that?

MR. NESSEN: Basically, they have not had time to analyze the bill thoroughly enough to give you any greater view on it.

Q Ron, did the President know in advance or does he approve the appearance of Mr. Usery at the Teamsters Convention minutes after the President of the Teamsters told his opponents to go to hell?

MR. NESSEN: I think you won the non sequitur prize for the day.

Q Did the President know Mr. Usery was going to --

Q That would be news to us.

MR. NESSEN: What?

Q I have to share it with Herblock then.

MR. NESSEN: What is the question?

Q The question is, did the President know in advance that Mr. Usery was going to give an endorsement to the International Brotherhood of Teamsters?

MR. NESSEN: I think you ought to see exactly what Usery said, Saul, and then see if you still have the same question.

Q Ron, is the President going to have Anne Armstrong campaign for him? Has he discussed this with her or just how does he feel about her offer to do that?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't know she had made the offer and, to my knowledge, she has not discussed it with the President.

Q Ron, going back to Saul's question for a minute, regardless of what Usery said and regardless of how you interpret it, Saul's question was a simple one. Did the President know in advance that Usery was going to appear before the Teamsters Convention and did he approve, whatever it was, that Usery said? Did he know that in advance, and did he approve it?

MR. NESSEN: Well, it is not normal procedure, Jim, for the President to review the voluminous schedule of every one of his Cabinet members, and so I mean that is just the fact with all the Cabinet members. The Teamsters happen to be the largest union in the country and they invited the Labor Secretary to appear at their convention. I don't know what the problem with that is.

Q No problem, we just want to know if he knew about it and whether he was aware in a general sense that --

MR. NESSEN: Specifically, I don't know whether he knew about it in advance or not, but, generally, the President would not review a Cabinet member's appointment schedule.

Q Ron, does the President have any reaction to or thoughts about the platform adopted by the Democratic Platform Committee?

MR. NESSEN: Not at this time, no.

Q Ron, did the President receive and have any reaction to a message, telegram, from the meeting of the Southern GOP State Chairmen last weekend?

MR. NESSEN: I am not aware of a telegram from them.

Q Or a message?

MR. NESSEN: I am not really aware of a message from them, either.

Q Was he aware or did Mr. Cheney report back to him that these people had said, "Cut out the fighting and get this thing together or you are going to go down to the people in November"?

MR. NESSEN: Well, Dick was there, as you know. I was not, and, in fact, I don't know what the Southern Chairmen discussed or concluded. I assume that Dick gave the President a report on the meeting but what the content was, I don't know.

Q What was the purpose of the Wednesday club meeting here today and why weren't we told?

MR. NESSEN: They come in from time to time, they and other members, and today it turned out that they had requested an opportunity to chat with the President about a number of things on their minds, and they did.

Q Like what?

Q Was the campaign among them?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q What was the thrust to be?

MR. NESSEN: I don't feel that I am the right one to give you the views of a number of Republican Senators.

Q Ron, why wouldn't it appear on the schedule?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know, frankly, why it did not appear on the schedule. It could have been arranged at the last minute or some other reason. I don't know what the reason was.

Q Why weren't we told when we saw the Senators here and asked about it and no one seemed to know?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know.

Q Ron, in addition to going to Iowa, is the President making telephone calls to State delegates and other Republican officials in other States that are having conventions -- and, in fact, I think there is another one this weekend, I cannot think of it -- maybe North Dakota? Is he making telephone calls to people in those States?

MR. NESSEN: I would have to check, Ted. I don't know.

Q As long as we are on that subject, Stuart Spencer said a month or so ago, a couple weeks ago or something like that, that he expects the President to be having groups of delegates -- I believe he said largely uncommitted delegates -- into the White House from time to time between now and the Convention to talk to them. Do you know of any specific plans for some of those meetings?

MR. NESSEN: I was not aware that Stu had said that and, as far as I know, there are no such plans right now.

Q There are no such plans?

Q Do you have any idea how many phone calls the President has made during the evenings to uncommitted delegates?

MR. NESSEN: I don't, Ann.

Q What is the President's view of Carter getting the majority of delegates to win the nomination?

MR. NESSEN: I think he has probably talked about that before, Helen.

Q Does he still think Hubert Humphrey will be the nominee? (Laughter)

Q He has not talked about it since Carter went over the top. Does he have a view on it?

MR. NESSEN: I have not asked him, actually.

Q Any plans for a news conference?

MR. NESSEN: What?

Q Any plans for a Presidential news conference?

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

Q And what about the busing legislation? What do you have new on that?

MR. NESSEN: There will be some other meetings later in the week to receive the views of others interested in the subject and then the legislation will go up some time after that.

Q Later this week?

MR. NESSEN: The meetings?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: The meetings will be later this week, yes.

Q With whom?

MR. NESSEN: Constitutional experts and some Members of Congress, and some others, perhaps.

Q Is he going to change the legislation as a result of his conversations with these people?

MR. NESSEN: He is listening to their views, Carol.

Q Does that mean he is going to change his legislation?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know.

Q Ron, for guidance purposes, do you expect a news conference this week?

MR. NESSEN: I don't.

Q Ever again? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: Yes, ever again.

Q He will hold his annual press conference next year if he is elected?

MR. NESSEN: You mean his sort of two or three times a week?

Q Sort of a deGaulle kind of format, one a year?

MR. NESSEN: What, Jim?

Q Never mind, it is not important.

MR. NESSEN: Oh, yes, it is.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END (AT 12:02 P.M. EDT)

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 4:08 P.M. EDT

JUNE 16, 1976

WEDNESDAY

MR. NESSEN: I have almost nothing to add.

Q Ron, are you ready to take questions?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, whatever I can help you with.

Q Can you be any more specific about the "appropriate resources of the United States"?

MR. NESSEN: It is just all the resources of the United States in conjunction with others to try to identify the person or the group who did this.

Q Do you have any idea now, any information from intelligence who might have been responsible?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q Do you know now how it happened?

MR. NESSEN: We don't have that information here.

Q Does the American Embassy have custody of the bodies now?

MR. NESSEN: That really ought to come out of Beirut, Ann. My understanding is -- but again, this ought to be checked in Beirut -- that the bodies are at the American University Hospital in Beirut.

Q Ron, how and when was the President informed?

Q When he said appropriate resources, was he talking about putting additional people in Lebanon -- Americans?

MR. NESSEN: Tom, that is not anticipated at this time.

Q What about the evacuation of Americans?

MR. NESSEN: That has not been ordered.

Q Have helicopters gone into that area to stand by?

MR. NESSEN: My understanding is that there have been no American forces sent to that area.

Q Was there anything to suggest that this was a premeditated, planned act, or does it appear to be an act of spontaneity, that the two men walked into something which was not planned and fell victim to circumstances?

MR. NESSEN: We just don't have those details, Walt.

Q Ron, the contingency plans for evacuation of Americans from Beirut are reportedly being reviewed this afternoon. Who is reviewing them?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know for a fact that they are. You know, all places in the world have contingency plans for evacuation of Americans. I mean, that is literally true, and that is true of Beirut. I don't know that the plans are being reevaluated or changed in any way today.

Q Ron, what if they did identify the culprits, the assassins? I mean, what Government is there to ever implement a law?

MR. NESSEN: Helen, as you see in this statement, we are in touch with the Governments in the area and the United States feels, the President believes, that these murders will create a universal sense of outrage, that the leaders of no country will not share the sense of outrage that the President feels.

Q When the President got his first word, your use of "next of kin" was very revealing.

MR. NESSEN: As I told you at the time, that was only in the sense of relatives and the United States at that time did not know what had happened to the men. There was a tentative or preliminary indication from the Red Cross in Beirut at the very beginning of the President's 12:30 meeting that the men might have been killed, and it was during the meeting that the confirmation was relayed to the President.

Q Do you know now which political faction seized the men, which political faction actually kidnapped them?

MR. NESSEN: We don't, Walt.

Q Who did discover the bodies? The Red Cross?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have that information here, Helen.

Q Has the President gotten any message from any Government in that area on this point, as of yet?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I know of. The President has sent private messages of condolence to the brother of Ambassador Meloy and to the wife of Counselor Waring.

Q Where is she?

Q What form were these messages in?

MR. NESSEN: Telegrams.

Q Where did he send them?

MR. NESSEN: Mrs. Waring is in Athens, along with other dependents, having left Beirut earlier with other dependents.

Q Ron, there was a suggestion earlier by someone who looked at Meloy's biography that perhaps he was indeed more than an Ambassador and that perhaps he had been employed by the Central Intelligence Agency. Is there any substance to that? Was Meloy employed by the Central Intelligence Agency either on this assignment or previously?

MR. NESSEN: Not to my knowledge, Walt.

Q Ron, is the President going to ask Secretary Rumsfeld to return?

MR. NESSEN: There is not a plan for that, as far as I know. The Defense Department was represented by the Deputy Secretary, Mr. Clements.

Q Is anyone at all being sent to Lebanon temporarily?

MR. NESSEN: The President anticipates, as he said in here, naming a new Ambassador in the very near future.

Q Who is in charge now?

MR. NESSEN: I will have to check that or the State Department can give you that, Helen. I don't have it.

Q Is that "very near future" the next couple of days?

MR. NESSEN: Well, the President's hope is to have a person designated very shortly so that he can continue the work of Ambassador Meloy.

Q Do you know what the mission was when he was going to meet Sarkis?

MR. NESSEN: I do not, Helen.

Q There are no troop movements involved, no Defense Department --

MR. NESSEN: There are not, to my knowledge, no.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.