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OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE

PRESS CONFERENCE
OF
HUGH SCOTT
SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA
AND
JOHN J. RHODES
REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE STATE OF ARIZONA

THE BRIEFING ROOM

9:30 A.M. EDT

MR. NESSEN: Ladies and gentlemen, good morning. The President had a meeting with the Republican leaders of the Senate and House that lasted close to two hours. The subjects discussed included the status of energy legislation in Congress, the upcoming vote on resumption of military sales to Turkey, the agreements in the Sinai and the placement of a small number of volunteer American technicians, and the outlook for the budget at the present time.

To describe to you what was discussed at the meeting and to answer your questions, we have Senator Scott and Congressman Rhodes.

CONGRESSMAN RHODES: Concerning the aid to Turkey matter, the House Rules Committee is taking up a rule today to make further consideration of the matter in order. The matter has been scheduled for next Tuesday on the floor of the House.

We have taken a chip check on the Republican side. We find that we are much, much better off than we have ever been on the issue and it would be my prediction at this particular stage there would be at least a limited relaxation of the arms embargo to Turkey to at least allow the delivery of goods and equipment which have been bought and paid for and perhaps go a bit farther than that.

Now I yield to Senator Scott.

SENATOR SCOTT: On the energy topic, Mr. Zarb made the point that the House-passed bill, H.R. 7014, is clearly unacceptable, a very bad bill, and the extension alone is desired but would not be helpful if it were accompanied with a bill with all the bad features that this one has.

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H.R. 7014 would force the United States to import an extra half million barrels of fuel a day. We would hope that the House leadership and the Congress -- the Congressional leadership, I mean, would accept the constructive responsibility to work out legislation with the President. If they don't want any bill, I think in all honesty in dealing with the American people they should say so. If the strategy is to do nothing and continue the confrontation, that would be most unfortunate and not responsible.

I know that the Democratic leaders of the House and Senate do not hold that view and are sincerely trying to work out some solution.

We also -- as Congressman Rhodes told you about Turkish aid -- Senator Case reported on the Sinai Agreement that he expected the Foreign Relations Committee to act favorably but wishes to be totally assured that all information and all agreements have been made available to them and the general feeling in the room is that that has been done through the Committee but the Committee is going to discuss it this morning to satisfy itself.

On the budget, Mr. Lynn made a general statement. We are looking at a budget deficit for Fiscal '77 of at least \$50 billion to start with. It can readily go up to \$73 or \$75 billion assuming an extension of the tax reduction.

Q Did the subject of the President's travel come up at all today. Did you discuss with him officially or informally whether he ought to curtail his schedule?

SENATOR SCOTT: Informally I spoke to him for a brief moment after the meeting and said that I had been asked by many people to urge him to be very careful and to use all safeguards suggested to him. He said that he recognizes that responsibility on him in his capacity as the Nation's President. He points out that there was no handshaking in the St. Francis incident at all because we had particularly been concerned about the difficulty of protecting any candidate during this handshaking period. There he was simply waiting for the Secret Service men to open the door. He saw the crowd across the street, waved to them, then there was the shot and he went into the car. There was no handshaking in that instance.

Q Did he indicate he is willing to curtail his schedule for a while as some have suggested that he do?

SENATOR SCOTT: He said, "I know how people are feeling and I am anxious to be as careful as I can and we are giving that consideration." He did not go into detail.

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Q Congressman Rhodes, did you speak with him about it at all?

CONGRESSMAN RHODES: No, I did not. I said nothing to him about it at all. As the Senator indicated, there was nothing said by the group.

Q Why didn't you say something to him about it, Mr. Rhodes?

CONGRESSMAN RHODES: Well, Miss McLendon, I just didn't feel it was my place right now to say anything about it. I know this President fairly well and I feel that he is going to do what he feels he has to do. He has said that he doesn't think that the American people should be deprived of the right to see their President by the activities of some terrorists, and it is my opinion that he is correct along those lines and that he will probably do whatever he feels is necessary.

I feel that it is very important that we redouble our efforts to protect not only the President but the Presidential candidates. Along those lines, I would hope that we would be able to tighten up security and that all members of not only the media but the country reflect once again upon the fact that people who take shots at Presidents quite often do it because of a desire for notoriety. I recognize that these are big stories and that they must be covered, but at the same time I would hope that we not make folk heroes of terrorists.

Q Senator Scott, when you say that you know he is giving that some consideration, that was in response to the question of curtailing travel but in the course of your answer you said he knows he needs to be more careful. Are you saying he is giving consideration to curtailing his travel or to being more careful?

SENATOR SCOTT: I meant that I understood him to say that he intended to be as careful as he could, to be extremely aware of that in view of these instances and, therefore, in that sense to be more careful in the course of traveling. But he also made the point that this incident didn't occur during a handshaking episode.

Q Congressman Rhodes, when you said that we have to redouble our security efforts, what did you mean by that? Do you think that the Secret Service has to add more people or change its techniques?

CONGRESSMAN RHODES: I was thinking primarily of some of the operations of the Secret Service, and I have to admit that I am not familiar with the operations but I think the Secret Service operated admirably and always has at the operative level.

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In other words, the President was not shot. He did come home safely and I guess that is the proof of the pudding.

Then when you consider the fact that Miss Fromme, for instance, was a person whose activities had been fairly well-known by all law enforcement agencies, that she was in the crowd, not dressed to blend with the crowd but with a red dress on which swept the ground practically, and with a red turban, somebody, I feel, should have been able to evaluate her presence and the evidence concerning her leanings and have probably done something about removing her from the crowd.

Also, in this latest incident there seems to be some evidence that people in law enforcement were aware of the lady's own purported statement that she felt she might have to test the system. And that, coupled with the fact a gun had been taken away from here the day before, in evaluating whether or not she was a safety factor people might well have come to the conclusion that she should be under very definite surveillance during the time the President was there.

So I am certainly not criticizing the Secret Service. I think they are a great service; they have done a great job. But perhaps in winnowing the various pieces of evidence involved in Presidential appearances there needs to be some more care taken.

Q Do you think investigation of this should be undertaken by some committee of the Congress?

CONGRESSMAN RHODES: No, I certainly do not. I think the committees of Congress have gone as far as they should go and probably farther in investigating the intelligence gathering agencies and the law enforcement agencies. I certainly don't believe that they are completely perfect but I am afraid that as far as making them more efficient is concerned that these investigations are rapidly becoming counter-productive.

Q What do you think the Secret Service ought to do, then; on its own beef up its intelligence operations?

CONGRESSMAN RHODES: I think that middle eschelon which is on the ground and has the authority and the responsibility of evaluating the probabilities that some person in that area might be a security risk should be beefed up and perhaps some better methods of evaluation employed.

SENATOR SCOTT: There are personnel from these services available in the crowds as well as those supporting the President or the candidate. It is very difficult with a list of some 200,000 people who are in one degree or another suspect to identify some of those people instantly in a suddenly formed crowd.

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Q Senator Scott, you started off by saying that you urged the President to be more careful and to use all safeguards. Were you intimating, without saying so, that you wish he would cut down on his travels? I know politicians feel this way but you don't want to say it?

SENATOR SCOTT: You don't want to say it because it is human nature and it is part of the competitive urge as well as the human desire to meet as many people as you can. I am myself a little mixed up on the degree to which anyone has the right to tell anyone else to curtail his appearances.

I would hope, however, that potentially dangerous situations should be evaluated and the advice of the Secret Service taken if they think the President should curtail some part of his activities. But generally speaking, we cannot allow this country or its officials to be held hostage to terrorism.

Q Senator Scott, do you subscribe to the theory that there should be a cooling off period, if he should not curtail events in the future, that at least he should slow it down for now?

SENATOR SCOTT: I think there will be periods -- if I have it correctly -- before long when there will be some hiatus here. I am not informed beyond that point.

Q Gentlemen, in your discussion of the budget, was there any discussion of continuation of the tax cuts?

SENATOR SCOTT: Simply by Budget Director Lynn, in discussing the impact when he said that we could well go up into fiscal 1977, up to the \$75 billion area. He also discussed the impact for fiscal 1976 and that even before a tax cut extension -- we are at the \$68 billion to \$72 billion range without a tax cut extension -- and with that, you could expect more should that affect this fiscal year.

Q Senator Scott, did they tell you how much of the budget would be for this agreement with the Middle East?

SENATOR SCOTT: No, we were not told that.

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Q What is the price tag on that, that you understand?

SENATOR SCOTT: I don't know, the Committee will get that this morning, our Foreign Relations Committee.

CONGRESSMAN RHODES: We had previously been told that the figure for Israel was about \$2.1 billion of which 1.5 was military, and that the figure for Egypt was \$650 million.

SENATOR SCOTT: I thought your question was the price tag for the 200 observers?

Q No, my question has to do with the overall, not just this year, but of the years to come, how much we are going to provide out of the budget for foreign credits, to pay for Israel's oil for the succeeding years as well as military aid as well as monitors. It looks like some of you all would have a total on that.

SENATOR SCOTT: The commitments are not made beyond this first commitment of 2.1 to \$2.3 billion. It is certainly very likely to be a continuing program but they are not, we were told at the last meeting here, they are not commitments for these future years.

Q Are then understandings, is that the word used?

SENATOR SCOTT: Even that word wasn't used.

Q What is the word they used?

SENATOR SCOTT: They didn't use any words. They said they are not commitments, so the words they used were negative words. The inference properly and logically to be drawn from that in my mind is that there will be continuing authorizations and appropriations for aid to Israel and I should think for aid to Egypt.

Q Do you think that will go into the billions and billions for the years to come?

SENATOR SCOTT: Sarah, I don;t know.

CONGRESSMAN RHODES: There is no doubt but what there is a shopping list, but there is also no doubt but what the shopping list has not been agreed to so it would not be possible for us to give a figure at this time. You know the shopping list as well as we do and there is just no further comment we can make on whether or not it will be honored in toto or only partially. But we do know that the advance planning of the budget does take into consideration that there will be aid to Israel in the future and probably aid to Egypt.

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SENATOR SCOTT: He says in toto, it won't be honoring Tito, there is no aid in there for Yugoslavia, is there?

CONGRESSMAN RHODES: There is none. (Laughter)

Q Senator Scott, if I could change the subject and go back to the President's travel, you said there will be some hiatus here. Could you explain what you meant by that?

SENATOR SCOTT: I have simply read in the paper there are periods upcoming where the President will not be making as many trips as he has made in the immediate past. I think you would have to get that from the White House but I do not know any curtailment as a result of these incidents. I better make that clear.

Q Congressman Rhodes, I wonder if we could just clarify something. Do you think that the American press, in whatever its form, has made a folk hero out of some of these assassins?

CONGRESSMAN RHODES: I don't accuse anybody certain of trying to. All I am saying is the effect is likely to be that when you find such things as this occurring -- Miss Fromme is one the cover page of two of the very prominent weekly commentary magazines one week, Miss Hearst is on the cover the next week. Now, I suppose this next week Mrs. Moore will be on. I should think this type of exposure would be such a heady dose that persons who desire to get rid of their own anonymity, and many people who do these things do have quirks along those lines, would certainly be attracted by it. This is something all of us have to be careful about.

SENATOR SCOTT: As a matter of fact, the news story in the current issue of Time makes the same point, quoting some psychologists who point out this temptation toward instant celebrity, this shortcut through violence. So they make the point in the news story.

Q What do you gentlemen suggest the news media do, stop covering these people?

SENATOR SCOTT: Obviously that question implies something which would never be in your minds or mine, or that of anybody I know. Certainly, you should cover it and cover it fully. The question is what is the effect of your coverage and to what degree do you wish to impose a volunteer restraint? Do cover stories of national news magazines incite to violence? It is a proper question and I raise it for you to consider. And do stories continually about bullet-proof vests indicate to terrorists they should aim for the head? These are the things you should consider in the course of your responsibility. You have a right to hold us to ours. I have a right to suggest that you, too, have a responsibility.

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Q But you raise the question without giving us any guidance as to the answer. Do you think we ought to impose censorship on ourselves?

SENATOR SCOTT: I think you ought to ask the Columbia School of Journalism on that one.

Q Senator Scott, I wonder if we are reading the same newspapers. In the Post this morning, they had an extensive travel schedule for the President traveling out of town to the various States through the entire month of October.

SENATOR SCOTT: As I say, you had better ask the White House. I had read earlier that there would be less travel rather than more in the immediate future.

I hope that the White House will not give out detailed information on the routes traveled, for example, and the places to be visited at a given minute and so on.

Q I wonder if you could give us your reactions to the President's proposal, before the attempted assassination in San Francisco the other day, of a Federal Energy Corporation that would cost \$100 billion. There is some difference within the White House. Do you support that wholly, Senator Scott?

SENATOR SCOTT: I haven't seen it wholly. I have only had the report which was given to our Senate Republican Policy Committee by the Vice President yesterday.

In broad terms the principle seems to be to have the Federal Government act as a catalyst in finding the means to make capital available to utility companies for future energy producing plants and coal conversion and research and so on, since they cannot include these costs in their rate base. The principle seems to be a good one. I don't know the fine print on this yet. There might be things I wouldn't agree with, I just don't know.

Q Congressman Rhodes, do you like the principle of another Federal corporation of some kind?

CONGRESSMAN RHODES: I am like Senator Scott. I haven't seen the proposal yet. I do feel that we need to take whatever action is necessary to try to get as close to independence in energy within the next ten years as we possibly can.

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If the proposed corporation is aimed at the Federal financing of new ways of developing primary sources of energy, and of course with the assumption that the funds would be repayable, I would tend to favor it.

If, on the other hand, it would get into the area of merely financing plants which utilities could finance otherwise, using conventional sources of energy, then I would certainly want to take a long look to make sure it is necessary or even desirable. I think it is important to remember that when this corporation is created, and if it is, and financed, that the financing will have to come from the money market. There is no way to devise a new supply of money for it.

Then, of course, you have to get into the question as to whether or not this is the best way to apply the resources of the money market or whether there are better ways to do it. There are many questions and I would like to study all of the ramifications.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END (AT 10:25 A.M. EDT)