

Transcript of President's News Conference

Following is a transcript of President Nixon's televised news conference last night, as recorded by The New York Times:

I. INTENSITY OF PROTEST

Q. Mr. President, have you been surprised by the intensity of the protest against your decision to send troops into Cambodia, and will these protests affect your policy in any way?

A. No, I have not been surprised by the intensity of the protest. I realize that those who are protesting believe that this decision will expand the war, increase American casualties, and increase American involvement. And those who protest want peace. They want to reduce American casualties. And they want our boys brought home.

I made the decision, however, for the very reasons that they are protesting. And as far as affecting my decision is concerned, their protests I am concerned about; I am concerned because I know how deeply they feel.

But I know that what I have done will accomplish the goals that they want. It will shorten this war. It will reduce American casualties. It will allow us to go forward with our withdrawal program—the 150,000 Americans that I announced for withdrawal in the next year will come home on schedule.

And it will, in my opinion, serve the cause of a just peace in Vietnam.

2. COLLEGE GENERATION

Q. Do you believe that you can open up meaningful communications with this college generation, and how?

A. I would like to try as best I can to do that. It is not easy. Sometimes they, as you know, talk so loudly that it is difficult to be heard — as we've learned during the campaigns and also during the appearances that many of the Cabinet officers have made on university campuses. However, on an individual basis, I believe that it is possible to do what I have been doing — to bring representatives of the college and university communities to my office, to talk with them, to have a dialogue. I'm very glad that Chancellor Heard, the chancellor of Vanderbilt, has agreed to take two months off from his very important re-

sponsibilities in that position to work with us in the Administration to see if we cannot develop better lines of communication both to school administrators, but also to school students.

3. ROLE OF STUDENTS

Q. What do you think the students are trying to say in these demonstrations?

A. They're trying to say that they want peace. They're trying to say that they want to stop the killing. They're trying to say that they want to end the draft. They're trying to say that we ought to get out of Vietnam.

I agree with everything that they're trying to accomplish. I believe, however, that the decisions that I have made, and particularly this last terribly difficult decision of going into the Cambodian sanctuaries which were completely occupied by the enemy—I believe that that decision will serve that purpose because you can be sure that everything that I stand for is what they want.

I would add this. I think I understand what they want. I would hope they would understand somewhat what I want.

When I came to the Presidency, I did not send these men to Vietnam. There were 525,000 men there. And since I've been there, I've been working 18, 20 hours a day, mostly on Vietnam, trying to bring these men home.

We have brought home 115,000. Our casualties were the lowest in the first quarter this year in five years. We're going to bring home another 150,000. And as a result of the greater accomplishments than we expected in even the first week of the Cambodian campaign, I believe that we will have accomplished our goal of reducing American casualties and also hastening the day that we can have a just peace.

But above everything else, to continue the withdrawal program that they're for, and that I am for.

4. CHANGE IN STRATEGY

Q. On April 20, you said Vietnamization was going so well that you could pull 150,000 American troops out of Vietnam. Then you turned around only 10 days later and said that Vietnamization was so badly threatened you were sending troops into Cambodia. Would you explain this apparent contradiction for us?

A. Well, I explained it in my speech of April 20, as you will recall, because then I said that Vietnamization was going so well that we could bring 150,000 out by the spring of next year, regardless of the progress in the Paris talks and the other criteria that I had mentioned.

But I also had warned at that time that increased enemy action in Laos, in Cambodia, as well as in Vietnam was something that we had noted and that if I had indicated and if I found that that increased enemy action would jeopardize the remaining forces who would be in Vietnam after we had withdrawn 150,000, I would take strong action to deal with it.

I found that the action that the enemy had taken in Cambodia would leave the 240,000 Americans who would be there a year from now without many combat troops to help defend them would leave them in an

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untenable position. That's why I had to act.

5. STATE OF SOCIETY

Q. Mr. President, some Americans believe this country is heading for revolution, and others believe that crime and dissent and violent demonstrations are leading us to an era of repression. I wonder if you would give us your view of the state of the American society and where it's heading.

A. Well, that would require a rather extended answer. Briefly, this country is not headed for revolution. The very fact that we do have the safety valves of the right to dissent, the very fact that the President of the United States asked the district commissioners to waive their rule for 30 days' notice for a demonstration, and also asks that that demonstration occur not just around the Washington monument but on the Ellipse where I could hear it—and you can hear it pretty well from there, I can assure you—that fact is an indication that when you have that kind of safety value you're not going to have revolution, which comes from repression.

Now, the second point with regard to repression — that is nonsense in my opinion.

I do not see that the critics of my policies, our policies, are repressed. I note from reading the press, from listening to television, that criticism is very vigorous, sometimes quite personal. It has every right to be. I have no complaints about it.

Q. One of the consequences of the Cambodian action was the fact that the other side boycotted this week's peace talks in Paris, and there's some question as to whether our side will attend next week. Have you made a decision on that?

A. Our side will attend next week. We expect the talks to go forward and, at the time that we're cleaning out the enemy sanctuaries in Cambodia, we will pursue the path of peace at the negotiating table there and in a number of other forums that we're presently working on.

6. NEW BOMBING RAIDS

Q. Mr. President, Secretary of Defense Laird said last week that if the North Vietnamese troops should move across the DMZ in force he would recommend resumption of the bombing. What would be your reaction to such a recommendation in those circumstances?

A. I'm not going to speculate as to what the North Vietnamese may do. I will only say that if the North Vietnamese did what some have suggested they might do — move a massive force of 250,000 to

300,000 across the DMZ against our Marine Corps people who are there—I would certainly not allow those men to be massacred without using more force and more effective force against North Vietnam.

I think we have warned the leaders of North Vietnam on this point several times. And because we have warned them, I do not believe they will move across the DMZ.

7. MEETING WITH COLLEGES

Q. After you met with the eight university presidents yesterday, they indicated that you had agreed to tone down the criticism within your Administration of those who disagree with you. Yet, tonight, Vice President Agnew is quoted all over the news programs as making a speech which includes these words, that every debate has a cadre of Jeremiahs, normally a gloomy coalition of choleric young intellectuals and tired, embittered elders. Why?

A. Miss Dickerson, I've studied the history of this country over the past 190 years, and, of course, the classic and the most interesting game is to try to drive a wedge between the President and the Vice President. And believe me, I had eight years of that and I'm experienced on that point.

Now, as far as the Vice President is concerned, he will answer for anything that he has said. As far as my attempting to tone him down, or my attempting to censor the Secretary of the Interior because he happens to take a different point of view, I shall not do that.

I would hope that all the members of this Administration would have in mind the fact—a rule that I have always had, and it's a very simple one—when the action is hot, keep the rhetoric cool.

8. TROOP WITHDRAWALS

Q. Mr. President, on April 30 you announced that you, as Commander in Chief, were sending in U.S. units and South Vietnamese units into Cambodia. Do the South Vietnamese abide by the same pullout deadlines as you have laid down for the American forces?

A. No, they do not. I would expect that the South Vietnamese would come out approximately at the same time that we do, because when we come out our logistical support and air support will also come out with them. I would like also to say that with response to that deadline that I can give the members of the press some news with regard to the developments that have occurred.

The action actually is going

faster than we had anticipated. The middle of next week, the first units, American units, will come out. The end of next week, the second group of American units will come out. The great majority of all American units will be out by the second week of June, and all Americans of all kinds, including advisers, will be out of Viet-

nam [the President meant Cambodia] by the end of June.

9. USE OF WORD 'BUMS'

Q. Mr. President, do you believe that the use of the word "bums" to categorize some of those who are engaged in dissent—and I know that you meant it to apply to those who are destructive—but it's been used in a broader context. Do you believe that's in keeping with your suggestion that the rhetoric should be kept cool?

A. I would certainly regret that my use of the word bums was interpreted to apply to those who dissent. All the members of this press corps know that I have for years defended the right of dissent. I have always opposed the use of violence.

Now, on university campuses, the rule of reason is supposed to prevail over the rule of force. And when students on university campuses burn buildings, when they engage in violence, when they break up furniture, when they terrorize their fellow students and terrorize the faculty, then I think bums is perhaps too kind a word to apply to that kind of person. Those are the kind I was referring to.

10. CAMBODIA SANCTUARIES

Q. Mr. President, you mentioned that you expected the Americans to be out of Cambodia by some time in June. President Thieu was quoted as saying in an interview that he felt the North Vietnamese could re-establish their sanctuaries in Cambodia within six months and possibly, he was quoted as saying, within two or three months. If that's the case, what have we accomplished in Cambodia, was it worth the risk, and what do we do when they re-establish those sanctuaries?

A. I'm planning to give a report to the nation when our own actions are completed toward the latter part of June. At that time I will answer that question in full. At the present time I will say that it is my belief, based on what we have accomplished to date, that we have bought at least six months and probably eight months of time for the training of the Army — that is the Army of Vietnam, South Vietnam.

We have also saved, I think, hundreds if not thousands of

Americans—as Frank Reynolds reported tonight on A.B.C., rockets by the thousands and small arms by the millions have already been captured and those rockets and small arms will not be killing Americans in these next few months.

And what we've also accomplished is that by buying time it means that if the enemy does come back into those sanctuaries, the next time the South Vietnamese will be strong enough and well trained enough to handle it alone. I should point out, too, that they are handling a majority of the assignment now in terms of manpower.

11. COMMENT ON HICKEL

Q. Sir, without asking you to censor the Secretary of the Interior, could you comment on the substantive points that he made in his letter?

A. I think the Secretary of the Interior is a man who has very strong views, he's outspoken, he's courageous—that's one of the reasons I selected him for the Cabinet and one of the reasons that I defended him very vigorously before this press corps when he was under attack.

Now, as far as his views are concerned, I will, of course, be interested in his advice. I might say, too, that I hope he gives some advice to the Postmaster General. That was the fastest mail delivery I've had since I've been in the White House.

12. REACTION TO CRITICS

Q. Mr. President, how do you answer the criticism that the

justification that you give for going into the Cambodian sanctuary is hauntingly similar to the reasons that President Lyndon Johnson gave as he moved step by step up the ladder of escalation? He wanted peace, too.

A. Mr. Scall, President Johnson did want peace and, if I may use the vernacular, he's taken a bad rap from those that say that he wanted war. However, the difference is that he did move step by step. This action is a decisive move and this action also puts the enemy on warning that if it escalates while we are trying to de-escalate that we will move decisively and not step by step.

13. RESULTS OF MOVE

Q. Mr. President. This war was well under way before you came in, as you just said. Now considering the toll in lives and in everything else that's happening now, do you think that it will have proved to be worthwhile?

A. It's rather a moot question, Mr. Healy, as to whether

it will prove to have been worthwhile. As commander in chief I found 525,000 Americans and my responsibility is to do everything that I could to protect their lives and to get them home as quickly as I can.

And we've succeeded pretty well. We've brought 115,000 home; we're going to bring another 150,000, and this action will assure the continued success of that program.

However, looking at the whole of Southeast Asia, looking to the fact that we have lost lives there, I would say that only history will record whether it was worthwhile.

I do know this: now that America is there, if we do what many of our very sincere critics think we should do — if we withdraw from Vietnam and allow the enemy to come into Vietnam and massacre the civilians there by the millions, as they would—if we do that, let me say that America is finished insofar as a peace-keeper in the Asian world is concerned.

14. CONDUCT OF POLICE

Q. Mr. President, in light of the Kent State University incident, could you tell us what, in your judgment, is the proper action and conduct for a police force or a National Guard force when ordered to clear the campus area and faced with a crowd throwing rocks?

A. We think we've done a rather good job here in Washington in that respect. As you note we handled the two demonstrations, Oct. 15 and Nov. 15, of last year without any significant casualties, and that took a lot of doing because there were some pretty rough people involved. A few were rough — most of them were very peaceful.

I would hope that the experience that we have had in that respect could be shared by the National Guards which, of course, are not under Federal control but under state control. Now, what I say is not to be interpreted as a criticism in advance of my getting the facts of the National Guards at Kent State. I want to know what the facts are, I've asked for the facts and when I get them, I'll have something to say about it.

But I do know that when you do have a situation with a crowd throwing rocks and the National Guard is called in, that there is always the chance that it will escalate into the kind of a tragedy that happened at Kent State. And if there's one thing I'm personally committed to it's this.

I saw the pictures of those four youngsters in the Evening Star the day after the tragedy, and I vowed then that we

were going to find methods that would be more effective to deal with these problems of violence—methods that would deal with those who would use

force and violence and endanger others but at the same time would not take the lives of innocent people.

15. FUTURE OF CAMBODIA

Q. Mr. President, sir, after the American troops are removed from Cambodia, there may still be a question as to the future Cambodia's ability to exist as a neutralist country. What is your policy toward Cambodia's future?

A. The United States is, of course, interested in the future of Cambodia and the future of Laos—their neutrality—both of which, of course, as you know, are neutral countries. However, the United States—as I indicated in what is called the Guam, or Nixon, Doctrine—cannot take the responsibility, and should not take the responsibility in the future, to send American men in to defend the neutrality of countries that are unable to defend them themselves.

In this area, what we have to do is to go down the diplomatic trail. And that is why we're exploring with the Soviet Union—with not too much success to date, but we're going to continue to explore it—with Great Britain, with the Asian countries that are meeting in Jakarta, and with every—through every possible channel—methods through which the neutrality of countries like Cambodia and Laos, who cannot possibly defend themselves—to see that that neutrality is guaranteed without having the intervention of foreign forces.

16. RIFTS IN NATION

Q. In your inaugural address, you said that one of your goals was to bring us together in America. You said that you wanted to move us in international terms from an era of confrontation to an era of negotiation, and you said you wanted to bring peace to Vietnam. Well, during these past two weeks, it seemed that we're farther than ever from those goals. How do you account for this apparent failure?

A. Don't judge us too quickly. When it comes to negotiation, I would suggest that you recognize the fact that some very important talks are going forward on arms limitation with the Soviet Union.

We're still far apart. But I will predict now that there will be an agreement, and when that agreement comes, it will have great significance.

And I say that having in mind the fact that we are far apart from the Soviet Union

in our policy toward Southeast Asia, in our policy toward the Mideast, but I say that where the problems of arms are concerned, here's where our interests are together. The Soviet Union has just as great an interest as we have in seeing that there is some limitation on nuclear arms.

17. JETS TO ISRAEL

Q. Mr. President, have you made any judgment yet on the sale of jets to Israel and how do you view the situation in the Middle East at the moment?

A. Well, the situation has become ominous due to the fact that reports have been received with regard to Soviet pilots being interjected into the U. A. R. air force, not in a combat, but in some other role. We are watching these reports very closely.

If those reports prove to be true and if that continues to escalate, this will dramatically shift the balance of power and it would make it necessary for the United States to re-evaluate its decision with regard to the sale of jets to Israel. We have, we have made it very clear, and this is in the interest of peace in that area, that the balance of power must not be changed, and we will keep that commitment.

18 BID FOR NEGOTIATION

Q. Mr. President, is the United States prepared to pursue with equal fervor in Paris negotiations to find a political settlement of this war, including the possibility of discussing with the other side a coalition government?

A. We are prepared to seek not only in Paris but in any other forum a political settlement of this war. We are not prepared, however, to seek any settlement in which we, or anyone else, imposes upon the people of South Vietnam a government that they do not choose.

If the people of South Vietnam choose a coalition government, if they choose to change the leaders they presently have, that is a decision we will accept. And President Thieu has indicated he will accept it. But we do not intend to impose at the conference table on the people of South Vietnam a government they do not choose.

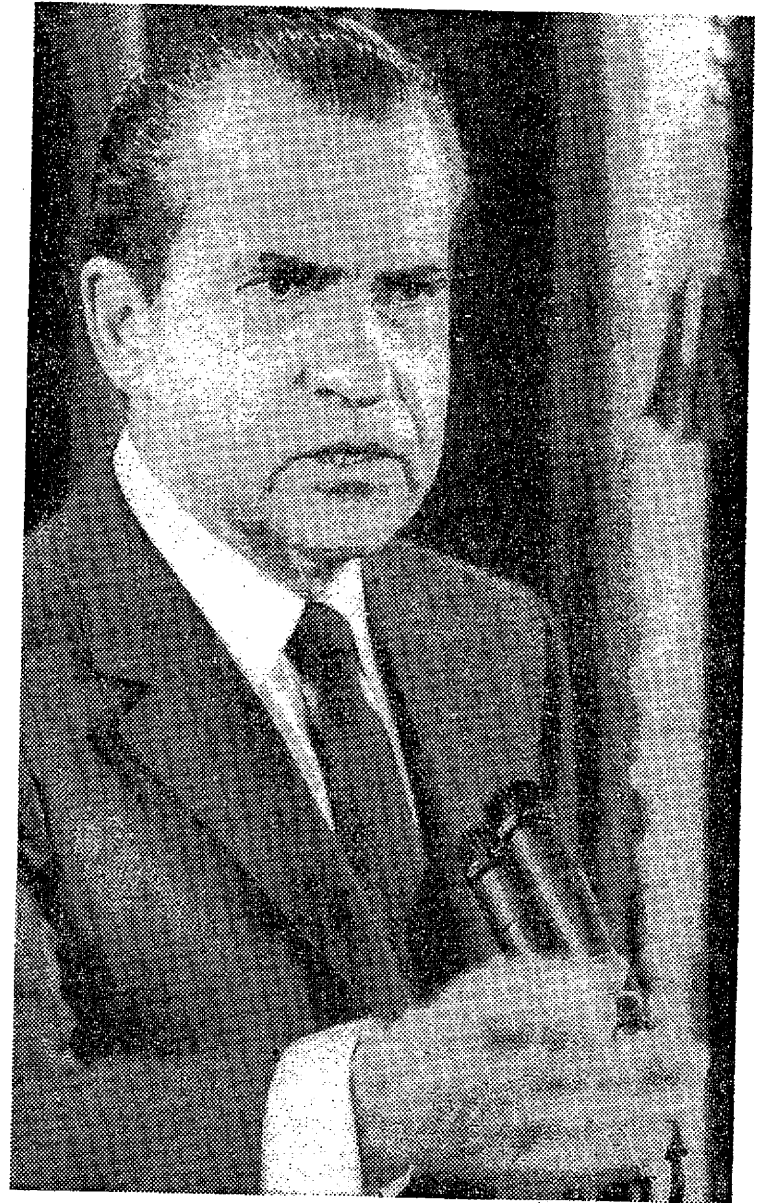
19. VIEW OF ECONOMY

Q. Mr. President, on a domestic subject—the economy, sir. Unemployment is up, the stock market is down, things look generally discouraging. Do you have any views on that, and do you have any plans on that?

A. Yes, unemployment reached the point of 4.8. I noticed this last month. In order to keep it in perspective, it should be noted that in 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964, 1965, the av-

erage unemployment was 5.7; 5.7 is too high, 4.8 I think is also too high. But unemployment we presently have is the result of the cooling of the economy in our fight against inflation.

We believe, however, that as we look to the balance of the year, that we will begin to see a moving up in our gross national product in the last of the second quarter and throughout the third and fourth quarters. I believe that by the end of the year we will have passed the trillion-dollar mark in terms of G.N.P. I believe that the year



United Press International

President Nixon emphasizes his words during news conference

1970 will be a good year economically—a year in which unemployment, we hope, can be kept below the average that we had in the early 50's, 60's, which was much too high.

20. ROLE OF ROGERS

Q. Mr. President. Did Secretary of State Rogers oppose your decision to go into Cambodia, or did Dr. Kissinger oppose it?

A. Every one of my advisers—Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, Dr. Kissinger, Director Helms [of Central Intelligence]—raised questions about the decision.

And believe me, I raised the most questions because I knew the stakes that were involved. I knew the division that would be caused in this country. I knew also the problems internationally. I knew the military

risks.

And then after hearing all of their advice, I made the decision. Decisions, of course, are not made by a vote in the National Security Council, or in the Cabinet. They are made by the President with the advice of those.

And I made this decision. I take the responsibility for it. I believe it was a right decision. I believe it will work out. If it doesn't, then I'm to blame. They are not.

21. JOB OF PRESIDENT

Q. Mr. President, volumes have been written about the loneliness of the Presidency. You yourself have said that you were not going to get trapped into an isolation as President. Have you, particularly in recent days, felt isolated? And, if you have not, could you explain to us why it was not until yesterday that you, whose voice means more than anybody else in the Administration, whether it be Mr. Agnew or Mr. Hickel, waited until yesterday to tell the educators that the Administration was lowering its, was modifying its discourse with the dissenters?

A. Well first, let us understand what I told the educators. The educators came in to discuss their problems and, since they are all presidents, I felt a community of interest with them. I indicated to them that I didn't want to make their job any harder for them, and I would appreciate it if they wouldn't make my job any harder for me in their own activities.

They raised questions about the Vice President, and about other people in the Administration, about the rhetoric. And, I know, of course, questions have been raised about my rhetoric. Let me say that in terms, however, of the Vice President, in terms of what I told the educators, I did not indicate to them that I was going to muzzle the Vice President, that I was going to censor him. I believe that the Vice President, the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary of H. E. W., everybody in this Administration should have the right, after considering all the factors, to speak out and express his views.

This is an open Administration. It will continue to be. I also think that people should

have the right to speak out as they do in the House, in the Senate, in the media and in the universities.

The only difference is that, of all these people, and I refer particularly to some of my lively critics in the House and Senate, they have the luxury of criticism. I was once a Senator and a House member, and I thought back to this when I called Harry Truman today and wished him well on his 86th birthday, some of the rather rugged criticisms that I directed in his direction.

They have the luxury of criticism because they can criticize and if it doesn't work out, then they can gloat over it, or if it does work out, the criticism will be forgotten.

I don't have that luxury. As commander in chief I alone am responsible for the lives of 425 or 30,000 Americans in Vietnam. That's what I've been thinking about and the decision that I made in Cambodia will save those lives. It will bring the peace that we all want, in my opinion. Now I could be wrong, but if I am wrong, I'm responsible and nobody else.

22. FIGURE ON TROOPS

Q. Early in the news conference, saying that the troop withdrawals would continue, you said that a year from now there would be 240,000 American soldiers in Vietnam. A. Don't hold me to the exact figure I haven't—

Q. That's 185,000 less. Are you announcing a larger withdrawal? A. No, I wasn't. I was indicating a range, but don't get the impression that we might not get that low also, because you understand we're going to go forward on the negotiating track at this time and I am not among those who has given up on that track. I still think there's a possibility of progress there.

23. PROTEST IN CAPITAL

Q. Mr. President, will you see any of the demonstrators tomorrow in the White House? Will you talk with them?

A. If arrangements are made by my staff so that they can come in to see me, I'll be glad to. I talk to great numbers of people. I will be there all day long. And as a matter of fact, I'll be there tonight and tomorrow as well.

But sometimes it is quite difficult to arrange which group should come in. I think — I know members of my staff will go out to see them. I've asked all the younger members of my staff to talk to the demonstrators and try to get their views, as we did on Nov. 15 and Oct. 15. And I'll be glad to see them if some of them are available.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

A. Could I ask the members of the press to wait one moment? For 26 years a member of this press corps did just what Frank Cormier did then—he was known as the man who said, thank you, Mr. President. Three weeks ago he met a tragic death, and, as we close this conference, I would like to suggest that we all stand for a moment in memory of Merri-man Smith. Thank you.