Transcript of the President's News Conference

OPENING STATEMENT
Will you all sit down, please?

On Friday, the Commission on C.I.A. activities within the United States presented its report to me. I read the report two days ago. I have read it again today. I have decided it should be made available to the public. It will be released tomorrow.

I thank the Vice President and other members of the commission and the staff. It is obvious to those who have been through the report that the commission has done an extensive job of looking into the allegations that the C.I.A. activities include political assassinations, domestic operations in violation of its statute.

My reading of the report leads me to the conclusion that the panel has been fair, frank and balanced. I will ask the Attorney General to try out all the materials gathered by the commission on any major determination whether action should be undertaken against any individual. I am asking each of the Federal agencies with headquarters affected by the report to study its recommendations and report back to me with their comments.

In addition to investigating the original allegations of improper domestic activities by the C.I.A., the commission at my request, subsequently looked into allegations concerning possible domestic involvement in political assassination attempts.

The commission has reported that it did not undertake this other aspect of the investigation. The materials they have developed concerning these allegations have been turned over to me in classified form.

Because the investigation of the political assassination allegations is in complete, and because the allegations involve extremely sensitive matters, I have decided that it is not in the national interest to make public material relating to these allegations at this time.

However, I have determined that procedures that will serve the national interest, I will make available to the Senate and House Select Committees and these materials together with other related materials in the investigation.

I know that the members of the Congress will exercise utmost prudence in the handling of such information.

I have stated previously I am totally opposed to political assassination. This Administration has not and will not use such means as instruments of national policy. However, in fairness, none of us should go to the conclusion as to events that may have occurred in the past 15 or 20 years. After I have further studied the recommendations of the commission, I will order or submit to the Congress the necessary measures to ensure that the intelligence community functions in a way designed to protect the constitutional rights of all Americans.

It remains my deep personal conviction that the C.I.A. and other units of the intelligence community are vital to the survival of this country. As we take the steps necessary to ensure proper functioning of the intelligence community, we must also be certain that the United States maintains the intelligence capability necessary for the full protection of our national interest.

JUNE 10, 1975
THE NEW YORK TIMES, TUESDAY, JUNE 10, 1975

on Domestic and

Foreign Affairs

Questions
Possible Criminal Prosecutions
Q. Mr. Conner? Mr. President, will you refer the report to the Justice Department the materials on the allegations of assassination plots as well as the matters contained in it?
A. Mr. Conner, I will turn over the material that has been given to me by the Rockefeller Commission, and then turn over to the Justice Department other material within the Executive branch to the Department of Justice so that the Department of Justice and the Attorney General will have full access to whatever we have for a determination by them as to any need to prosecute any individual.

Lessons of Vietnam War
Q. Mr. President, at a recent news conference you said that you have learned the lessons of Vietnam. Since then, I've received a letter from a Mrs. Katherine Litchfield of Dedham, Mass. She is a member of the United Religions Church and she wrote that she was a resident of Vietnam during the war and has been trying to do something for the Vietnamese people.
A. Miss Thomas, there are a number of lessons that we can learn from Vietnam. One, that I would have to work with other Governments that feel as we do that freedom is not only important. We cannot, however, fight their battles for them. Those countries who believe in freedom, as we do, must carry the burden. We can help them, but not with U.S. military personnel but with arms and expertise and allied governments can support their own national interests and protect the freedom of their citizens.

I think we all may have learned some lessons concerning how we would conduct a military operation. There was, of course, from the period of 1961 or 2 to the end of our military involvement in Vietnam, a great deal of controversy whether the military operations in Vietnam were carried out in the proper way — some dispute between civilian and military leaders as to the proper prosecution of a military engagement.

I think we can learn something from those differences and if we ever become engaged in any military operation in the future—and I hope we don't—I trust we've learned enough about how we should handle such an operation.

... you would not conduct a limited war again, or with a certain amount of restraint on the part of our bombers, and so forth?
A. I wouldn't want to pass judgment at this time on any hypothetical situation. I simply am indicating that from that information, that experience in Vietnam, we ought to be able to be in a better position to judge how we should conduct ourselves in the future.

Federal Law Violating C.I.A.
Q. What is the nature of the Federal law that may have been violated by the C.I.A.? I can understand where state law might have been violated, but is there a Federal statute that you have in mind?
A. Invoking the C.I.A.? Well, in 1947, the Congress passed the basic charter of the Central Intelligence Agency and the law passed by the Congress gives certain responsibilities to the C.I.A. in the handling of intelligence overseas.

It was understood, as I have read excerpts from the debate of 1947, that the Central Intelligence Agency should not be involved in any domestic activities.

Now, if individuals within the C.I.A. violated that basic charter, it will be for the Attorney General to make a judgment as to whether there should be any prosecution.

In the broader sense, however, if it is determined that the Central Intelligence Agency, as an organization, has violated its charter, then, of course, corrective action will have to be taken. And without revealings by this in the report from the Rockefeller commission, I believe there will be certain recommendations for some legislation and some administrative action that ought to be taken to make certain and positive that the agency does its job and that the rights of Americans—domestically—are well protected.

Conclusion of Commission Work
Q. Mr. President, I was wondering why you had the Rockefeller commission stop short in its work and not complete its investigation into alleged political assassinations. Why did you not reach a conclusion in that particular area?
A. Let me say at the outset I did not tell the Rockefeller commission that it should not proceed further. The Rockefeller commission on its own decided that it wanted to stop short of operations on the basis of the original responsibilities given to it. The commission at the outset was told it should investigate allegations concerning domestic violations of its charter. Subsequent to that, there was, there were questions that should, as raised about political assassinations. I suggested that the commission undertake an investigation into domestic involvement in political assassinations.
The commission, after the original 90 days it was given to complete its report, requested an extension for an additional time and I gave them an additional 60 days. Some time in early May, the commission decided that they wanted to conclude its original assignment and they decided that they should make the report, which would be delivered tomorrow to the public, and they have turned over to me the material they collected concerning corruption and political assassinations.

Q. This was a Presidential commission, of course. Do you agree with their conclusion that they should stop without reaching a conclusion in this particular area?

A. I do. For this reason: the material they have collected, the interviews, the hearings, any other material that is giving to me, I am turning over to the House of Representatives. I will turn over all other material that we are collecting within the Executive branch of the Government to the proper agency. The Executive branch of the Federal Government will be in a position to analyze and to prosecute if there is any need to do so.

Assignment to Commission

Q. Sir, if I may press you on that just a little bit. Why aren’t they the proper agency to do that? They were assigned by you, you went into the C.I.A. and found out what was wrong, and it was all put together into something very controversial. And then all of this has been stopped. Why didn’t you tell them, “Go on, follow, and get to the bottom of this?” Isn’t the only way for investigations are usually conducted?

A. I think you have to bear in mind the fact that I was the head of the Rockefeller commission, which was to investigate any alleged illegal activities done by the C.I.A. I have a charter only to conduct intelligence matters overseas. And the allegation was made by many people. The C.I.A. had involved itself into domestic intelligence matters. I asked the Rockefeller commission to understand the investigation of the original charges, which was a very major responsibility. I think they decided that they should conduct their investigation of the basic charges and give to me for proper utilization by the Attorney General for any further investigation and prosecution. I think it’s a responsible manner in which to handle this matter.

Vulnerability to Charge

Q. But you don’t think you’re going to escape somehow from a charge of cover-up by doing it this way?

A. I’m convinced that with the Attorney General, Mr. Ed Levi, we have a man who is going to carry out his sworn duties. He will conduct an investigation on the broadest basis and to prosecute if there’s any problem. I have full faith in the Attorney General, and I should add, that the Senate and House committee are also in the process of making further investigations as they have been charged with the responsibility by the Congress. So there’s not going to be any cover-up by any cover-up because we’re giving them the material that the Rockefeller commission developed. They will make reports to any other material that is available in the executive branch.

Release of Materials

Q. Mr. President, do you foresee any time in the future when that material from the Rockefeller commission that relates to assassination plots and other White House material that you say you are going over to Congress and Senate committee, do you foresee any time when it might be in the public interest to have that released?

A. I think there may be. And of you notice, in my opening statement I said, “at some point in time we want to prejudge that at the moment.”

Q. Mr. President, what part was played by the C.I.A. in this by whom?

A. Would you speak a little louder, please?

Q. I’ll try. What part was played in your thinking by the memories of President Eisenhower and .

President Kennedy and the fear that not fully substantiated allegations coming out, especially about the late President Kennedy this time, would make it open to the charge of trying to interfere with a candidacy of Senator Kennedy?

A. I was personally involved in the selection of anything that I divulged passing judgment in what was to be as discussions made in the last 19 or 20 years. I have read the summary from the Rockefeller commission concerning political assassinations. I have read the summary of material collected by the executive branch of the Government, going back to late 1959 and running up to and through 1979 or ’80. I’ve read that myself.

And under the circumstances I don’t want to sit in 1979–1980. The passing judgment on decisions made by honorable people under various circumstances. I think historians will make judgments better than anybody in 1978. In very good feeling I, the members of Congress, we ought to reserve judgment and that’s why I caution the House and Senate committee to use utmost prudence in how they handle the material I’m giving them.

Q. When you say, sir, that you don’t want to sit in judgment on decisions made 15 years ago, are you suggesting that there are issues made by the Presidents in that time?

A. No, quite the contrary. I’m not passing judgment on whether they were right or wrong. I simply am advising that for us 15 to 20 years later to pass judgment in the position of people who had the responsibility for the highest echelons of our Government, shouldn’t be the Monday-morning quarterbacks, if I could invent a clue. I think it’s better to let history tell the story rather than contemporary.

Restoring the C.I.A. Creditability

Q. Mr. President, in view of what some people have called the post-Watergate morass, do you believe that the C.I.A.’s credibility can be restored until and unless the story of the allegations of political assassinations are disclosed fully to the public?

A. Of course I do. I believe that the credibility of the C.I.A. can be and will be restored by the report of the Rockefeller commission and the recommendation of the several Congressional committees.

I believe that there can be internal improvements in the C.I.A. that there can be legislative recommendations that I hope the Congress will enact. And the net result will be that we will have a strong, effective, and proper Central Intelligence Agency. We have complete faith that we can do the job, that we will do it, and that we will have a C.I.A. that will do the job for us.

Security Conference

Q. I wonder if it can change the subject to Europe and the future. There are reports in Europe, sir, that both the United States and the Soviet Union seem less and less interested in the security conference that is due up this year. Could you tell me something about the future timetable, when might we come upon? How SALT is doing? When you might be seeing MacArthur in Europe?

A. There seems to be some slippage in this area. While I was in Europe, I discussed with many European leaders the status of the European Security Conference, the SALT. It appears that there are some complications being made on both sides between the Warsaw Pact nations and the European nations, including ourselves, that will potentially bring the European Security Conference to a conclusion.

Those will complications have not been made, but it’s getting closer and closer. And I think that there will be sufficient understanding on both sides to bring about an ending to this long negotiation. If it does, in the near future we probably would have a summit in Helsinki.

The negotiations on SALT 2 are progressing, I think, constructively. The technicians are now working on the problems of verification and other matters that are very important but can be better outlined and put together by the government. I’m optimistic that we can have a SALT 2 agreement, but I can assure you I have other that we can have a SALT 2 agreement, but I can assure you I have other that we can have a SALT 2 agreement, but I can assure you I have other that we can have a SALT 2 agreement, but I can assure you I have other that we can have a SALT 2 agreement, but I can assure you I have other that we can have a SALT 2 agreement, but I can assure you I have other that we can have a SALT 2 agreement, but I can assure you I have other that we can have a SALT 2 agreement, but I can assure you I have other that we can have a SALT 2 agreement, but I can assure you I have other that we can have a SALT 2 agreement, but I can assure you I have other that we can have a SALT 2 agreement, but I can assure you I have other that we can have a SALT 2 agreement, but I can assure you I have other that we can have a SALT 2 agreement, but I can assure you I have other that we can have a SALT 2 agreement, but I can assure you I have other that we can have a SALT 2 agreement, but I can assure you I have other that we can have a SALT 2 agreement, but I can assure you I have other that we can have a SALT 2 agreement, but I can assure you I have other that we can have a SALT 2 agreement, but I can assure you I have other that we can have a SALT 2 agreement, but I can assure you I have other that we can have a SALT 2 agreement, but I can assure you I have other that we can have a SALT 2 agreement, but I can assure you I have other that we can have a SALT 2 agreement, but I can assure you I have other that we can have a SALT 2 agreement, but I can assure you I have other
language of our mutual defense treaty with South Korea requires the presence of American troops there or can the United States fulfill its commitment short of that?

A. I believe it's highly desirable under our mutual defense treaty with South Korea to maintain a U.S. military contingent in South Korea. We have now roughly 38,000 U.S. military personnel in South Korea. I think it's keeping the peace in Korea, and I think it's important for the maintenance of peace in the Korean peninsula that that force stay in South Korea.

Q. Are you thinking of keeping them there indefinitely, or do you hope to review that question next year? A. It's constantly under review.

Embarrassment in C.I.A. Report

Q. Mr. President, to get back to the C.I.A., some senior assistants of yours have blamed Vice President Rockefeller for having suggested the public report on the C.I.A. would contain assassina-
tion findings, and by announcing plans to issue the commission report before checking with you. Has this caused you any embarrassment, or anyone in the White House?

A. I haven't embarrassed me. I have of course been in constant contact with the Vice President. I understood that the commission was going to make the decision that it would not get in any further into the political assassination area, that they wanted to conclude their commission investigation and file its report. The Vice President and I understood each other perfectly.

Guarantees to Israel

Q. The Prime Minister of Israel is coming on Wednesday. I believe, and you met with Egyptian President Sadat a week ago. As you go into this next phase of consultations, are you any more prepared to give Israel stronger guarantees?

A. Well, my meeting with Prime Minister Rabbin of Israel, which is to be held on Wednesday and Thursday of this week, will be a meeting where I will get his personal assessment of the over-all situation in the Middle East. We will discuss the options that I see as possible — either a resumption of the suspended step-by-step negotiations or a comprehensive recommendation that I would make to probably reconvene the Geneva conference or a step-by-step process under the umbrella of the Geneva conference. I'm going to go into these alternatives or these options in depth with Prime Minister Rabbin, and when we have concluded our discussion, I'll be in a better position to know how our government should proceed in trying to achieve a broader peace, a more permanent peace, with fairness and equity in the Middle East.

A. Mr. DeFrank.

Announcing Candidacy

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You keep saying that you're going to announce your candidacy for election in 1976 at the appropriate time, but nothing happened. Are we getting any closer to that appropriate time, and if so, can you tell us about that?

A. You're getting closer and closer. But I have not picked a specific time for this announcement. There's no doubt of my intention. I reiterated it again tonight. But all I can say is, we're getting closer and closer to a specific announcement. A. Mr. Barnes,

Last Meeting With Sadat

Q. Mr. President, when you were in Salzburg, you appeared to be especially friendly with Egyptian President Sadat. Was this public display of cordiality with him designed in any way to pressure Israel to make new concessions toward a Middle East settlement?

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A. I did enjoy my opportunity to get acquainted with President Sadat and I not only enjoyed his company, but I benefitted from his analysis of the Middle East and related matters.

Q. But I have the same relationship with Prime Minister Rabbin. I've known him longer — this will be the second or third opportunity that I've had to meet with him, plus my opportunities when he was the Israeli Ambassador here.

I think I can benefit immeasurably by meeting face-to-face with people like Prime Minister Rabbin and President Sadat. This judgment by our Government in this area is a major decision. And we have to get the broadest possible information to make the best judgments.

And in both instances, as well as others, I am glad to have the help and assistance of those who come from that area of the world.

Statement In Government

Q. Mr. President, some of your critics in Congress argue that your veto of legislation such as the public service jobs bill amounts to a minority rule. Is it your judgment that the next year, this year and a half, will be a series of veto confrontations and stalemate?

A. There's no need for it if the Congress acts responsibly in the handling of the Federal Fiscal affairs. I would hope that the veto that was sustained last week will put the proper environ-
ment on Capitol Hill for a responsible fiscal policy by the Congress. If the Congress ignores the desire on the part of the President and more than a third of the House to be responsible fiscally, then of course we will have more vetoes. I would hope there might be a lesson learned and that we will have responsibility rather than irresponsibili-
ty by the Congress.

Thank you all. This is a beautiful place here tonight, isn't it?