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NEWS CONFERENCE

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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 11:54 A.M. EDT

JUNE 17, 1976

THURSDAY

MR. NESSEN: I think you know that the President will be presiding at a meeting to make further preparations for the Puerto Rican summit at 2 o'clock. A number of participants will be out and away on other business between now and the start of the summit, so that is one of the purposes of having this today.

I think you also know that the President will be talking to a group of National Teenage Republicans who are here for a leadership training conference. That will be in the Rose Garden, weather permitting. There are about 200 along with their advisors. I anticipate that the President will have remarks to the group and there can be coverage of that if you desire.

Q What time?

MR. NESSEN: It is at 4:15.

Q Ron, is there any possibility of someone from the economic meeting coming out and talking to us?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I think I will attend the meeting and see how it goes, and we will see if there is anything to tell you.

Q Can we get a list of the Republican Teenagers?

MR. NESSEN: All 200 of them?

Q Sure. There was somebody's list down here laying on the Xerox machine.

MR. NESSEN: Pam Powell is the lady. Let me see if Pam Powell has a participants list on the Teenage Republicans.

There is a meeting added to the President's schedule today at 5:30. It is the same group he met with yesterday on the situation in Lebanon; that is, the Vice President, the Secretary of State, Brent Scowcroft, George Bush and Deputy Secretary Clements. The purpose of the meeting is to review the situation in Lebanon.

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Q Will that have to do with an American evacuation?

MR. NESSEN: I think that one of the subjects that could come up at this meeting would be a review of the need for an evacuation of private American citizens who live in Lebanon.

Q Can you tell us the President's disposition on the need for an American evacuation?

MR. NESSEN: Well, you know, he has not ordered any evacuation so I think that --

Q Is he considering it?

MR. NESSEN: I think, as I say, it could be or is likely to be one of the subjects to come up -- the evacuation of private Americans.

Q I didn't quite understand what you mean by that. Do you mean they are going to go over those plans with the President, revisions?

MR. NESSEN: They are going to review the entire situation in Lebanon across the board, and one of the matters to be considered would be any need for an evacuation of private American citizens.

Q Ron, has the President received any information on the PLO claim of arresting those responsible for the assassinations?

MR. NESSEN: Well, we have received reports that the PLO and Lebanese elements have detained several individuals, and that is really about all I can say on it.

Q You mean reports through the Government and not news media reports?

MR. NESSEN: Both.

Q Was the subject of the appointment of a new Ambassador --

MR. NESSEN: What was the first part of your question? I want to be sure the right impression is given.

We have reports from our various contacts and sources in Lebanon, but also, as you know, the PLO has made public statements about this, too.

Q Has the President made any comment on this?

MR. NESSEN: No, I don't think it is the right time to make any further comment.

Q Have official sources confirmed the PLO claim?

MR. NESSEN: The PLO claim being that they have arrested some individuals and -- well, we have that report from various sources that we are in contact with.

Q Will the appointment of a new Ambassador to Lebanon be one of the subjects discussed today?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know whether that will come up or not, but I may be able to give you something else on the situation. I am going to give you some broad, general thoughts on this, and for the exact details you can check with the State Department, but, generally, the plan is that the bodies of Ambassador Meloy and Counselor Waring will be taken by road to Damascus because the airport in Beirut is closed. The President has directed that a military aircraft leave from here and go to Damascus with Ambassador L. Dean Brown on board as the personal representative of the President and of the Secretary of State, and that the bodies be picked up in Damascus and then that the plane will stop in Athens on the way home for Mrs. Waring and one of their daughters who lives in Athens, and then proceed on to Washington. And I understand that both families have indicated a desire to have the funerals in the Washington area although I cannot give you any more details on that.

I think the timetable we are thinking of, although obviously the situation there makes it difficult to set precise times, would be that Ambassador Brown and the plane would leave some time this evening and that the bodies would be returning to Washington some time on Saturday, but --

Q Will Brown stay there?

MR. NESSEN: No. He will return back to Washington as the President's personal representative.

Q Does he have any other duties on this trip other than to escort the bodies?

MR. NESSEN: Not other than to show respect and express the President's regrets to Mrs. Waring and her daughter.

Q Would you expect the President to go out and meet the caskets?

MR. NESSEN: I just don't have anything on that at the moment, Walt. The precise times and so forth for the take-off and the return and so forth, I think, can be provided by the State Department as the day progresses.

Q Who has the bodies right now?

MR. NESSEN: They are in Beirut and I cannot tell you precisely where they are.

Q Do we know?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, we know.

Q Ron, several months ago Secretary Kissinger said that the Arab Governments, various Arab Governments, had assured him that the captured murderers of Ambassador Noel in Khartoum would be severely punished, yet I have not seen any report that this ever happened; in fact, it may be that they have been released. Do you know about this?

MR. NESSEN: They are in jail in Egypt.

Q They are in jail in Egypt?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q On what? Life sentences?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that. The State Department can tell you.

Q Thank you.

Q Ron, do you mean to leave the impression that the United States is seriously considering on an imminent basis the evacuation of private Americans?

MR. NESSEN: I don't want to leave that impression. In response to questions and I think in response to some remarks that the Secretary made on the Hill today, which may have sparked the questions, I do want you to know that in the course of a review of the entire situation in Lebanon this evening I do anticipate that that subject will come up.

Q Ron, you have not any estimate on how many private Americans are left in Lebanon?

MR. NESSEN: Well, it is difficult to say. The estimate we use is anywhere between 1,100 and 1,400, and the reason the estimate has such a wide range is that a number of these are Lebanese-Americans who carry American passports but are sort of settled and relatively permanent residents of Lebanon, although they have American passports.

Q Is it correct that dependents of American officials have all been taken out?

MR. NESSEN: Long since been gone, correct.

Q Is it correct to infer that there is no consideration being given to evacuating the official American citizens?

MR. NESSEN: There is no plan to close the Embassy in Beirut. There could possibly be some additional thinning out of the number of official Americans remaining there.

Q What logistic grounds are we using for diplomatic messages to Beirut? Are they all going through Damascus, the same way these bodies are going?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have that information, Dick. I am sorry.

Q Does the 1,100 to 1,400, Ron, include the Embassy staff?

MR. NESSEN: The Embassy staff is 53, so you are really not talking about very many people at the Embassy.

Q That is the group that could be thinned out?

MR. NESSEN: That is correct, yes.

Q Just purely as a matter of information -- I don't like to take up the time of the briefing -- but is it correct that the British have begun an evacuation of their private civilian personnel?

MR. NESSEN: That really should not come from here, Jim, but by way of guidance, that is a strong likelihood, yes.

Q Has the President received any messages from Arab leaders in response to his messages through the Secretary yesterday concerning peace diplomacy in Lebanon?

MR. NESSEN: I have not checked that this morning, Dick. I am sorry.

Q Ron, in view of the fact that a shooting war is going on in Beirut and considering the strong anti-American sentiment among the factions there, has any determination been made why the Ambassador's car went into the buffer zone unprotected?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have that information here. I don't know the answer.

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Q Has the President ordered any additional security measures or precautions on the part of the State Department personnel overseas, particularly the Middle East?

MR. NESSEN: Well, specifically for those official Americans left in Beirut, their protective set up is being reviewed.

Q Better hurry.

MR. NESSEN: Okay, if that is finished, let me tell you about tomorrow a little bit.

The check-in time for the trip to Iowa is 12:30 and the press plane leaves at 1 o'clock. I anticipate a bible -- these are rough times. Now that may vary just a little bit because the schedule is not totally locked in. I expect to have a bible by late afternoon in the Press Office and there will be no advance speech text.

Q Late tomorrow afternoon?

MR. NESSEN: No, we are leaving tomorrow so the bible would be available late this afternoon in the Press Office. In light of the fact that the check-in time for the trip is 12:30, I think we probably will not have a briefing tomorrow, although obviously this office is open from 7:00 or 7:30 on and we will be here to answer your questions.

Q Ron, is it settled that the President will be making a speech at that dinner?

MR. NESSEN: He will have brief remarks, John.

Q At the dinner?

MR. NESSEN: At the dinner, that's correct.

Q Any other speeches while there or is that it?

MR. NESSEN: That is it.

Q You were not clear yesterday whether he might speak in any other format.

MR. NESSEN: I think he will speak -- he will obviously meet some delegates out there.

Q Isn't there a reception for a large group of delegates as well?

MR. NESSEN: There, again, if he does speak, it will be off the cuff and rather brief.

Q Will he stay for Governor Reagan's brief remarks which are also scheduled at that same time?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what the exact schedule at the dinner is.

Q Well, he would not walk out on the former Governor of California, would he?

MR. NESSEN: I don't mean to leave -- I don't know what his schedule is.

Q Governor Reagan is at that same dinner scheduled to make brief remarks, according to the Reagan office.

MR. NESSEN: This is a dinner in honor of Mary Louise Smith who I believe is the Chairman of the Republican National Committee.

Q I know, but is it your understanding that the President will stay the full length of the dinner?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. I have not seen the schedule for tomorrow.

Q What time is he due to leave Iowa?

MR. NESSEN: I will check.

Q What is his take-off time?

MR. NESSEN: Well, it would be a half hour to an hour after yours, so somewhere around 1:30, 1:45, 2 o'clock. This schedule is still being put together which is why I am a little vague on the exact times.

MR. CARLSON: He leaves there at 7:30 their time and gets back at roughly 10:20.

MR. NESSEN: 7:30, which is 8:30 Eastern time, and gets back here at 10:20.

Q It is a very early dinner then, is that it?

Q Well, the dinner begins at 6 o'clock.

MR. NESSEN: Oh, that gives you plenty of time.

Q So he will be there an hour and a half.

MR. NESSEN: They eat early in Iowa. (Laughter)

Q Do you know which of the President's senior aides are going with him to Iowa?

MR. NESSEN: I don't.

Q Do you know what is the press plane departure time from Iowa?

MR. NESSEN: It would depend on how long you wanted to stay behind and file. It would be pretty much up to you.

Q Don't ask Ron, ask Russ.

MR. NESSEN: That is not the way I heard it, Walt. (Laughter)

Q The press plane leaves at 7:31.

MR. NESSEN: 7:31, Russ says. (Laughter)

Q Ron, in the President's speech to the Southern Baptist Convention he said, "We cannot stand very long on the shifting sands of situation ethics." This morning the Reverend Joseph Fletcher of Cambridge, who is considered the leading advocate of situation ethics, asked, "What system of ethics does the President know of that has no shifts or qualifications?" (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: I don't feel qualified, Les. (Laughter)

Q All right. I will accept that, Ron. (Laughter)

Who wrote this sermon, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: Who wrote what sermon?

Q The sermon that he gave at the -- it had lots of text and so forth, the speech, whichever way you call it. I would call it a sermon, it was a very appealing thing. Now who wrote it so I can get an answer to this?

MR. NESSEN: The President takes part in the writing of all of his speeches.

Q Has he discussed "situation ethics" with you? Is he well informed on "situation ethics?" He kind of took a hard swipe at "situation ethics" and I just wondered if he knows very much about it.

MR. NESSEN: I assume he does or else he would not have talked about it.

Q Well, who assisted him? In other words --

Q Twenty-six years on Capitol Hill and you don't think he understands "situation ethics?" (Laughter)



Q Ron, can you tell me, is it a Southern Baptist Minister on his staff who assisted the President in this?

MR. NESSEN: I think we have a policy of not spelling out which of the President's advisors help him with various speeches.

Q Could you take the question, then, and see if we can get some answer?

MR. NESSEN: No, because I don't think we will change that policy.

Q Do you have a Southern Baptist on your staff?

MR. NESSEN: We may have a lot of Southern Baptists on the staff.

Q Do you have a Southern Baptist in residence who has been kind of advising the President on that?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I have never inquired into the religion of anybody on the staff, Sarah.

Q I know, but this is a little different situation. This would be his expertise.

Q Yes, he was put there by Dent and the Southern Baptists had an article that big about it -- "12 Feet From Power" and so forth. It was a big feature. Halloran, I believe it was.

MR. NESSEN: Welcome back.

Q What is his name, Ron? What is his name?

MR. NESSEN: What is whose name, Sarah?

Q The name of this man who is on the staff. Obviously --

MR. NESSEN: Which man on the staff? We have 435 people here and some are women.

Q Ron, let's stick to the subject. The name of the man that he just said was written up. I am sure you know that.

MR. NESSEN: I didn't see the write-up.

Q Don't you have a clipping service here?

MR. NESSEN: Pardon?

Q Don't you have a clipping service here?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, but I have not seen any article about a Southern Baptist.

Q We will have it Monday, Ron. (Laughter)

Q Will you be kind enough to find out the name?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what the question is I am supposed to find out. Do we have any Southern Baptists on the staff?

Q Yes, you have a minister.

MR. NESSEN: I don't inquire into peoples' religions here, Sarah.

Q We heard that but the Southern Baptist expert who was hired and who is advising the President at this particular time has not been-- no set precedent for this before. It is nothing unusual.

MR. NESSEN: Well, I am not exactly clear on what you want but I will look into the situation.

Q Ron, why did the President propose raising the rate as opposed to raising the wage base to generate more revenue for Social Security?

MR. NESSEN: Is this the Social Security proposal he signed this morning? Well, I have asked to come down our sort of resident expert on Social Security and we can have him come out and answer.

Q If he is a Southern Baptist, we can kill two birds with one stone. (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: What happened to our associate?

Here he comes.

Q Ron, you are not going to leave this briefing right now, are you, for that?

MR. NESSEN: I am enjoying it too much, Sarah. (Laughter)

Q Are we going to go ahead now with Social Security?

MR. NESSEN: Do we want to take a moment here to clear up Adam's and any other Social Security questions?

Q We can ask about Social Security later.

MR. NESSEN: It is a very complex proposal that the President made this morning.

Q Let's hold that for a moment and clean this up first.

MR. NESSEN: Which, the Southern Baptist?

Q Other things, other matters. For example, what have you to say about the Hills-Richardson squabble?

MR. NESSEN: My understanding is that if there was a squabble, it has been resolved.

Q If there was a squabble? Do you have a copy of the reconciliation paper?

MR. NESSEN: A letter has been written, I am told, and I assume it would be available to reporters from Secretary Richardson to Rod Hills which I am told resolves the matter and I know you could get a copy at the Commerce Department.

Q Did the President have anything to do with this?

MR. NESSEN: No, he did not.

Q The Southern Baptist clergyman is the Reverend Richard Brennan of the White House staff. Does that name ring a bell?

MR. NESSEN: I think we have a Richard Brennan on the staff.

Q Right.

Q Ron, did you have a chance to check yesterday into the problem about watching the helicopters take off and whether there is a change of policy?

MR. NESSEN: I did not, Fran, but I will.

Q Can you do it today so we know before the take-off tomorrow?

MR. NESSEN: I will.

Q Does the President want John Connally as his Vice Presidential candidate?

MR. NESSEN: I am glad you asked that. Let me answer that question narrowly and then answer in a more broad sense.

The President has not made any decision on a Vice Presidential running mate, period.

Now in a broader sense, I think I should say this -- that the first and only authorized and official word on who the President has selected as his Vice Presidential running mate will come from the President. Anyone else who tells you that he knows that the President has made a decision or if he tells you that he knows the President has made a decision and who the President has decided on is wrong.

Q Even if it comes from you?

MR. NESSEN: Even if it comes from anybody. It is simply that if there are people who are telling you that, they are wrong.

Q You are not excluding lucky guesses, then?

MR. NESSEN: It is pure speculation on their part.

Q Ron, is Connally his selection as Vice President?

MR. NESSEN: Let me finish.

Q If there are people who are telling you they know who the Vice President is or a specific name?

MR. NESSEN: If there is anybody who is telling you, number one, that the President has made a decision, and if there is anyone who is telling you he has made a decision and hears who it is, they are wrong and they are speaking totally from speculation and you are being led down a path.

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Q Maybe the right path. (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: The fact of the matter is that the President has not made his choice.

Q Is Reagan in the running?

MR. NESSEN: He has not consulted with anyone as he considers his choice.

Just really, truly, as a friend, I hope, let me say that this is not, you know, a Press Secretary's statement, but as a friend I can tell you that anyone who is going around and doing this is simply wrong, because the President has not made this choice yet.

Q Well, what did they talk about, then, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: They talked about a lot of things, Sarah.

Q Did the President ask him or did he ask the President for the appointment?

MR. NESSEN: The President and Governor Connally have a kind of long-standing arrangement that whenever the Governor is in Washington he has a kind of standing invitation to come in and see the President.

Q Did somebody have him call and set up the meeting? Did Connally call and set up yesterday's meeting?

MR. NESSEN: I think what normally happens, and I think what happened the other day, was that Connally called and indicated he was in town and the meeting was arranged.

Q Ron, has the President given any assurances to Vice President Rockefeller or to anyone else that any given individual will not be considered as Vice President?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what you mean by that.

Q What I mean is that Vice President Rockefeller, I think, has said publicly that he is certain that Governor Reagan will not be the Vice Presidential choice if President Ford is nominated. I am wondering if he has gotten some assurance from the President that that is going to be the case?

MR. NESSEN: I thought I said very clearly that the President has consulted with no one.

Q You said no one about who it would be, not about who it would not be. I am just wanting to clear up that ambiguity.

MR. NESSEN: I see the distinction. Well, I just would like to stick to what I said before.

Q What did Connally and the President talk about yesterday?

MR. NESSEN: A lot of things. I was not there. It was a private meeting between two men.

Q For how long?

MR. NESSEN: Forty-five minutes, I was told.

Q Ron, you cannot have a private meeting between those two without public matters being discussed.

MR. NESSEN: Well, maybe not.

Q Can't you find out what they talked about?

MR. NESSEN: No, I can't.

Q You could ask, but you will not get an answer, is that it?

MR. NESSEN: I just feel that it is a private meeting like many private meetings.

Q Could you explain why there is this standing invitation for Governor Connally whenever he is in Washington to come in and talk to the President? I am a little curious as to why whenever John is in town he comes in and talks to the President.

MR. NESSEN: They are old friends.

Q Does anyone else have a standing invitation like that?

MR. NESSEN: I think a couple of the President's friends do -- some people from --

Q Solzhenitsyn. (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: Who was the other?

Q Solzhenitsyn.

MR. NESSEN: That is right. That is another one.

Q You know, I am a little curious --

Q I am serious.

MR. NESSEN: There are a number of Presidential friends who I think have that same kind of invitation.

Q What are the President's plans in going about choosing a Vice Presidential running mate? Is he going to continue not to consult with anyone or at some point does he plan to talk to people about this, or is he going to go to the top of the mountain?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what the future plans are, but I am just trying --

Q Doesn't he think he better --

Q Let him answer the question.

MR. NESSEN: I started to tell Ed, I don't know what the future plans are for making his selection, but I have tried really in a very sincere way to convey to you what the situation is now, and that is all I can do.

Q Ron, can you explain why whenever Governor Connally comes in here it suddenly does not show up on the schedule? Is there any reason for it?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think there is anything, you know, especially unusual about that. There are a number of people and groups who come in from time to time to visit the President, and, you know -- we have gone over this before -- he does have a private schedule. Connally is on the private schedule sometimes and on the public schedule sometimes.

Q Ron, for the record--we overlooked this earlier--will the subject of possible troop movements in the Middle East come up this afternoon?

MR. NESSEN: There is no anticipation of any American military involvement in Lebanon.

Q Ron, to follow up Dick's question, when Vice President Rockefeller said that Governor Reagan would not be a candidate, you are not disputing the Vice President?

MR. NESSEN: I have not seen that statement by the Vice President. I cannot speak for the Vice President.

Q It was on Meet the Press.

Q On Meet the Press he said he was personally, absolutely certain that the Governor would not --

MR. NESSEN: I can't help you out in that area. All I am saying is that the first time you will hear anything that -- well, I don't know what the Vice President said and I would have to look at the transcript to find out, but, leaving that aside and in no way connected with it, I am saying that you will not know anything that is authoritative and represents the President's thinking until you hear it from the President, and if others --

Q Would you like to bet a dollar on that?

MR. NESSEN: I will, Ted, very much bet a dollar on that or any amount of money, because I know that that is indeed the situation and I know that -- I mean, you have been around Washington a long time. This is a quadrennial game of guess who the Vice President is going to be, and a lot of people down in the bowels of the building and some up in the top of the building like to suggest that they know either that he has made up his mind and, if he has, who it is, and that is, as I say, a quadrennial game. You are simply going to be wrong if you take any of those people's word for that during this period until you hear it from the President.

Q When you say this period --

Q When will we hear it from the President?

MR. NESSEN: As I said to Ed, I don't have a timetable for that.

Q Ron, are you saying that we should not take Connally's word on this, by the way?

MR. NESSEN: Just a step away from your question, Tom -- (Laughter) -- the President has not consulted on this with anyone.

Q Ron, are you through with that?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know.

Q Did Connally give him any kind of light lecture yesterday on the fact that he better get working on this thing, that it was going to get away from him if he was not careful?

MR. NESSEN: Well, Phil, there were only two people in the meeting and I was not one of them so I don't know what they discussed.

Q Ron, did the President meet with Congressman Joe Waggoner of Shreveport this morning, and did they discuss Waggoner's case in which he has been written about by the New York Post?

MR. NESSEN: Well, today was one of the Congressional hours and I think if you recall Congressional hour it is one of those occasions in which an hour or an hour and a half is set aside for very brief meetings with Members of Congress.

Q Yes, we know that, but that is not the question.

MR. NESSEN: Well, I want to set in context why Congressman Waggoner was here. He came in with one of his constituents, the Reverend Ashley T. Law --

Q Southern Baptist? (Laughter)



Q What else?

MR. NESSEN: -- who is an artist and has painted a picture of the President and Mrs. Ford. The President met Reverend Law during a trip to Shreveport which you may recall a couple of months ago, and Reverend Law mentioned the painting to the President at that time and Congressman Waggonner made arrangements during the Congressional hour today to present this. Reverend Law is elderly. He began his painting career in 1911 and has studied in Paris and at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.

Q How do you spell his name?

MR. NESSEN: L-a-w. The first name is Ashley, A-s-h-l-e-y, initial T., Law -- L-a-w.

Q What denomination?

MR. NESSEN: He was the pastor for Congressman Waggonner and his family for a long time.

I did not inquire into his denomination.

Q Did he discuss anything else?

MR. NESSEN: I don't believe so, no.

Q Could I go back to Connally? You obviously knew when you met with the President this morning that there would be questions asked here about his meeting with Governor Connally. Did you go to bat for us and ask the President what you could say about that meeting, and what was his response?

MR. NESSEN: Well, you know, as always, Walt, I don't want to get into the give and take of my discussions with the President or anybody else here, but I am telling you, first of all, some guidance, I hope, on how to deal with the people who are peddling rumors on the Vice President, and on the subject of the meeting, it was a private meeting.

Q Just to refresh ourselves, are you, as usual, giving us the sentiments of the President?

MR. NESSEN: As usual.

Q Ron, before we all get old enough to draw Social Security benefits -- (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: I want to apologize.

Can we move on now to any questions on the President's Social Security proposal today?

Q I thought we were waiting for John the Baptist. (Laughter)

Q Who were the other Members of Congress?

MR. NESSEN: Come around to the Press Office and I will run through the briefing paper with you and give you the other names.

Q Why don't you introduce the gentleman?

MR. NESSEN: I think we probably kept him waiting an hour, and we ought to do it now.

Why not introduce yourself?

Q Are you coming back after this?

MR. NESSEN: No, I did not plan to.

Q Can I ask you a question before you go, then, on a matter that has not been touched?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q What, if any, effect is the current unrest in South Africa likely to have on Secretary Kissinger's plan of meeting with John Vorster?

MR. NESSEN: He still plans to have his meeting with Prime Minister Vorster.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END (AT 12:25 P.M. EDT)

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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 3:36 P.M. EDT

JUNE 17, 1976

THURSDAY

MR. NESSEN: I have a couple of things.

First of all, we either have just or are about to give you some press releases here, three of them. One deals with a Presidential declaration of an emergency in the States of Minnesota, Wisconsin and South Dakota because of the drought in that area. This permits the use of Federal funds in the relief and recovery efforts in designated areas of these States. The press release will give you more information and we can also point you toward people who can give you a greater degree of detail on that.

Q Will it guarantee rain?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think we are able to do that.  
(Laughter)

Q The President is declaring these today?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, he is declaring these.

We also have a personnel appointment, and this is Assistant Secretary of HEW, and an Executive Order on the lowering of flags to half-staff in honor of the two Americans killed in Lebanon.

Some of you requested that I come and see you after the meeting that the President had concerning the Puerto Rican summit. I can't tell you a great deal about it except to say that it had several purposes.

One, it provided an opportunity for members of the Economic Policy Board and the National Security Council to report to the President on a preliminary meeting, or preparatory meeting, that they had with representatives of the six other nations the other day. I think you probably recall we announced that meeting at the time.

Q When was it, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: Monday.

Secondly, the purpose was to go over some of the areas that could possibly come up at Puerto Rico and to discuss the issues involved in these areas and to pull together and to present to the President a fair amount of information that is being assembled in these areas in preparation for the conference.

The areas include how to continue economic recovery without inflation, relations with developing countries, financial and monetary issues, trade, investment and energy.

There really were no decisions made because no decisions were required at this meeting. It was a discussion and a sort of pooling of information and a discussion of information and the President, in several cases, requested that additional information be pulled together for him so that he would be able to study it and use it when the conference itself begins.

Q In what area did he want to know more about?

MR. NESSEN: Well, he asked for some additional information in the area of energy on one particular topic, and in the area of trade. At least in those two areas.

Q Ron, while we were in there--I think I was the only writer in there--he was talking to Usery and he made reference to what he called a very dramatic drop in the initial claims of unemployment --

MR. NESSEN: Yes, I heard that myself.

Q Can you give us anything further?

MR. NESSEN: No. I heard that and I have not had time to look into it further.

Q Can you check on it for us?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, I will.

Q Aren't there some figures coming out shortly?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think unemployment figures are due. I think the next set of figures would be CPI, but let me check and see what he meant by that.

Q I think they get those initial claims two or three weeks before.

MR. NESSEN: I think that is right. I will check.

Obviously, we are going to have for you some briefings next week in preparation for the summit meeting. I talked to Greenspan a little bit after this meeting and I will be able to give you the schedule of the briefings in a few days.

Q How long was this meeting today?

MR. NESSEN: Well, you saw when it began and it broke up, I would say, seven minutes ago, something like that.

Q That is all Americans?

MR. NESSEN: All Americans at the meeting, yes.

Q Did Alan Greenspan give Barbara Walters a personal briefing?

MR. NESSEN: No. That, I think, was in the nature of a private discussion.

Q Ron, are you going to come back and give us something after the 5:30 meeting?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know yet. It really depends. I just can't say one way or the other.

Q Kissinger said there was going to be a decision in 36 hours as to whether to evacuate American citizens.

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q That appears to be more of a prime subject.

MR. NESSEN: Well, I said I thought that would be one of the subjects reviewed.

Q I believe Mr. Kissinger also said he did not think Dean Brown should go back to Lebanon in an official capacity, as far as Ambassador. Has the President made any decision?

MR. NESSEN: No, he has not.

Q Ron, is there apt to be a decision in that 5:30 meeting on the evacuation?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have any way of knowing in advance what, if any, decisions will be made.

Q If there was, would you tell us afterwards?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I don't know that either.

Q Well, if there was, would you try to tell us afterwards?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I don't know that either. I mean, it depends on whether the decision is made and what the decision is.

Q Again, I just want to make the request if there is a decision made or an inclination, a tentative decision to evacuate, would you please come out and tell those of us who will be here?

MR. NESSEN: Well, let's wait and see what, if any, decisions are made, Walt.

Q If there is a decision, is there a chance we could get still pictures of that in his office? There were none yesterday.

MR. NESSEN: Of the meeting?

Q Yes.

Q How about some pictures at the beginning?

MR. NESSEN: I don't think so, Phil.

Q It is not a National Security Council meeting?

MR. NESSEN: No, it is not. It is just a business meeting to sit down and review the situation, and I think we will not.

Q How many Americans are in the city?

MR. NESSEN: The number of official Americans -- that is, those attached to the Embassy or in other official capacities -- is 53, and the number of private Americans, the estimate ranges from 1,100 to 1,400. Some of those are Lebanese-Americans who carry American passports but have lived there for a considerable time and it is difficult to tell precisely how they should be counted.

Q Before you escape, are you planning any news out of here tomorrow morning in the absence of a briefing; that is to say, are we fairly safe short of any -- are you going to have anything major in the morning announcements or can we just go to Andrews?

MR. NESSEN: Cabinet meeting at 11:00. You are going to be around for a while so let me look at my schedule and see.

Q Ron, let me ask you how this meeting at 5:30 differs from a National Security Council meeting?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I don't know if all the statutory members are there or not. I guess they are. The purpose is to simply review the situation in Lebanon at the moment.

Q It isn't Joint Chiefs?

MR. NESSEN: The Joint Chief Chairman is not there.

Q The whole thrust is economic?

MR. NESSEN: At the summit meeting?

Q Are there any political questions?

Q The New York-Puerto Rican vote?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. Some of these are difficult to specifically talk about. I mean, some have political factors in them, Helen. How to continue recovery without inflation, I think, has some political factors in it. Trade does. I think energy does. Almost all of them involve political decisions as well as purely economic decisions.

Q Ron, did they talk about trying to revive this international --

MR. NESSEN: This is not the agenda, incidentally. Let me make that clear. These are areas which it is believed could come up, but the agenda has not been agreed to yet by all the nations attending.

Q Did they talk about this international resources bank proposal at all in the meeting?

MR. NESSEN: I did not hear it discussed as such.

Q Recalling the 6:30 deadline of various of your favorite networks --

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q And one of your other favorites at 6:00.

Q -- what kind of guidance can you give us on whether to expect -- let's go on deep background or however you want to do it about the evacuation decision at the 5:30 meeting. We have got a real problem.

MR. NESSEN: My guess would be that you would not have anything to report out of this meeting within the time frame of the nightly news shows. That is my guess at the moment.

Q This is just another step in the process of decision-making?

MR. NESSEN: At the moment, that is right. It is a review.

Q Well, that helps. Thank you.

MR. NESSEN: That is the guidance I would give you.

Q Excuse me. Along those same lines, what about tomorrow morning? Is there something apt to happen in this particular area, on the subject of evacuation between 8:00 a.m. tomorrow morning and when the President departs for Des Moines?

Q I think you are saying 36 hours.

MR. NESSEN: I read that, Walt. I think we will have to take a reading on that after this 5:30 meeting.

Q All right.

Q Ron, is there anything you can say now about the President's schedule in relation to the return of the two bodies?

MR. NESSEN: No. I just don't know what the plans are on Saturday.

Q What about this weekend?

Q Is there a busing meeting on Saturday?

MR. NESSEN: There are a couple of meetings with people to hear their views on busing.

Q Saturday?

MR. NESSEN: On Saturday, right.

Q In what area are these? Congressional?

Q Constitutional?

MR. NESSEN: Let me get the list together and see exactly who is on it.

Q Ron, who picks these people to talk to him on busing?

MR. NESSEN: For instance, in the case of Roy Wilkins in the NAACP, he requested the meeting, and others are acknowledged experts in the field.

Q That is why I say who picks them?

MR. NESSEN: Well, in some cases, they are people who have requested an opportunity to give their views to the President.

Q One of those men who was here, I believe it was last Saturday, was very unique -- had to go a long way looking through the country to find him.

MR. NESSEN: Who was that?



Q I have forgotten his name, but he was a black man who was opposed to busing or something.

Q He was an economist from UCLA.

MR. NESSEN: Why don't you let me put you together with Jim Cavanaugh who has arranged these meetings, and he can give you --

Q Is it Jim Cavanaugh who arranges them?

MR. NESSEN: He is involved in the arrangement of the meetings, right.

Q Sunday -- what is Sunday?

MR. NESSEN: Sunday, I think the President will stay in town and relax a little bit.

Q Golf?

MR. NESSEN: I think it is possible, probable.

Q Any travels next week? Mississippi?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I know of.

Q Wait a minute.

Q Montana?

Q What about the 22nd?

MR. NESSEN: Well, of course, at the end of next week the President will be going to the summit meeting.

Q What about the Hoosiers?

MR. NESSEN: What is that?

Q Indiana, the 22nd.

MR. NESSEN: I know that that is an outstanding invitation and there has been no decision made to go or not.

Q Outstanding, meaning good or outstanding meaning --

MR. NESSEN: Outstanding, meaning it is out in Indianapolis.

Q Indianapolis?

MR. NESSEN: It is a request that has not been decided upon yet.

Q Ron, I have something I meant to ask you about. It seems that the Bicentennial organization for the District of Columbia was promised \$400,000 to plan medical programs in case they were needed to take care of the crowds.

Am I talking while somebody else is talking?

As I was saying, they were promised \$400,000, and this was to take care of any medical planning, like people having heart attacks or need an ambulance, and they have not been given a dime and they have received \$5,000, which has come from private sources, and for the same purpose Philadelphia was given \$1 million and Boston was given considerable money, and the Philadelphians sent their people to Washington to copy the plan of the Washington, D. C. people because they had a good plan yet they have not been given any money to carry out their plan and Philadelphia has been given \$1 million.

Now, what we would like to know is, is Washington, D. C. going to get any of this Government money that was promised for a medical program? Are the American people who come to Washington for the Fourth of July celebration going to be protected medically?

MR. NESSEN: Let me look into it, Sarah. This is the first I have heard of it. I am not familiar with it.

Q What is the difference between an emergency for these three States you mentioned as opposed to a disaster area?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I think if you call up the FDAA they will be able to provide you with that, Walt. I am not enough of an expert in this area.

MR. CARLSON: The amount of assistance that you are eligible for.

Q Is it more or less?

Q Ron, did you find out about that helicopter coverage?

MR. NESSEN: I got my afternoon organized to include a meeting.

Q Why does that take so long?

MR. NESSEN: I have not had time to sit down and find out.

Q Do you have to sit down?

MR. NESSEN: I have got to meet my folks.

Q Ron, did you understand the problem with the helicopter -- as Fran brought up, if it continues and if the pool or whoever is held back is not allowed to see it again there will be stories appearing to the effect that reporters are being held back to keep the reporters from seeing the President bumping his head? That is the problem with this particular story.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END (AT 3:52 P.M. EDT)

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