

Transcript of the President's News

Special to The New York Times

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

QUESTIONS

Won't you be seated, please. Miss Thomas has the first question tonight.

1. U.S. Policy on Vietnam

Q. Mr. President, a question about Vietnam. Our recent air strikes have raised speculation that our policy of not bombing North Vietnam may be undergoing a subtle change. What is our policy? Also, despite the objection by the Saigon Government and the Vietcong, do you plan to proposed a unilateral cease-fire from Christmas through Tet in a bid for peace?

A. Let me answer the second part of the question first. We are prepared to have cease-fires on a limited basis over the holiday seasons.

As you know, the North Vietnamese have turned down any extended cease-fire over the holiday seasons out of hand.

We, of course, could not have any extended cease-fire unilaterally, because that would be very dangerous for our forces. If it's a brief cease-fire, we will do it. If it's extended, we will not.

With regard to the second part of your question, the bombing of North Vietnam: You may recall that, a few weeks ago, there was bombing of installations in North Vietnam, after the North Vietnamese had fired on some of our unarmed reconnaissance planes.

Now, there's been, I note, some speculation in the press and also some charges from North Vietnam that there is no understanding that reconnaissance planes are to fly over North Vietnam since the bombing halt was announced.

I want to be very sure that that understanding is clear. First, President Johnson said there was such an understanding at the time of the bombing halt. Secretary Clifford did. And Ambassador Vance did.

But if there is any misunderstanding, I want to indicate the understanding of this President with regard to the flying of reconnaissance planes over North Vietnam.

I must insist that there be continued reconnaissance over North Vietnam because, as we are withdrawing our forces, I have to see whether or not there's any chance of a strike against those forces that remain. And we have to watch for the build-up.

If our planes are fired upon, I will not only order that they return the fire, but I will order that the missile site be destroyed and that the military complex around that site which supports it also be destroyed by bombing.

That is my understanding.

Beyond that, there is another understanding with regard to the bombing of North Vietnam which at a number of these press conferences, and in my speech on Nov. 3, and in four televised speeches to the nation last year, I have stated. I restate it again tonight.

At a time that we are withdrawing from North Vietnam—from South Vietnam, it is vitally important that the President of the United States, as Commander in Chief, take the action that is necessary to protect our remaining forces, because the number of our ground combat forces is going down very, very steadily.



The New York Times (by Mike Lien)

President Nixon at his news conference last night in Washington

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Conference on Foreign

and Domestic Matters

Now, if, as a result of my conclusion that the North Vietnamese by their infiltration threaten our remaining forces—if they thereby develop a capacity and proceed possibly to use that capacity to increase the level of fighting in South Vietnam—then I will order the bombing of military sites in North Vietnam, the passes that lead from North Vietnam into South Vietnam, the military complexes and the military supply lines.

That will be the reaction I shall take. I trust that that is not necessary, but let there be no misunderstanding with regard to this President's understanding about either reconnaissance flights or about a step-up of the activities.

2. Changes in Cabinet

Q. Are you contemplating any further changes in your Cabinet and, if so, why change the line-ups at half-time or, depending on what happens in '72, at the end of the first quarter?

A. It seems we are in the football season pretty genuinely tonight. First, with regard to changes in the Cabinet, one has already been named, made for reasons that I have already indicated. As far as other changes, I have none to announce tonight. I will announce tonight, however, two, I think important, additions to the Administration.

The first, Mr. Rumsfeld is coming into the White House as a counselor to the President on a full-time basis and Mr. Frank Carlucci will take over as the director of O.E.O.

He is his deputy and has done an outstanding job in that particular position, and I believe in promoting a man who has done such a job to the top spot.

Mr. George Bush, the Congressman who was defeated in his bid for the United States Senate, I talked to yesterday and I'm very happy to report that he has agreed to take a top position in the Administration. That will be announced tomorrow at Mr. Ziegler's 11 o'clock conference. Mr. Bush will be there.

I don't mean that we didn't want to give you the break, Mr. Cormier, but all of the arrangements haven't quite been finished.

3. Actions by F.B.I. Chief

Q. Mr. President, as a lawyer and as his immediate superior, do you approve of the following actions of F.B.I. Director J. Edgar Hoover? One accusation which has been made public—accusing two men of conspiring to kidnap Government officials and/or blow up Government buildings as an antiwar action before any formal charges had been made and a trial could be arranged for those gentlemen. And continuing to call the late Martin Luther King a liar. Do you approve of those actions?

A. I have often been asked about my opinion of Mr. Hoover. I believe that he has rendered very great service to this country. I generally approve of the action that he has taken. I'm not going to go into any of the specific actions that you may be asking about tonight with

regard to the testimony, for example, that you referred to. The Justice Department is looking into that testimony that Mr. Hoover has given and will take appropriate action if the facts justify it.

4. Position on Hickel

Q. Mr. President, considering the rather broad national interest in some of former Secretary Hickel's views, I wonder if you would elaborate for us exactly what he did to lose your confidence and what you expect the new Interior Secretary to do that Mr. Hickel failed to do.

A. The problem of confidence, where you have a Cabinet team or a board of directors, is something that can't really be described that precisely. And there are numbers of things that occur that determine whether or not that confidence is going to continue to exist.

In this instance, I thought that when I appointed Mr. Hickel that we would have that mutual confidence that is essential between a President and a Cabinet officer.

There were some—certain things that happened during the course of his stewardship in which I think I lost confidence in him and perhaps he lost confidence in me.

Under the circumstances I thought a change was right.

I have great admiration for him. I think he rendered sincere service. I wish him the very best.

I just didn't want to discriminate against the other network.

5. Divisions in the Nation

Q. Mr. President, another question about confidence, if I may, involving you. There seems to be a feeling in some quarters, not just among blacks and students but also among some of your natural Republican allies, some voters, and, certainly, as you may have noticed, some columnists, that you have yet to convey a sufficiently sharp and clear sense of direction, vision and leadership on many matters to end the divisions in this country as you said you hoped to do two years ago and as your own Scranton Commission on Campus Unrest has urged you to do. Do you recognize this as a problem for yourself and for the country and, if so, what can you do about it and what will you do about it?

A. Well, Mr. Semple, it is, of course, a problem, but I should emphasize that divisions in this country are never going to end—there's always going to be a generation gap and there's always going to be differences between the races and between the religions.

The problem is trying to mute those differences, to mitigate them to the greatest extent possible and to develop a dialogue.

I think we've made some progress in that respect—not as much as I would like. I'm concerned about our relations with youth. I do believe that as we make progress in bringing the war in Vietnam to a close, as we are making it—I was glad to note, or example, that the casualties this week were down to 27, which was a fourth of what they were a year ago and an eighth of what they were two years ago. One is too many, but that's an improvement.

As we end the war, I think that will help some with youth, as the Scranton Committee did indicate. In the other areas, I trust we can give that sense of direction that you refer to and I particularly hope I can give it to the columnists. I want them to have a sense of direction, too.

6. Progress in Peace Talks

Q. Mr. President, does what you said a while ago about bombing of North Vietnam, and indications we've had from other officials of probably more raids to try to free American prisoners—does all that mean that you have abandoned hope for the Paris peace talks to reach a negotiated settlement?

A. Not at all. We're continuing those talks. As you note today, Ambassador Bruce made an offer, which refined the offer we had made earlier of a complete exchange of all prisoners of war. He offered to exchange, upon the part of both the United States and South Vietnam, 8,200 North Vietnamese that we

have prisoner for approximately 800 Americans and other allied prisoners that they had. That's a 10-to-1 ratio, but we're willing to do that.

Their failure to accept that offer will pinpoint something that is pretty generally getting known around the world, and that is that this nation is an international outlaw, that it does not adhere to the rules of international conduct. But we are going to continue the negotiations as long as they are willing to negotiate and as long as there's some hope to make progress in the prisoner issue, or on a cease-fire and an earlier end to the war than the Vietnamization process will inevitably bring.

7. Secret Report on SST

Q. Mr. President, you've had at least two reports on the supersonic transport prepared at your direction. Both of those reports have been kept secret. Now a group of conservationists and others are in court asking that one of these reports be made public and the Attorney General is arguing against this, trying to keep this document kept secret. I'm wondering if you could tell us why the public should not know what is in that report, in view of the fact that you support the continuing expenditure of hundreds of millions of dollars.

A. I have no objection to the substance of reports being made public. The problem here is that, when reports are prepared for the President, they are supposed to be held in confidence. And some of those who participate in the making of those reports have that assurance.

Now, with regard to the SST, I have satisfied myself, after long deliberation and considering both of these reports, that the arguments with regard to the environment could be met, that this prototype should be built.

8. News Conferences

Q. Mr. President, a year or so ago you told us you thought you ought to have a news conference when it was of public interest, not just in your interest or in the press's. Do you or do you not feel that sufficient public interest developed to justify a news conference before the four months since the last one?

A. Mr. Kaplow, I've noted with interest that several members of the press corps have indicated a desire for more news conferences. And let me be quite candid as to what I feel about this.

Incidentally, I was prepared for this question.

What is involved here is not just 150,000 jobs which will be lost if we don't build it, not just the fact that billions of dollars in foreign exchange will be lost if we do not build it, but what is lost here is the fact that the United States of America, which has been first in the world in commercial aviation from the time of the Wright brothers, decides not just to be second, but not even to show.

Now, not out of any sense of jingoism but because this plane is going to be built, because it's going to bring, for example, Asia—not only Japan but China in the last third of this century—three hours from the West Coast to Asia—I think the United States should build it, and I believe that we can answer the arguments of the conservationists.

First, I believe that I have a responsibility to members of the press. I go by that press building of yours about 11:30 at night from the E.O.B. I see most of you still working there.

I, as President, have a responsibility to help you do your job. But I, as President, also have a primary responsibility to do my job.

Now, my job is, among other things, to inform the American people. Now, one of the ways to inform them is through a press conference like this.

Another way is through making reports to the nation, as I did on several occasions about the war in Southeast Asia.

Another is an interview—an hour's interview with the three anchor men of the three networks, which mainly dealt, as you may recall, upon Southeast Asia.

I feel that all of these are useful ways

to inform the American people. I think the American people are entitled to see the President and to hear his views directly, and not to see him only through the press. And I think any member of the press would agree with that.

However, I would certainly be open to suggestions from members of the press as to how we could make better use of news conferences without dominating the television too much. Because I would recall to you that one network early this summer decided that it would be necessary to give opposition to the President's policy—opponents to the President's policy—equal time because he was on television too much.

And, so, consequently, the televised press conference, perhaps, should be limited. Perhaps we need more conferences in the office, perhaps more one-on-one, perhaps more—someone suggested a television conference which, instead of the anchor men, we have three of the top columnists. But you make the vote. I won't select it.

9. Troops for Cambodia

Q. Mr. President, Secretary Rogers assured the Senate Foreign Relations Committee today that there is no present intention of ever using American ground forces in Cambodia. Can you foresee any circumstances whatever under which we would use ground troops in Cambodia? A. None whatever.

10. Economic Policy

Q. With unemployment and inflation rising, do you think it's fair to say that your economic policies have not worked, and do you plan any quick changes?

A. I believe our economic policies are working. First, we've cooled off the inflation. It is beginning to recede—the rate of inflation. Second, we are now moving into the second half of our plan of expanding our fiscal policy and that, together with an expanded monetary supply, we believe will move the economy up.

I should point out, too, that when we speak of the problem we have to keep it in context. It's interesting to note that the unemployment for this year will come out at 4.9 per cent. When we look at that figure, a rate of 4.9 per cent, we see that that is lower than any peacetime year in the sixties. In 1960, 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964, unemployment was always over 5 per cent.

Now, in answering the question that way, I want to say I'm not satisfied that that is as good as we can do. I believe that we can have a lower rate of unemployment than 5 per cent without war, which is the only time we had a lower rate of unemployment without—in the sixties—was at a time that we had it with war. That is our goal. I think we can achieve it.

11. Integration in Housing

Q. Mr. President, concerning Governor Romney's plan, to what extent does the Federal Government use its leverage to promote racial integration in suburban housing?

A. Only to the extent that the law requires. In two cases, as a result of acts passed by the Congress, that the Federal Government not provide aid to housing or to urban renewal where a community has a policy of discrimination and has taken no steps to remove it.

On the other hand, I can assure that it is not the policy of this Government to use the power of the Federal Government or Federal funds in any other way, in ways not required by the law, for forced integration of the suburbs. I believe that forced integration in the suburbs is not in the national interest.

12. Rights of Defendants

Q. Mr. President, at a previous news conference you said that what happened at Mylai was a massacre. On another occasion, you said that Charles Manson is guilty. On another occasion you mentioned Angelas Davis by name and then said that those responsible for such acts of terror will be brought to justice. My question concerns the problem of pretrial publicity and the fact that it could jeopardize a defendant's rights at a trial. How do you reconcile your comments with your status as a lawyer?

A. I think that's a legitimate criticism. I think sometimes we lawyers, even like doctors who try to prescribe for themselves, may make mistakes. And I think that kind of comment probably is unjustified.

Let's go to the left now. Mr. Warren.

13. View on Election Issues

Q. Mr. President, in retrospect, do you think that the Republican emphasis on the law-and-order issue paid dividends, and in the future, looking to '72, what do you think will be the big issue then?

A. Mr. Warren, I really expected a lot more questions on the 1970 elections than we've had tonight. But let me answer that one by saying, first, that I feel that it is my responsibility as President to do everything that I can to work for the election of men who will help support me in keeping the pledges that I made to the American people when I ran for President.

I did everything that I could in 1970, to the best of my ability, to meet that responsibility. And after the election I commented upon the election and gave my views on it, views which differed from some of those here in this room.

Having done that, however, it is now my responsibility, now that the people have spoken, to work with those men and those women elected by the people in 1970. And I can only hope that, in the year 1971, Democrats and Republicans will work with the President in a policy to bring an end to the war, in bringing our economy ahead, in holding down inflation, in moving on such great programs as the health program, which will be one of the highest priority programs I will submit.

14. Third-Party Candidates

Q. Mr. President, to follow up on the 1970 campaign, in light of what has generally been considered to be purging Senator Goodell of New York, is it likely that you and the Administration will support third-party candidates in other states against Republican nominees who may disagree with some major points of your policies? A. Under no circumstances.

15. Consultation on Sontag

Q. Mr. President, on related matters involving the Congress, you've been

charged repeatedly that you do not consult enough with members of Congress, and the most recent example was the raid on Sontag. Wonder if you might specifically answer the charge as to why you did not consult the members of Congress as the raid was occurring or immediately thereafter, when all the men were safe?

A. The reason that we did not consult with the members of Congress as the raid was occurring or before it was, of course, because of the high risk involved of the men who were participating.

And as far as the information was concerned afterwards, there was a period of time in which it was felt that the full information should be given to the country at a later time.

I believe that when we look at the record here, all of the information with regard to the raid has been completely put out—there's been no attempt to withhold anything. It was a very brave attempt. I'm very proud of the men who participated in it. I regret that it did not succeed. But I think that it gave hope to the men who were there, and I think it also gave a great deal of hope to their wives who were here.

16. Wage-Price Guidelines

Q. Mr. President, back to the economy for a moment. At your first news conference, you ruled out exhorting, to use your word, labor and management to follow certain guidelines, saying that they would follow their organization's desires in any case. Now, since then, you've taken some small steps toward bringing Presidential influence to bear on wages and prices through the inflation alert and the steps you took the other night in your N.A.M. speech. In the light of that, do you consider your initial remarks about wage-price guidelines a mistake in controlling inflation?

A. Mr. Lisagor, I consider that at the time I made the first statement it would not have been proper for me, as President of the United States, to urge labor and management to restrain their price increases and their wage demands at a time that Government was the major culprit in contributing to inflation. But, now that Government has done its part in holding down the budget, and a restricted monetary policy, now it is time for labor and management to quit betting on inflation and to start help fighting inflation. I think it's a question of timeliness.

17. Soviet Role in Caribbean

Q. Mr. President, do you think that United States security is threatened at all by Soviet military activity in the Caribbean, including the submarine base in Cuba? A. No, I do not.

18. U.S. Policy in Mideast

Q. Mr. President. Sir, does it remain United States policy in the Middle East that Israel must withdraw from all occupied Arab territories, excepting what Secretary Rogers called any substantial alterations?

A. Well, the policy is based basically on the '67 U.N. resolution. Now, that's a matter for negotiation, and to be more precise than that I do not think would be helpful at this time. I would only say that the cease-fire should continue, that I trust that we get the legislation through for the supplemental—not only there but for Southeast Asia—so that we can keep the balance of powder in that part of the world so that the parties involved on both sides will be willing to negotiate, and that eventually they start talking.

19. Aid for Cambodia

Q. Mr. President, how do you plan to keep your quarter-billion-dollar aid program for Cambodia from escalating into a guarantee of survival of the Cambodian Government?

A. The quarter-billion-dollar aid program for Cambodia is in my opinion probably the best investment in foreign assistance that the United States has made in my political lifetime. The Cambodians, a people seven million only, neutralist previously, untrained, are tying down 40,000 trained North Vietnamese regulars. If those North Vietnamese weren't in Cambodia, they'd be over killing Americans. That investment of \$250-million in small arms and aid to Cambodia, so that they can defend themselves against a foreign aggressor—this is no civil war, there's no aspects of a civil war—the dollars we sent to Cambodia save American lives and enables us to bring Americans home. And I only hope the Congress approves it.

20. Position on Trade Bill

Q. You said in July that you would veto any trade bill that came to you that went beyond what you yourself had asked for in the way of quotas—import quotas—and you would ask only for taxing import quotas. Is that still your position now?

A. I stated my position on the trade bill, as you may recall, in a letter to the Senate leadership. I believe that the kind of a bill that we should have is one that is limited to textile quotas. I believe that the addition of shoes, for example, or a basket clause which might require the addition of other items would lose us more jobs than it would save, while the textile quotas will save jobs and insofar as any actions we have with the Japanese will not do so. That's the reason for my position.

21. Report on Campus Unrest

Q. Mr. President, the Scranton Commission on campus unrest was mentioned earlier, and that report was turned in quite some long time ago and we haven't had your description of it, although I think Vice President Agnew has called it pabulum for permissiveness. How do you describe it?

A. Well, I've read it, and it's certainly not pabulum. Of course, they didn't have pabulum when I was a baby, so I wouldn't know what it tasted like, but I can only say that I read the Scranton Committee report. I have written to Governor Scranton. In fact, the letter went off last night or early this morning, and it will be released as soon as he informs Mr. Ziegler that he has received it, and that states my views in detail on the report.

22. U.S.-Soviet Relations

Q. Mr. President, are you concerned, Mr. President, there may be any serious deterioration in United States-Soviet relations as reflected in the progress on

SALT talks, Big Four Berlin talks this week?

A. I'd noted the speculation to the effect that United States-Soviet relations, something they're warmer and sometimes they're cooler. I would only suggest that United States-Soviet relations are going to continue to be difficult, but the significant thing is that we are negotiating and not confronting. We're talking at SALT. We're very far apart because our vital interests are involved, but we are talking. And our vital interests—the interests of both the Soviet Union and the United States—require that we have some limitation on arms, both because of the cost and because of the danger of a nuclear confrontation.

And so it is with Berlin and so it is with the Mideast. I'm not suggesting that we're going to find easy agreement, because we are two great powers that are going to continue to be competitive for our lifetime. But I believe that we must continue on the path of negotiation, and in my long talk with Mr. Gromyko I think there are some other areas where we can negotiate.

23. One-Term Presidency

Q. Mr. President, would you comment on the emergence of Democratic aspirants for the Presidency in '72 and speculation that you might be a one-term President? A. I think I'll let them speculate about the one-term Presidency.

24. Policy Toward China

Q. Mr. President, since the United Nations vote on China, have you found it expedient for the United States to re-view our policy towards mainland China?

A. No, our policy wouldn't be based on expediency, it would be based on principle. We have no plans to change our policy with regard to the admission of Red China to the United Nations at this time. However, we are going to continue the initiative that I had begun—an initiative of relaxing trade restrictions and travel restrictions and attempting to open channels of communication with Communist China, having in mind the fact that looking long toward the future we must have some communication and eventually relations with Communist China.

25. Problem of Defectors

Q. Could you tell us your personal view on the defector problems of this Lithuanian who was beaten on the Coast Guard cutter?

A. Well, as I have already indicated, I was, as an American, outraged and shocked that this could happen. I regret that the procedures, the Coast Guard informing the White House, were not adequate to bring the matter to my attention. I can assure you it will never happen again.

The United States of America for 190 years has had a proud tradition of providing opportunities for refugees. And guaranteeing their safety. And we are going to meet that tradition.

26. Rate of Pullout in Asia

Q. Mr. President, you mentioned several times tonight when we bring the war to a close. Is the war going to be over by 1972, for example? How many Americans are going to be in Vietnam by '72?

A. I am not going to indicate the rate of withdrawal of Americans as long as we are still negotiating in Paris. Indicating the rate of withdrawal, indicating when the Vietnamization program will be concluded would completely destroy any reason to continue the Paris negotiations. The Paris negotiations have not produced results. We do not have great hopes for them at this time. But we are going to continue to try in that line, and as long as we're negotiating there, I'm not going to indicate a withdrawal schedule.

27. Dissent in Administration

Q. Mr. President. In the light of the firing of Secretary Hickel and the Goodell case, could you tell us how much dissent you will tolerate in your Administration and in the Republican Party?

A. I have always felt that it was very important for a party that was basically a minority party to be as united as it possibly could be particularly as we go into a national election. And I can only say, as I implied rather strongly in answer to an earlier question, that I personally expect to support all of those Republicans who may be running for the United States Senate in 1972, if they want my support. And some of them are as you know members of what is called the Liberal wing of the party. But they are Republicans. We welcome them. We want them. We need both.

Q. Mr. President, do you feel, do you feel that you could approve the . . .

A. He was up first.

28. Trade Bill and Japan

Q. Thank you, sir. Do you feel you could approve it in the form that's been approved by the Senate Finance Committee and also in a related issue, sir, do you feel there's any progress being made in the textile talks with the Japanese?

A. Some progress is being made. It is not as hopeless today as it was yesterday, for example, but I'm not satisfied with the progress.

As far as the forum is concerned, I do not want to say what I will do about the bill as long as it is still before the Senate. I have indicated clearly the kind of a bill I want. It should be limited to the textile quotas. It should be limited also in terms of the basket clause and the other items because I emphasize this point: the key question is jobs, and it's all well and good to apply a quota that's going to save jobs in America, but it doesn't make sense if it's going to cost us more jobs in America because of cutting down the exports that we make abroad.

CLOSING STATEMENT

I guess Mr. Cormier says that's all we have. I want to say in conclusion that Mrs. Nixon told me I had to make the last statement tonight. I understand I am to invite all the members of the White House press corps and your families to the annual Christmas party on the 23d of December, and she says there's some new lights that all the children will like to see. Thank you.