

NYTimes Transcript of President's News

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

Good evening. Will you please sit down. I have several announcements to make tonight.

First, with respect to foreign policy and national security affairs. You will recall that when I became President a year ago last August, I indicated that I believed it was essential to guarantee stability and continuity in the conduct of U.S. foreign policy.

I made a conscious decision at that time not to change personnel in the important national security area.

I have, however, made a number of significant changes in the Cabinet in the domestic area.

We have now successfully reassured our allies that the United States will stand firm in the face of any threat to our national interest, and convinced potential adversaries that America will aggressively seek out ways to reduce the threat of war.

Therefore I am tonight announcing several personnel changes which I believe will strengthen the Administration in the important area of national security affairs.

I intend to nominate Donald Rumsfeld as my new Secretary of Defense. Don has served with distinction as a Congressman from Illinois, director of the Office of Economic Opportunity, director of the Cost of Living Council and as Ambassador to NATO.

For the past year, he has been my senior White House assistant and a member of my Cabinet. He has the experience and skill needed to help our country maintain a defense capability second to none.

The nation owes Secretary Schlesinger a deep debt of gratitude for his able service to his country as chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, director of the C.I.A. and as Secretary of Defense.

Henry Kissinger has been serving with great distinction and success as Secretary of State and as my assistant for National Security Affairs. Secretary Kissinger will relinquish his post as Assistant to the President to devote his full time to his important responsibilities as Secretary of State.

Brent Scowcroft who has been serving ably for three years as deputy assistant at the White House will move up to Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs.

For the past year George Bush has been U.S. representative to the People's Republic of China. He has served with great skill as a Congressman and as Ambassador to the United Nations. It is my intention to nominate Ambassador Bush to be Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. The C.I.A. is one of our nation's most important institutions. In recent months it has been the focus of some controversy. During this difficult period, Bill Colby, as Director of the C.I.A., has done an outstanding job of working with the Congress to look into and to correct any abuses that may have occurred in the past while maintaining an effective foreign intelligence capability.

Mr. Richard Chaney who has been serving effectively as deputy assistant will replace Don Rumsfeld as Assistant to the President and will take over his responsibilities for coordinating the White House staff.

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Conference on Domestic and Foreign Matters

In a separate area—I have one additional personal announcement to make. Some weeks ago Secretary of Commerce Rogers Morton indicated to me that after the first of the year he would like to reduce the pace of his activities and resign his current position to return to the private sector.

Rodge Morton has served with great distinction in the Congress and in two Cabinet posts for the last five years. He has earned the respect of Americans everywhere. He has a long and close personal friend. I am deeply grateful for his valuable service and I will be calling on his assistance in the future.

Elliot Roosevelt . . . eh . . . Richardson will be nominated to become Secretary of Commerce. An able former Secretary of Defense, Secretary of H.E.W. and Attorney General, Mr. Richardson is presently serving as our Ambassador to Great Britain. I know he will do an important job in his new assignment.

I hope that the Senate will move rapidly to confirm my nominees for these positions which require confirmation.

Now to the questions.

QUESTIONS

1. Rockefeller Decision

Q. Thank you, Mr. President, for your rundown on the personnel changes. There's been one other personnel change, or suggested change, today. And I wonder, in your estimation, Mr. President, has the Vice President by his action today sacrificed himself on your political behalf? And have you in any way urged him to do so?

A. The decision by Vice President Rockefeller was a decision on his own. He made the decision and delivered to me personally the letter that has now been published.

The Vice President has done a superb job and will continue to do so in the months ahead. But under no circumstances was it a request by me; it was a decision by him.

Q. Mr. President, a follow-up question: would you accept Governor Reagan or former Governor Connally as your running mate next year?

A. We have a long time, many months, to discuss and think about that matter. I will give it my closest attention, as to my running mate, but we've got lots of time and we'll think about all those alternatives as we move ahead and try to do the business of the Government.

Q. Mr. President, have you any commitment in your conversation with Governor Rockefeller that he will support you in 1976, or might he conceivably go off and seek the job himself?

A. Vice President Rockefeller has assured me categorically that he will support me in 1976.

2. Kissinger's Influence

Q. Mr. President, we're told that not only have there been personnel changes in the area of foreign policy and national security matters but that the

decision-making process has been altered as well, that Secretary Kissinger now will have to share access to you on a regular basis with the new Defense Secretary and with Mr. Bush of C.I.A. This leaves a very strong impression that Secretary Kissinger's influence in both these fields has been substantially reduced. Is that a correct impression?

Let me state it formatively, that Secretary Kissinger has done a superb job as Secretary of State as my Assistant for National Security Affairs. He will continue to handle the responsibilities of a foreign policy which I think has been not only successful but in the best interest of the United States.

There will be organizational changes as I have indicated and there will be closer liaison and cooperation as is necessary as we move ahead. But Secretary Kissinger will have the dominant role in the formulation of and the carrying out of foreign policy.

3. Schlesinger and Colby

Q. Mr. President, could you tell us why Mr. Schlesinger and Mr. Colby did not fit on your new team?

A. I think any President has to have the opportunity to put together his own team. They were kept on when I assumed office because I wanted continuity. But any President to do the job that's needed and necessary has to have his own team in the area of foreign policy.

I believe the team that I have assembled, as I've indicated tonight, will do a first-class job.

4. Attitude in Detente

Q. Mr. President, there are reports though, sir, that Secretary Schlesinger was in conflict with your attitude on detente, and with Secretary Kissinger's. Can you address yourself to that?

There were no basic differences. I wanted a team that I selected. And as President, I think it's important that a President have that kind of a team on an affirmative basis. And I have it. In Secretary Kissinger and in Don Rumsfeld and Brent Scowcroft I've put it on the affirmative side; that they are my choices, and that we can work together effectively to carry out an effective foreign policy.

5. Rockefeller Withdrawal

Q. Mr. President, you've said many times that Vice President Rockefeller along with you made a team that was one you liked, and you've said there was no reason to break up that team. What I want to know is, did you urge him not to withdraw from the race for the Vice-Presidential nomination? A. The Vice President came to me and indicated that what he said in the letter was his decision and I accepted it.

Q. One other question on the Vice-Presidential race. Does the nomination of Donald Rumsfeld as Defense Secretary and the nomination of Mr. Bush as C.I.A. Director—does that eliminate them as Vice-Presidential running-mate possibilities?

A. They are first-class public officials, they have important responsibilities, I don't think they're eliminated from consideration by anybody. The delegates to the convention or myself.

6. Foreign Policy Influence

Q. Could you be more specific and tell us exactly how the appointment of Mr. Rumsfeld and Mr. Bush to their new posts will strengthen your team in the area of foreign affairs?

A. Well, I've indicated that Secretary Bush . . . Ambassador Bush had been an ambassador to the United Nations for two years, he's been in China better than a year, he's a man of experience, in public life as a member of Congress and Don Rumsfeld has had excellent service in the Congress. He has been in the White House for 14 months, he was in NATO . . . Don Rumsfeld has the experience and the kind of working relationship with me that I think will be very helpful.

Q. Does this have any specific implication for policy?

I have indicated that in my judgment we have been very successful in the execution of foreign policy on behalf of the United States. We have achieved great success in the Middle East, we've strengthened NATO, we've continued relations on a good basis with the People's Republic of China, we are working with the Soviet Union in certain areas to relieve tension, so the foreign policy of this country is in good hands. But I wanted a team that was my team and this team of Kissinger and Rumsfeld, Bush and Scowcroft gives to me the kind of team that I think can carry out and execute a continuing foreign policy.

A. Let me assure you that my record in the Congress and as Vice President and as President has been one of strength in national security affairs, in international relations. I believe that in our attempts to ease tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States we have achieved a two-way street.

And I believe that the policy that I will follow, the team that I have will continue that policy in the future.

7. Congress and the C. I. A.

Q. Mr. President, would you expect, sir, that the Central Intelligence Agency under Ambassador Bush's tenure would continue to have the same relationship with the Congressional investigation as during Mr. Colby's period in office?

The Central Intelligence Agency will continue its policy of notifying the responsible committees in the Congress as to developments. They've done it in the past, they will continue it in the future.

I can see no change in the relations of the Central Intelligence Agency with the Congress under Mr. Bush different from what they have been under Mr. Colby.

Q. Well, specifically, as the Church committee continues its investigation, your instructions to Mr. Bush would be to cooperate fully with that investigation? A. I have given that word to Mr. Colby. He's carried it out in a very responsible way and Mr. Bush will continue that policy. Mr. Spurling.

8. Decision on Shifts

Q. How do you make a high-level personnel shift at this time, such a fast shift? Did you ask for suggestions or did you do this largely on your own?

I did it totally on my own. It was my decision. I fitted the pieces together,

and they fitted excellently. It was my decision.

Q. For example, would Mr. Rumsfeld, who was involved in your decision, would he have had any input into the over-all decision? A. He did not.

9. Rockefeller Letter

Q. Could you tell us, Mr. President, when you and Mr. Rockefeller first discussed his withdrawal, and what reasons he gave you for it other than what he stated in his letter.

A. The letter speaks for itself. I don't think I should amplify it. And the accompanying statement, which was agreed to between him and myself, indicates our personal views. I don't think we have to go beyond the letter, or the joint statement.

10. Control Over Intelligence

Q. Mr. President. Will these changes that you have made, do you feel, give you any more directly responsive intelligence community than you have had hitherto? In other words, do you feel that you that you are—with putting Mr. Bush and Mr. Rumsfeld in these two important positions give you a more direct control over the intelligence community than it has been previously?

A. Mr. Bush and Don Rumsfeld are long personal friends of mine. I have known of their fine record. I have an excellent relationship with them. I'm certain that they will contribute very significantly.

And these are my guys that I wanted, and I hope and trust that their confirmation will be quick in the United States Senate.

11. Ambassadorial Vacancies

Q. Mr. President, when do you expect to fill the vacancies—the ambassadorship vacancies in London and in Peking—and do you plan any further changes in your campaign committee?

A. We have not addressed the questions of replacement for Mr. Bush or Mr. Richardson, and I have no specific changes in mind at the President Ford Committee. In due time there will be a person to succeed David Packard.

Q. There will be no changes at the top, sir? A. I've indicated what the changes are.

11. Policies on Arms Curb

Q. Mr. President, the Pentagon and Secretary Schlesinger have been less than enthusiastic about the Administration's SALT policies. Can we expect to see an acceleration toward an agreement now that this power shift has occurred?

A. The Defense Department and Secretary Schlesinger and the others were very forthcoming and very strong in endorsing the agreement that I reached at Vladivostok. They wholeheartedly agreed with the decisions to pursue, but not under any pressure, negotiations with the Soviet Union in strategic arms limitation. We have differences. But I think it's in the national interest for us to continue to work toward a SALT II agreement but we're under no time pressure to do so.

Q. But you do see the possibilities for a second-stage agreement then?

A. I think it would be in the national interest if we can get mutual concessions by the Soviet Union on the one hand and by us on the other.

12. Brezhnev Reaction

Q. Mr. President, if you were Mr. Brezhnev, how would you analyze the removal of an American Secretary of State who is known for his advocacy of a strong national defense, possibly a stronger national defense than his rivals in the bureaucracy?

A. I think you said—misstated—Secretary of State at the outset. Right. Well, let me say very emphatically there is no one in this Government more emphatic for a strong national defense and the maintenance of our national security than myself, Secretary Kissinger and Don Rumsfeld and many others who I could mention by name from the top on down.

We believe in strong national defense and we have sought to implement it and we need some more help in the Congress. I won't speculate on what Mr. Brezhnev might feel concerning these changes.

Q. Could you possibly have been in contact with him directly or indirectly to explain what they mean to leave no misunderstanding on his part? A. We have not.

13. Schlesinger Dismissal

Q. With all due respect, sir, you've been talking about your desire to make your own team. But in fact you've replaced half the team; you haven't replaced the other half—Mr. Kissinger and Mr. Scowcroft are merely part of someone else's team you've elected to keep. It seemed to me that you really haven't answered the question: What did Secretary Schlesinger do wrong that you didn't like?

A. I have affirmatively answered the question by saying that I wanted my own team; and I am keeping Secretary Kissinger because I think he has done an outstanding job in the field of foreign policy. I wanted a change in the Defense Department, because I wanted, in that case, a person that I have known and worked with intimately for a long period of time; a person who is experienced in the field of foreign policy, and who served in the Department of Defense as a naval aviator.

The President has the right, and I believe ought to have the team with him that he wants to carry out the policies in the national interest; and the team I have selected will do so.

14. Reagan Challenge

Q. Mr. President. How worried are you about Ronald Reagan?

A. I'm not worried about any competitor, Democratic or Republican.

15. Travel Criticism

Q. Much of the criticism of your travel has been directed at the idea that you are greatly concerned about a challenge from your right and that's why you've been to California three times. I was wondering if you feel that criticism is justified?

A. It's ridiculous. Yes, Tom.

16. China Trip

Q. Mr. President, there have been reports that the China trip is being reduced from a possible five or six days

in China to three or possibly four days. Is that so, and if so, why?

A. For a long period of time, we have had tentative plans to visit the Peoples Republic of China. Secretary of Kissinger was there several weeks ago.

As far as we're concerned, those trip plans are still on and the length of the trip will be decided in the negotiations between Secretary Kissinger and the Foreign Minister of the Peoples Republic. And I don't think there's any significance in the areas that you've raised.

Q. Mr. President, hasn't there been a good deal of debate between Dr. Kissinger, Mr. Rumsfeld and others about the advisability of adding stops to that trip. And haven't the Chinese indicated that they would not be particularly happy if you did add some stops to that trip?

A. As far as I know, the answer to your question is no.

Q. When are we going to get an announcement . . .

Q. Mr. President?

A. Yes.

16. Scowcroft Role

Q. Several members of the Senate are concerned that Secretary Kissinger still will have total domination of foreign policy in part because your National Security Advisor, Gen. Scowcroft, is regarded as a Kissinger man. How do you answer that criticism? A. I have known Brent Scowcroft intimately for the last 14 months. I have been tremendously impressed with his experience and capabilities. I know that he speaks an independent mind—I know it personally—so I don't think that that criticism is valid.

Q. Can you explain what you mean when you say that Secretary Kissinger will have a dominant role in the foreign policy say? A. Well, as Secretary of State that's his responsibility.

17. Rumsfeld Role

Q. In the military role, will Mr. Rumsfeld have a dominant role? A. That's the responsibility of the Secretary of Defense.

19. New York Default

Q. Mr. President, on another subject, if I may, sir. Are you still convinced that the City of New York does not have to default, and if so do you plan to call Mayor Beame and Governor Carey here to tell them the reasons why you think New York can avoid default?

A. I believe that New York City can avoid default. They can take stronger action than they have taken. I believe the State of New York can take stronger action to be of assistance to the City of New York. This is a matter that can be, with forthright action, taken care of in the city or the city with the cooperation of the state. I hope they will, and if they don't I believe then the proper action to be taken is that which I publicly stated last Wednesday.

Q. In the event that they do not, Mr. President, are you still convinced that there will be no domino effect on the American and the world's financial market?

A. Absolutely. I have verified that with a number of experts with and without the Government. And there is no probability, no serious probability, that there will be any national repercussions and I'm convinced that the market has already discounted the possibility of any financial problems in New York City and I think the actions of the last three or four days verify that correct assumption.

20. Scott and China

Q. Mr. President, there are persistent reports that Hugh Scott is under consideration for appointment to Peking. Can you say if you are thinking about him?

A. As I said a moment ago, we haven't thought about replacements for George Bush and Elliot Richardson. I

can say this, that Hugh Scott is a great student of Chinese culture and history. He's been to China on a number of occasions. But I have not had an opportunity to focus in on the replacement for Mr. Bush.

21. Rockefeller Decision

Q. Mr. President, did Vice President Rockefeller decide to step aside either because of differing views with you over the New York financial situation or to give you a greater degree of maneuverability as you move politically toward the nomination?

A. Our differences over the handling of New York City are minimal as I said once before. The difference is his interpretation of what might be the money market reaction, if and when New York City defaults. Those differences are a matter of judgment. Certainly he did not take the action that he did because of that difference. I think the letter speaks for itself. And I greatly respect his judgment, in all matters, and I've been proud to have him on the team and he'll continue to do a first-class job in many important responsibilities.

Q. Does that mean, sir, that he did decide to step aside in order to give you a greater degree of maneuverability? The letter does not explain why he . . . A. I think he'll have to answer that. I think the letter in effect answers your question but if you want to pursue it further, you should do it with him.

23. President's Mood

Q. We were told this morning after your meeting with Mr. Rockefeller that you were in an exceptionally good mood. Could you. . . . A. I've been a good mood all day.

Q. . . . suggests perhaps a feeling of relief. I wonder if you could tell us, in your own words, what your feelings are now, and were then?

A. I believe that the decisions that I have made, and the announcements that I have made officially, give to me the people and the team and the organizational structure to continue to carry out an affirmative, successful foreign policy on a global basis; and to keep our national security forces second to none.

I therefore feel very pleased with the acceptance on the part of individuals for these new responsibilities. They're important—not for me, but primarily for the country.

24. Campaign Resignation

Q. Mr. President. You recently have had two resignations—A. Now don't make a speech, Paul.

Q. No sir. You recently have had two resignations from your campaign committee and some of your aides have said you're having problems in your primary organization, especially in New Hampshire and perhaps Florida. I was wondering, is your campaign in trouble? A. I don't think it is. I was in Florida yesterday and talked to Lou Fry. He's very encouraged.

We have some very encouraging news about the organization in New Hampshire. I'm very happy about it.

25. Election Optimism

Q. Could you tell me, please, the basis for your optimism going into the election? I mean, why are you confident that you will not only be your party's nominee, beating Reagan, and why you'll beat the Democrats?

A. You couldn't have asked a better question, Wally. I'm happy and I'm optimistic about the nomination and the election because I am convinced the American people feel that we've been successful in foreign policy, the Middle East, Europe, etc. I'm convinced that we're well on the road to a good economic situation in 1976, so when you combine peace and prosperity, any incumbent President ought to be very happy.

26. Talks With Sadat

Q. Mr. President. You'll be conclud-

ing talks with Egyptian President Sadat on Wednesday. Can you tell us whether the President will be going home with a commitment or what he thinks is a commitment for future military aid for his country?

A. The final decisions in these areas will be made on Wednesday and properly announced. We've had very successful negotiations, but I think it's premature for me to make any announcement at this time on those matters.

27. Potential Running Mates

Q. Mr. President. With Vice President Rockefeller out of the picture for '76, you've indicated that you don't want to give us a name tonight, but maybe you'd give us some kind of an idea as to what kind of qualities you'll be looking for in your Vice-Presidential running mate. Specifically, are there any parameters with regard to age, political philosophy, what region of the country he comes from?

A. There'll be plenty of time for me to think about and discuss with others the answer to the question that you've asked, and it's certainly premature for me to make any comment at this time in that very important area.

28. Position on New York

Q. Mr. President, in addition to the differences you mentioned between yourself and Vice President Rockefeller, did he talk to you at all about the effect of your position against aid to New York and other cities on your campaign for next year? A. He has not.

29. Foreign Policy Roles

Q. Mr. President, you gave no indication of exactly what you were unhappy with in terms of the dual roles of Secretary Kissinger. He has stated publicly that he considered the dual roles of great importance to the execution of foreign policy. A. I indicated that the team I put together will affirmatively satisfy the way I want an organizational structure set up. That's the way I wanted it, that's the way it is, and I think it'll work effectively.

Q. A question in that regard, Mr. President, is that there have been charges that the Secretary is stretched too thin, or that by having the dual roles he is able to have an undue influence over the course of foreign policy. Were those problems?

A. I don't like to answer speculative comments or rumors. I have done what I did because I as President wanted the organization and the people that I have selected. That's the answer to the question.

29. 15-Month Period

Q. Mr. President, why has it taken you 15 months to form your team and set up your structure, why has it taken you 15 months to form your team and set up your structure in national security and foreign affairs?

A. I felt it was very important at the outset because of the unusual circumstances under which I became President to have continuity, to have stability in the area of national security and foreign policy—that was absolutely essential—and as a result of that we continued a successful foreign policy. As time went on I felt that in this area once we had confirmed with our allies our assurances, once we had confirmed with our potential adversaries that we were in a position to continue a relaxation of tensions, that then I should select without any rupture of those relations the kind of people, the individuals, that I wanted to work with very, very intimately. And I have so selected.

Q. May I follow up with a slightly repetitious question? Are you saying and intending to be understood to say that neither personal nor policy differences between Dr. Kissinger and Mr. Schlesinger contributed to this change? A. That is correct. Thank you very much.