

Transcript of President Ford's News

Following is the transcript of President Ford's news conference in Washington last night, as recorded by The New York Times through the facilities of ABC news:

OPENING STATEMENT

For over a year, the nation has engaged in exhaustive investigations into the activity of the C.I.A. and other intelligence units of our Government. Facts, hearsay and closely held secrets—all have been spread out on the public record.

We have learned many lessons from this experience, but we must not become obsessed with the deeds of the past. We must act for the future. Tonight, I am announcing plans for the first major reorganization of the intelligence community since 1947:

¶First: I am establishing by executive order a new command structure for foreign intelligence. Henceforth, overall policy directions for intelligence will rest in only one place: the National Security Council, consisting of the President, the Vice President, the Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense. Management of intelligence will be conducted by a single new committee. That committee will be chaired by the Director of Central Intelligence, George Bush.

To monitor the performance of our intelligence operations I am creating a new independent oversight board to be made up of private citizens. Former Ambassador Robert D. Murphy will chair the board and two other distinguished citizens—Stephen Ailes and Leo Cherne—will serve as members. All three of these units—the National Security Council, the committee on foreign intelligence and the oversight board—will be responsible to me, so that the President will continue to be ultimately accountable for our intelligence activities.

¶Second, to improve the performance of the intelligence agencies and to restore public confidence in them, I am issuing a comprehensive set of public guidelines which will serve as legally binding charters for our intelligence agencies. The charters will provide stringent protections for the rights of American citizens. I will soon meet with Congressional leaders to map out legislation to provide judicial safeguards against electronic surveillance and mail openings. I will also support legislation that would prohibit attempts on the lives of foreign leaders.

¶Third, tomorrow I will send to the Congress special legislation to safeguard critical intelligence secrets. This legislation would make it a crime for a Government employee who has access to certain highly classified information to reveal that information improperly.

In taking these actions, I have been guided by two imperatives.

As Americans, we must not and will not tolerate actions by our Government which abridge the rights of our citizens. At the same time, we must maintain a strong and effective intelligence capability in the United States. I will not be a party to the dismantling of the C.I.A. and the other intelligence agencies.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 1976

Conference on Foreign and

Domestic Affairs

To be effective, our foreign policy must be based upon a clear understanding of the international environment. To operate without adequate and timely intelligence information will cripple our security in a world that is still hostile to our freedoms.

Nor can we confine our intelligence to the question of whether there will be an imminent military attack. We also need information about the world's economy, about political and social trends, about food supply and population growth, and certainly about terrorism.

To protect our security diplomatically, militarily and economically, we must have a comprehensive intelligence capability.

The United States is a peace-loving nation, and our foreign policy is designed to lessen the threat of war and of aggression. In recent years, we have made substantial progress toward that goal—in the Middle East, in Europe, in Asia and elsewhere around the world. Yet we also recognize that the best way to secure the peace is to be fully prepared to defend our interests. I believe in peace through strength.

A central pillar of our strength is, of course, our armed forces. But another great pillar must be our intelligence community—the dedicated men and women who gather vital information around the world and carry our missions that advance our interests in the world.

The overriding task now is to rebuild the confidence and capability of our intelligence services so that we can live securely in peace and freedom. That is my goal.

QUESTIONS

Intelligence Director

Q. Mr. President. You have talked often lately including tonight about the need for a strong intelligence capability. You have appointed a Director of Central Intelligence who has little or no intelligence expertise that I'm aware of, and I wondered what do you see as the advantages of having a relative novice directing the intelligence community?

A. I respectfully disagree with your assessment of George Bush's capabilities and background. George Bush was our U.N. ambassador and did a superb job at the United Nations. George Bush was our representative in the People's Republic of China and in that capacity did extremely well. I've known George Bush for a number of years; I served with him in the House of Representatives where he did a very fine job. I'm absolutely convinced he will perform superbly as the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Q. Are you arguing that he has an intelligence background? A. I think he has the intelligence to do the job and the experience in foreign policy, and I think these are major ingredients that make him an outstanding person for this responsibility.

Nixon's Trip to China

Q. Mr. President, Robert Strauss has suggested that it might behoove you to ask former President Nixon to post-

pone or cancel his trip to China. There are also reports that you're unhappy because it coincides with the New Hampshire primary. Do you have any plans to ask him to put off the trip?

A. I have no such plans. Mr. Nixon is going to the People's Republic of China as a private citizen at the invitation of that Government. I don't believe a private American citizen visit that country. I should intervene with the invitation of a foreign government to have a private American citizen visit that country.

Q. Well, do you think if the Chinese Government sends a special plane which lands at a military airport, asks for the top media in this country to cover him—some 20 representatives—and you send your special briefing books on the change in leadership and it still is a private trip in their eyes?

A. Well, let me answer several of those questions; you've asked a good many of them.

First, there has been no special briefing given to Mr. Nixon. He has received periodic briefings, or information concerning world affairs from the national or Federal Government. There was no special briefing given to him in relationship to this trip.

Whether or not he will land at a civilian or a military airport has not been determined. It's a decision on the part of the Chinese Government as to where they would like to land, and they have to ask us which of several airports. If and when we get a specific request, we'll act on it.

Control of C.I.A.

Q. Mr. President at first reading on your reform of the Central Intelligence Agency you seem to be putting the agency more on under the dominance and more under the control of the office of the Presidency, and we know that office has abused the C.I.A. in the past and I'm wondering what you've done to make sure that does not occur again, since you are not apparently making an outside agent outside of the White House responsible for the C.I.A.

A. I think a President ought to be accountable. And what we have sought to do in this case is to make the process and the decision-making fall on the shoulders of the President and he will be held accountable by the American people. In each of the cases of the Director of Central Intelligence or any of the other intelligence agencies, the directives or the guidelines will hold special individuals accountable for what happens in their particular area of responsibility.

But the final and the ultimate responsibility falls on the shoulders of the President, and in my case I'm willing to assume that responsibility and I can assure you it will be handled in the most appropriate way.

Q. If you are setting a precedent, though, for future Presidents by giving them more authority over the C.I.A., would you agree it also invites the prospect of a temptation for abuse of the C.I.A.? A. It shouldn't happen and I would hope that the American people will elect a President who will not abuse that responsibility. I certainly don't intend to.

Voting Chances on Right

Q. Mr. President. Last weekend in Florida you suggested that anyone to the right of you politically could not be elected as President. Newsmen assumed you were referring to Ronald Reagan, but you weren't entirely specific, and I'd like to pin you down now. Do you believe that Reagan is so far to the right that he cannot win a national election, and if you do believe that, I'd like to know what you base your opinion on, especially in light of the fact that he was twice elected Governor of the most populous state in the country by large margins.

A. I was referring to anybody in either political party who is to the right of me, and there are some in the Democratic party and some . . . I think Governor Reagan is to the right of me philosophically. It seems to me that there are some differences, for example, between Governor Reagan and myself. Let's take the issue of Social Security. He has suggested from time to time that it ought to be voluntary, not mandatory as it is under the existing law. He has suggested that maybe the funds from the Social Security program ought to be invested in the stock market—I disagree with both of those proposals. I believe in the firm integrity of the Social Security program and the way I suggested, it seems to me, is the better approach.

Governor Reagan has suggested \$90 billion cuts in Federal expenditures, transferring the responsibilities in the programs to the local and state officials where they either have to abandon the programs or raise taxes to support them. I disagree with that approach. I think that the better way to do it is to take the Federal funds and transfer them to the state and local units of government so that those services can be provided at the state and local level much more effectively. These are some of the differences that exist between Mr. Reagan and myself. It is a somewhat different philosophy.

Q. Specifically, do you believe that he cannot win a national election? A. I believe that anybody to the right of me—Democratic or Republican—can't win a national election.

Going to New Hampshire

Q. Mr. President, are you ready to say now flatly that you're confident of winning the New Hampshire and/or the Florida primary?

A. I think we'll do well in both. I certainly was greatly encouraged by the two days we were in Florida last weekend. The crowds were very large, the enthusiasm of not only my party workers but the public generally was extremely encouraging. We're going to New Hampshire on Thursday and Friday of this week and I am led to believe I am encouraged in both cases.

Q. Do you expect to win? A. When I say I'm encouraged, I think that is quite indicative that I think I'll do very well.

Q. Do you expect to win? A. When I say I'm encouraged, I think that is quite indicative that I think I'll do very well.

Q. Mr. President, your opening remarks concerning the Central Intelligence Agency, it sounded considerably like an Official Secrets Act, which applies in Great Britain. Now, this act has been criticized as being beyond the con-

stitutional realm that we apply here in the United States. First of all, do you agree with that assessment, and secondly, wouldn't, if you received this kind of legislation, wouldn't this in the future prevent the kind of disclosures which have brought out the abuses in the Central Intelligence Agency?

A. I categorically disagree with your assessment. It's a great deal different from the Official Secrets Act that prevails in Great Britain.

As a matter of fact, this is much more restrictive on the foreign intelligence community in the United States than anything has been in existence in the past. There are a number of specific limitations as to what foreign intelligence agencies in the United States can do. They are spelled out. And there is an official charter for each one of the intelligence agencies, and I am recommending to the Congress several very specific pieces of legislation which are I think constructive and quite contrary to the impression you left with your question.

For example, I am recommending that the Attorney General proceed to work with the Congress to establish legislation for electronic surveillance so that he, representing the administration, would have to go to the court to get the authority, even in national security matters.

Under the present setup the Attorney General can simply do it without going to the court if it involves national security. This is quite contrary to the impression that you raised with the question that you asked.

So I think we're going down the middle, trying to make certain and positive that the intelligence capability of this country is first class and at the same time that the rights of individuals are adequately protected.

Q. The second part of my question, Mr. President, was whether the legislation to prevent leaks in the third point mean that the United States would once of your opening remarks would not again be subjected, perhaps, in the future, to abuses that have been exposed to the fact that people were not put in jail by leaking information.

A. Well under the organization that I've established or will establish tomorrow and under the legislation that I have recommended there won't be any abuses and the people, if there are any abuses, will be held accountable. So I don't feel at all apprehensive that what happened in the past will be repeated in the future.

Q. Mr. President your statement that

was early in the week showed that despite some very heavy tax bites from Federal and state taxes, you ended up with about \$135,000 in spendable income last year. It also showed that you made no investments and that you weren't able to save any of that. Can you tell us how you can spend \$2,600 a week when you don't have to pay rent or any mortgage payments.

A. I'm glad that you were scrutinizing my complete and full disclosure of my financial activities. Let me say this, during that period of time I had at least three of my four children in college and most of you know that that's not a cheap operation. I paid for it, they didn't borrow any money, they didn't get any scholarships, etc. That accounts for part of it.

And, quite frankly, um . . . I have sought to help my children so that at the time when I'm no longer in a position to help them financially, I have made some investments for them, which is perfectly permitted under our laws of

this country. So between supporting them in college and trying to help them get a start when they get through college, I think we can account for every penny.

Q. Mr. President, you haven't said anything about members of Congress who reveal classified information. Does that concern you?

A. It does. And we had some experiences—and I'm not pointing a finger at anybody—but certain information which we supplied to the Congress, to the House of Representatives, to a committee of the House, somehow, either through a member or through a past member, highly classified material has been made public.

This is something that the Congress, I think, has to address itself to. The Constitution protects a member of the Congress, but it doesn't protect the illegal making of such information public for a staff member. And I think the Congress has to clean up its own

house, and I have urged them to do so. And I hope they will.

Q. Assuming they take some steps in that direction, will this affect your providing classified information to Capitol Hill?

A. In the case of most committees we've had no trouble whatsoever. There's been good cooperation. The arrangements have been lived up to.

On the other hand, even after the House of Representatives by almost a 2-to-1 margin said a report that had highly classified information in it should not be released, it was leaked to certain individuals and to certain publications.

I think the House of Representatives ought to take some action. We've agreed to cooperate with them in whatever legal way they would ask us to do so. But I think it's a very serious matter what happened in this one case.

(The rest of the transcript was not available for this edition.)