

Transcript of President's News Conference

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

OPENING STATEMENT

Good evening and will you please sit down.

Before we start the questions tonight, I would like to make a statement on the subject of assistance to Cambodia and to Vietnam.

There are three issues. The first, the future of the people who live there. It is the concern that is humanitarian. Goods for those who hunger and medical supplies for the men and women and children who are suffering the ravages of war.

We seek to stop the bloodshed and end the horror and the tragedy that we see on television as rockets are fired wantonly into Phnom Penh.

I would like to be able to say that the killing would cease if we were to stop our aid but that is not the case.

The records shows in both Vietnam and Cambodia that Communist take-over of an area does not bring an end to violence but on the contrary subjects the innocents to new horrors.

We cannot meet humanitarian needs unless we provide some military assistance. Only through a combination of humanitarian endeavors and military aid do we have a chance to stop the fighting in that country in such a way as to end the bloodshed.

The second issue is whether the problems of Indochina will be settled by conquest or by negotiations. Both the governments of Cambodia and the United States have made vigorous and continued efforts over the last few years to bring about a cease-fire and a political settlement.

The Cambodian Government declared a unilateral cease-fire and called for negotiations immediately after the peace accords of January, 1973. It has since repeatedly expressed its willingness to be flexible in seeking the negotiated end to the conflict.

Its leaders have made clear that they are willing to do whatever they can do to bring peace to the country. The United States has backed these peace efforts. Yesterday we made public an outline of our unceasing efforts over the years including six separate initiatives since I became President. Let me assure you, we will support any negotiations and accept any outcome that the parties themselves will agree to.

As far as the United States is concerned, the personalities involved will not themselves constitute obstacles of any kind to a settlement. Yet all of our efforts have been refuted. Peace in Cambodia has not been prevented by our failure to offer reasonable solutions. The aggressor believes that it can win its objectives on the battlefield.

MARCH 7, 1975

on Foreign and

Domestic Matters

QUESTIONS

Q. Mr. President, you would up—time is running out in Cambodia. Can you give us any assurance that even if the aid is voted it will get there in time? Is it stockpiled and ready to roll, or what is the situation?

A. If we don't give the aid, there is no hope. If we do get the necessary legislation from the Congress and it comes quickly—I would say within the next 10 days or two weeks—it will be possible to get the necessary aid to Cambodia both economic assistance, humanitarian assistance and military assistance. I believe there is a hope that we can help our friends to continue long enough to get into the wet season when then there will be an opportunity for the kind of negotiation which I think offers the best hope for a peace in Cambodia.

2. Colby Briefing on C.I.A.

Q. Mr. President, would you tell us what Director Colby has told you of any C.I.A. connections involving, any C.I.A. connection with the assassination of foreign leaders?

A. I'm not in a position to give you any factual account. I have had a full report from Mr. Colby on the operations that have been alluded to in the news media in the last week or so, really involving such actions that might have taken place beginning back in the 1960's. I don't think it's appropriate for me at this time to go any further. We do have an investigation of the C.I.A., of our intelligence agencies, by the Congress, both overt and covert, going back from the inception of the C.I.A. and of course we do have the Rockefeller Commission going into any C.I.A. activities in the domestic front.

But for me to comment beyond that,

Defends Assistance

This belief will be encouraged if we cut off assistance to our friends.

We want an end to the killing and a negotiated settlement. But there is no hope of success unless the Congress act quickly to provide the necessary means for Cambodia to survive.

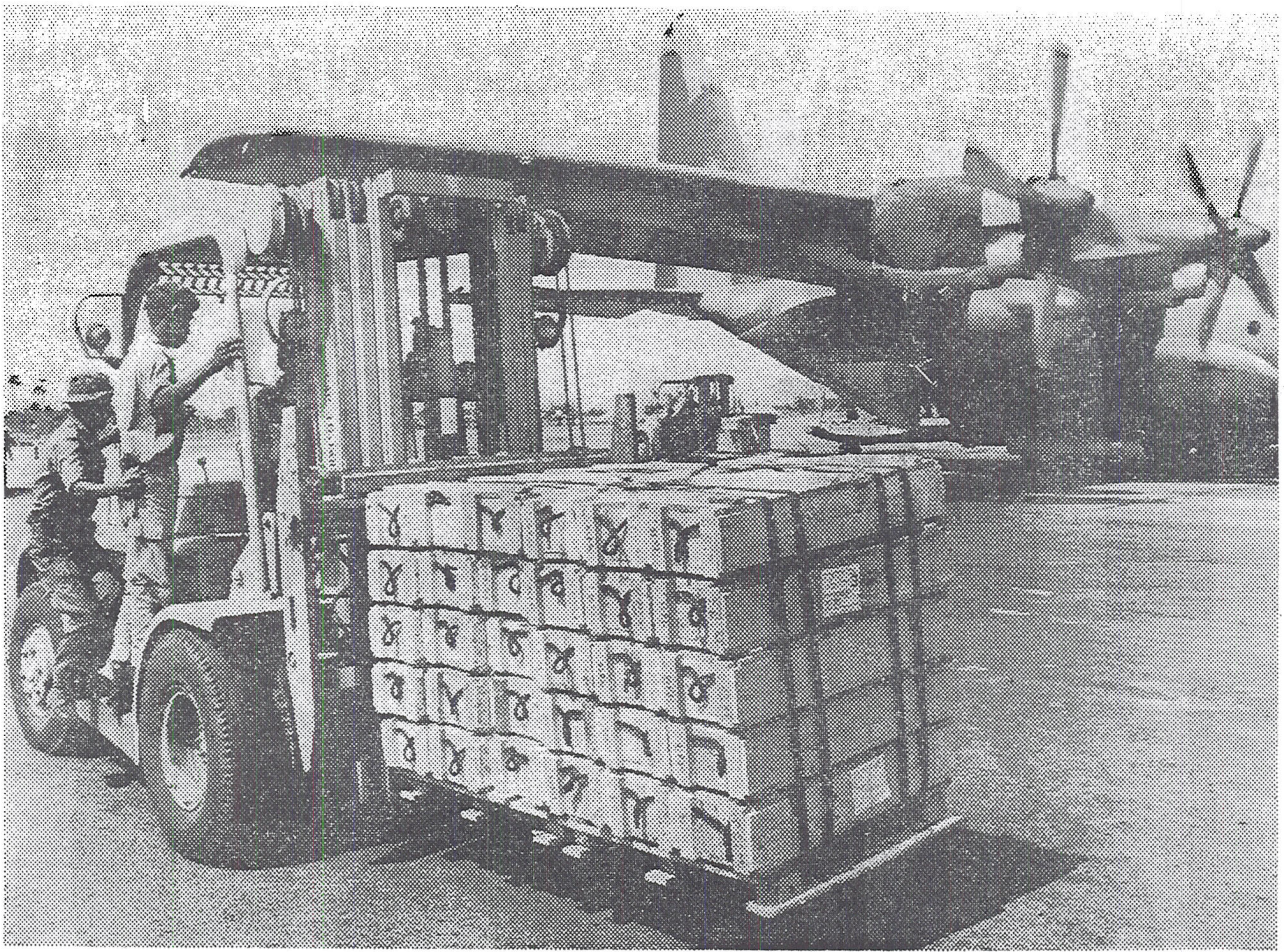
If we abandon our allies, we will be saying to all the world that war pays. Aggression will not stop, rather it will increase.

In Cambodia the aggressors will have shown that it negotiations are resisted, the United States will weary, abandon its friends and force will prevail.

Reliability Involved

The third issue is the reliability of the United States. If we cease to help our friends in Indochina, we will have violated their trust that we would help them with arms, with food and with supplies so long as they remain determined to fight for their own freedom. We will have been false to ourselves, to our word and to our friends. No one should think for a moment that we can walk away from that without a deep sense of shame. This is not a question of involvement or re-involvement in Indochina; we have ended our involvement. All American forces have come home. They will not go back.

Time is short. There are two things the United States can do to affect the outcome. For my part I will continue to seek a negotiated settlement. I ask the Congress to do its part by providing the assistance required to make such a settlement possible. Time is running out. Mr. Cormier.



The New York Times

Cambodian soldiers unloading ammunition from U.S. planes at Phnom Penh airport earlier this week. Speaking of aid to Cambodia, President Ford said that "we cannot meet humanitarian needs unless we provide some military assistance."

I think, would be inappropriate at this time.

3. Apathy Over Southeast Asia

Q.—You say that there would be a deep sense of shame in the country if Cambodia should fall. If that would be the case, sir, can you explain why there seems to be such a broad feeling of apathy in the country and also in the Congress for providing any more aid for either Cambodia or South Vietnam?

A.—I believe there is a growing concern which has been accentuated since we have seen the horror stories on television in recent weeks. The wanton use of rockets in the city of Phnom Penh, the children lying stricken on the streets and people under great stress and strain—bloody scenes of the worst kind—I think this kind of depicting of a tragedy there has aroused American concern, and I think it's a growing concern as the prospect of tragedy of this kind becomes even more evident.

So I have noticed in the last week in the United States Congress in a bipartisan way a great deal more interest in trying to find an answer, and yesterday I spent an hour plus with members of Congress who came back from a trip to Cambodia and South Vietnam and they saw first hand the kind of killing, the kind of bloodshed and it had a severe impact on these members of Congress, some of whom have been very, very strongly opposed to our involvement in the past in Vietnam, and I think their impact will be significant in the Congress as well as in the country.

4. Effect of Détente

Q. The question is raised by many critics of our policy in Southeast Asia as to why we can conduct a policy of détente with the two Communist super powers in the world and could not follow a policy of détente should Cambodia and South Vietnam go Communist. Could you explain that to us?

A. I think you have to understand the difference that we have with China—People's Republic of China—and with the Soviet Union. We don't accept their ideology. We don't accept their philosophy. On the other hand, we have to recognize that both countries have power bases in the world—not only in population, but in the regions in which they exist.

Now, we don't expect to recognize or to believe in their philosophy. But it is important for us, the United States, to try and remove any of the obstacles that keep us from working together to solve some of the problems that exist throughout the world—including Indochina.

Now the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China have supplied and are supplying military assistance to South Vietnam and Cambodia. We have to work with them to try and get an answer in that part of the world; but at the same time, I think that effort can be increased and the prospects improved if we continue the détente between ourselves and both of those powers.

Q. Mr. President. Putting it bluntly, wouldn't we just be continuing a bloodbath that already exists in Cambodia if we voted the \$222-million.

A. I don't think so, because the prospects are that with the kind of military assistance and economic and humanitarian aid we're proposing, the government forces hopeful can hold out. Now, if we don't the prospects are almost certain that Phnom Penh will be overrun and we know from previous experiences that the overrunning of a community or an area results in murder and the bloodshed that comes when they pick up and sort out the people who were the school teachers, the leaders, the government officials.

This was told very dramatically to me yesterday by several members of the Congress who were there and talked to some of the people who were in some of these communities or villages that were overrun. It's an unbelievable horror story and if we can hold out—and I think the prospects are encouraging—then I think we will avoid that kind of massacre and innocent murdering of people who really don't deserve that kind of treatment.

Q.—If I may follow up, as I understand it, the Administration's point is that if we vote the aid that we'll have the possibility of a negotiated settlement not a bloodbath. Is that correct? A.—That is correct, sir.

Q.—And yet just yesterday you indicated in your statement the State Department listed at least six unsuccessful efforts to negotiate an end to the war in Cambodia dating to the summer of 1973 when American bombing stopped there. The Cambodian Government was certainly stronger then, than it would

be with just conceivably another \$220-million.

A.—Well, I think if you look at that long list of bonafide legitimate negotiated efforts, the best prospects came when the enemies felt that it would be better off to negotiate than to fight.

Now, if we can strengthen the government forces now and get into the wet season, then I believe the opportunity to negotiate will be infinitely better, certainly better than if the government forces are routed and the rebels or Khmer Rouge take over and do what they'd done in other communities where they've had this kind of opportunity.

6. Cambodian Government's Strength

Q. Mr. President, you said sir that if the funds are provided that hopefully they can hold out. How long are you talking about. How long can they hold out. In other words, how long do you feel this aid will be necessary to continue?

A. Well, this aid that we've requested on an emergency basis from the Congress is anticipated to provide the necessary humanitarian effort and the necessary military effort to get them through the dry season, which ends roughly the latter part of June or first of July.

7. Conservatives in G.O.P.

Q. Mr. President, if I might, I'm sure you've seen news accounts to the effect that the conservatives, especially within your own party, are considering starting a third party in 1976 and they're bolting, and I understand yesterday that a group of conservative Republican Senators met with you and afterward they came out and talked with reporters at the White House and told us that they were unhappy with your policies, they thought you were going too far to the left and, in fact, they said that you, they wanted you to know that you could no longer take the right wing of your party for granted.

That being the case, sir, do you intend to go out and court conservative Republican support to woo them back for 1976, and do you think anything short of dropping Nelson Rockefeller from the ticket will do that?

Let me say the meeting that I had with about 11 very fine Republican members of the United States Senate was a very, very frank discussion, and I think very constructive. Some of them indicated that in certain areas they had disagreements with me; in other areas they indicated a very strong support for the position that I have taken on various issues.

It's my feeling that the Republican party has to be a broad-based wide-spectrum party, if it's going to be a viable force in the political situation in the United States.

I happen to believe that Nelson Rockefeller is doing a very fine job as Vice President, and if we can broaden the base of the Republican party I think we have an excellent chance to prevail in 1976, and my maximum effort will be at, in getting all elements of the Republican party on the team, and I think in the final analysis we will.

Q. Mr. President. Can you really broaden that base without losing the right wing of your party? A. Oh yes. I think we can. In 1968 and 1972, that was achieved and we were successful. I think it can be done in 1976.

8. Senate's Action on Filibusters

Q. On Rule 22, when Mr. Rockefeller ruled, had you approved what he was doing beforehand? Do you agree with the ruling? And do you agree with the assertion of some of the Senators you met with that it's going to make it much harder for your program to get by in the Senate with three-fifths rather than two-thirds?

A. I think we have to understand that the Vice President occupies the position as presiding officer of the United States Senate under the Constitution. He has a constitutional responsibility in that regard. I am in the executive branch of the Government. He, in that part of his responsibility, is in the legislative branch. He has the obligation under the Constitution to make a ruling, to preside in the United States Senate. I think it's inappropriate, or inappropriate I should say, for me to tell him as a member of the legislative branch in that capacity how he should rule, and therefore I did not.

I have had a number of discussions with the Vice President as to my personal philosophy concerning the United States Senate. I happen to believe that the United States Senate ought to be a somewhat different legislative body than the House of Representatives, where, by

a 51 per cent vote, a majority can prevail.

But our Founding Fathers very wisely thought that the Senate ought to be a little different and they provided that the Senate should have other rules, other parliamentary procedures, including the requirement of more than 51 per cent to conduct its business under certain circumstances. I expressed those views to the Vice President, but I went no further, and I don't think it would have been appropriate for me to go any further.

9. Effect on Ford Program

Q. Mr. President, do you think it's going to be harder for you to get your program through the Congress with this prospective change in the filibuster rule? A. I don't think it'll be any more difficult to get the program through. It might be more difficult in other ways, but I don't think it will be more difficult to get the program through.

10. Plans for Nixon in Party

Q. Mr. President, some people who have visited former President Nixon in recent months have quoted him as saying that he would like to, after his illness is over, become a major figure in the Republican party again. Do you foresee any time in the future when it would be beneficial for the Republican party to have him re-emerge as a leader?

I think any comment that I make in that regard is inappropriate at the present time. Mr. Nixon is still recovering from a very serious illness, and for me to speculate down the road I think is unwise at this point.

11. Larger the Reduction

Q. Mr. President, Secretary Simon said the other day that he thought the jobless rate, unemployment rate could rise to as much as 9 per cent before things turned around. Now in view of this, would you be willing to go for a larger tax deduction? Would you be willing to raise it, say, \$10-billion, or some other figure?

A. In the first place, I have doubts that it will go to 9 per cent. It might. But without commenting on whether it will or won't, if there is a need for a greater stimulant, I would certainly go for a greater tax reduction than for increased spending. I think the tax reduction route is a lot more desirable than just increasing spending on some of these categorical programs or other programs that really don't help the individual as much as a tax reduction which would put money back in his pocket.

I believe that the program we have as it appears to be moving through the Congress is at this stage of the game moving in the right direction. The big problem is not the size of the tax reduction but the slowness with which the Congress is acting on it, and the failure of the Congress thus far to limit the tax reduction to something that can be enacted into law quickly. What we need is speed and a figure of \$16- and \$19-billion in tax reductions. If we delay, and I hope it isn't, then

delay is more of a problem than the size.

12. View of House Tax Bill

Q. Mr. President, in the bill that came out of the House, you really got a different kind of character to that bill than the one you proposed. There is a greater percentage going to lower-income groups. Would you veto a bill if it came—if it got to your desk in the form it came to the House vote? How would you feel about the House bill?

A. I don't think it's wise for me to speculate on what I would do with the House bill. It does have to go through the Senate committee. It does have to go through the Senate itself, and then it has to go to conference and come down to me. For me to speculate at this stage, I think, is very unwise.

I would like to add this, however: I agree with Secretary of the Treasury Simon, who testified yesterday or the day before, that there ought to be a larger increase for the middle-income taxpayer. I think the House version of the bill was much too limited. It didn't give a sufficiently large rebate, or tax reduction, to the middle-income taxpayer. And those people, I think, deserve a break because in recent years they have gotten a heavier and heavier burden imposed on them.

13. The Watergate Scandal

Q. Mr. President, I'm wondering if you agree, sir, with Leon Jaworski, who feels that the time has now come for former President Nixon to tell the truth about Watergate.

A. I don't think it's appropriate for me to give any advice to Mr. Nixon on that matter at this time. A fairly comprehensive story has been told in the impeachment hearings in the House in the testimony of many, many people in the court here in the District of Columbia. I think the proper place for any further discussion in this regard is in the court system of the United States.

14. Tel Aviv Terrorism

Q. Mr. President, what effect will last night's massacre in Tel Aviv have on the current Kissinger negotiations, and what advice would you give to Israel to counteract such terrorism?

A. Let me answer the last first. I don't think it's appropriate for me to give any advice to Israel or any other nation as to what they should do in circumstances like that. I hope that the very ill-advised action, the terrorist action, in Israel or in Tel Aviv last night was absolutely unwarranted under any circumstances. I condemn it because I think it's not only inhumane but it's the wrong way to try and resolve the difficult problems in the Middle East. I would hope that the terrorist activity would not, under any circumstances, destroy the prospects or the possibilities for further peace accomplishments in the Middle East.

15. NATO Role for Israel

Q. Have you considered asking Israel to become part of NATO? A. I have not.

16. Cambodia Aid Prospects

Q. Mr. President, you sounded encouraged about the prospect for Cambodian aid. Can you give us an estimate of what you think the chances are now of it being passed?

A. They're certainly better than they were. I had a meeting this morning with Senator [John J.] Sparkman and Senator Hubert Humphrey and Senator Clifford Case. They want to help. They say the prospects are 50-50, but if they're that, I think we ought to try and make the effort because I think the stakes are very, very high when you involve the innocent people who are being killed in Cambodia.

17. Effect if Cambodia Falls

Q. If the Congress does not provide the aid and the Lon Nol government should fall, would the country be in for any recrimination for this Administration. Would we have another Who Lost China debate, for example.

A. I first would hope that we get the aid and the Government is able to negotiate a settlement. I don't think, at least from my point of view, that I would go around the country pointing my finger at anybody. I think the facts would speak for themselves.

18. Lon Nol's Resignation

Q. Mr. President, from some of the remarks of Senators who met with you today, they didn't indicate that they were quite in as much agreement as you have indicated. But Senator Humphrey, for one, asked that as part of a negotiated settlement that you spoke of, if you would be willing to seek the orderly resignation of President Lon Nol.

A.—I don't believe it's the proper role of this Government to ask the head of another state to resign. I said in my opening statement that we believe that the settlement ought to be undertaken and it's not one that revolves around any one individual. And I would hope that some formula, some individual on both sides, could sit down and negotiate a settlement to stop the bloodshed.

19. Support in Cambodia

Q.—On that, are you saying that the United States will support any government, no matter how weak or corrupt in a situation like this?

I'm not saying we would support any government. I'm saying that we would support any government that we can see coming out of the present situation or the negotiated settlement.

20. Public Service Jobs

Q. Mr. President, yesterday on unemployment, your requested \$1.6-billion for public service jobs to run through mid-1976. No your advisers, meantime, keep predicting that the problem will improve in mid-'75 just a month or two from now. How do you reconcile those two positions?

A. The requested additional manpower training funds that I requested will fully fund the authorized amount that was approved by the Congress last year. We believe that this amount is needed to take care of any potential contingency. We think there will be an improvement toward the end of this year and certainly in the beginning of next year on the unemployment and on the other hand, we think it's wise at this time to be prepared for any adversary developments.

21. Unemployment Outlook

Q.—You mentioned earlier that it might go to nine. Are you revising upwards the figure from 8.5. . . .

A.—No, I think I said I wasn't going to agree to any figure but I did say that if we had any such development, the better way to solve it would be for a further tax cut rather than some of these additional spending programs and the most important thing was to get the Congress to act affirmatively, quickly, on the tax bill. And I'm very disturbed with their lack of affirmative action as quickly as I think it should come.

22. OPEC Price Stand

Q.—Mr. President, out of the OPEC summit meeting in Algiers today came a declaration that oil prices should be pegged to inflation and the prices they have to pay for the products they buy. Do you think this kind of inflation indexing system is fair?

Well, we are trying to organize the consuming nations and we've been quite successful. I believe that once that organization has been put together—and it's well along—that we should sit down and negotiate any matters with the producing nations. I personally have many reservations about the suggestion that has been made by the OPEC organization. I think the best way for us to answer that problem is to be organized and to negotiate rather than to speculate in advance.

23. Size of Budget Deficit

Q. Mr. President, things have been sort of piling up since you announced your \$52-billion prospective deficit. You have now postponed your tax proposals for April, March and April. You've put out \$2-billion for highways, another \$2-billion for jobs, relief jobs, and now that Congress has refused to put a ceiling on food stamps. Just, my question is this—just how high do you think this \$52-billion deficit is going to go and where do you think it is at this point?

A. Well the \$52-billion deficit was too high in my judgment. We did our best to keep it down and the Congress so far has added substantially to it by not approving the recommended rescissions and deferrals that I proposed.

I think I recommended in one group about a \$950-million rescission or deferral and Congress only approved about a hundred and ten or a hundred and twenty million of that and they have in addition as you indicated added about six hundred and fifty million in additional food stamp costs.

I'm disturbed and I will continue to work trying to convince the Congress that a deficit of fifty-two billion is too much and anything above that is very, very bad.

And if they think the way to stimulate the economy is to blow the Federal budget, I think they're wrong.

I think the better procedure, if we need any additional stimulant is through a tax cut.

Q. Thank you.