

A Speech to Nation Is Expected Tonight

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By ANTHONY RIPLEY AUG 9 1974

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WASHINGTON, Aug. 8—Ger-ald R. Ford, who never sought the nation's highest office, was preparing tonight to become the 38th President of the United States.

Along Pennsylvania Avenue, where crowds have gathered for three days, sensing that history was being enacted, applause rang out when he appeared. A ceremony is scheduled for noon tomorrow in the East Room of the White House where Mr. Ford is to raise his

right hand and "solemnly swear" to execute faithfully the office of the President and protect and defend the Constitution.

And thus will he become the first man to serve as President

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Ford is on Page 2.*

without a vote of the American people.

It will be a small private ceremony, attended only by close friends, and it is expected that he will address the nation tomorrow night on radio and television.

Last Oct. 26, as Mr. Ford was returning on a plane from a trip to Ohio—when his nomination for Vice President was still under consideration by Congress—a reporter asked him, "Would you like to be President?"

A Reluctant Nominee

"I really would not like to be," Mr. Ford replied. "I wasn't even anxious to be the Vice-Presidential nominee. I simply had indicated to the White House that if the President wanted me to be the Vice President, I would certainly accept it and do my best."

Mr. Ford's staff would say nothing about his plans for tomorrow. "It is easy to jump to conclusions," one staff man said asking not to be quoted. "They [the conclusions] aren't there yet, believe me."

Mr. Ford arrived at his office in the Executive Office Building shortly after 8 A.M. He met with President Nixon for an hour this morning.

He had been scheduled to begin a 12-day speechmaking tour on the West Coast and in Chicago, beginning today, but canceled it. A press aide said it was "inappropriate at this time."

There were no details announced after Mr. Ford's meeting with Mr. Nixon and later Mr. Ford went across Pennsylvania Avenue to Blair House, the Presidential guest house, where he awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor posthumously, to the families of seven Vietnam servicemen.

It is a task usually performed

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by the President. Mr. Ford stayed for a reception for the families after the ceremony.

The crowds that have gathered for the last three days along the White House's black cast iron fences on Pennsylvania Avenue applauded Mr. Ford as he moved back and forth across the street in a limousine.

In the afternoon he met with Secretary of State Kissinger and George Bush, the Republican National Chairman.

Mr. Ford and Mr. Kissinger posed for pictures together. Mr. Bush said they had discussed the future of the nation and the party.

Pentagon Disclaims Knowledge

After a meeting with his staff, the Associated Press quoted sources close to Mr. Ford as saying that he had promised a "smooth and orderly transition" to a new Administration.

One act of transition to a new President appeared to be missing. That is a briefing of Mr. Ford on use of the so-called "black box" with which a President can send coded signals to unlock certain electronic devices to respond immediately to a wartime attack.

A number of Pentagon sources said that they knew of no such briefings as yet.

In an interview yesterday in The New York Times, Mr. Ford said he had visited every executive department in Government to confer with Cabinet members and their top aides. In addition, he said he had briefings daily from the Central Intelligence Agency, meetings with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and a briefing on nuclear arms matters at the Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory in New Mexico.

"I think I'm well-prepared for any contingency," he said.