

Transcript of President Nixon's News

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

OPENING STATEMENT

Ladies and gentlemen, before going to your questions, I have a statement with regard to the Mideast which I think will anticipate some of the questions because this will update the information which is breaking rather fast in that area, as you know, for the past two days.

The cease-fire is holding. There have been some violations, but generally speaking it can be said that it is holding at this time.

As you know, as a result of the U.N. resolution, which was agreed to yesterday by a vote of 14 to 0, a peacekeeping force will go to the Mideast, and this force, however, will not include any forces from the major powers including, of course, the United States and Soviet Union.

The question, however, has arisen to whether observers from major powers could go to the Mideast. My up-to-the-minute report on that—and I just talked to Dr. Kissinger five minutes before coming down—is this: We will send observers to the Mideast if requested by the Secretary General of the United Nations, and we have reason to expect that we will receive such a request.

With regard to the peace-keeping force I think it's important for all of you ladies and gentlemen and particularly for those listening on radio and television to know why the United States has insisted that major powers not be part of the peacekeeping force and that major powers not introduce military forces into the Mideast.

Soviet Plan Cited

A very significant and potentially explosive crisis developed on Wednesday of this week. We obtained information which led us to believe that the Soviet Union was planning to send a very substantial force in the Mideast—a military force.

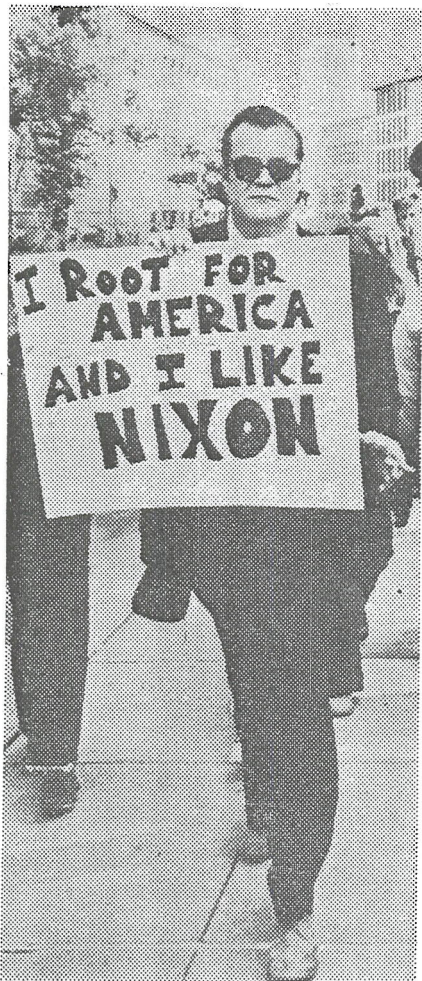
When I received that information, I ordered shortly after midnight on Thursday morning, a alert for all American forces around the world. This was a precautionary alert. The purpose of that was to indicate to the Soviet Union that we could not accept any unilateral move on their part to move military forces into the Mideast.

At the same time, in the early morning hours, I also proceeded on the diplomatic front in a message to Mr. Brezhnev—an urgent message—I indicated to him our reasoning and I urged that we not proceed along that course and that instead that we join in the United Nations in supporting a resolution which would exclude any major powers from participating in a peace-keeping force. As a result of that communication and the return that I received from Brezhnev—we had several urgent exchanges, I should say—we reached the conclusion that we would jointly support the Resolution which was adopted in the United Nations.

'Critical Time'

We now come, of course, to the critical time in terms of the future of the Mideast and here the outlook is far more hopeful than what we have been through this past week.

I think I could safely say that the chances for not just a cease-fire which we presently have and which of course we have had in the Mideast for some time, but the outlook for a permanent peace is the best that it has been in 20 years.



Associated Press

One of a number of demonstrators outside the White House yesterday.

The reason for this is that the two major powers, the Soviet Union and the United States, have agreed—this was one of the results of Dr. Kissinger's trip to Moscow—have agreed that we would participate in trying to expedite the talks between the parties involved.

That does not mean that the two major powers will impose a settlement. It does, mean, however, that we will use our influence with the nations in the area to expedite a settlement.

The reason we feel this is important is that, first, from the standpoint of the nations in the Mideast, none of them—Israel, Egypt, Syria—none of them can or should go through the agony of another war.

The losses in this war on both sides have been very, very high, and the tragedy must not occur again. There have been four of these wars, as you ladies and gentlemen know, over the past 20 years.

But beyond that it is vitally important to the peace of the world that this potential trouble spot, which is really one of the most potentially explosive areas in the world, that it not become an area in which the major powers come together in confrontation.

Confrontation Not Wanted

What the developments of this week should indicate to all of us is that the United States and the Soviet Union who admittedly have very different objectives in the Mideast have now agreed that it is not in their interest to have a confrontation there, a confrontation which might lead to a nuclear confrontation. And neither of the two major powers wants that.

We have agreed also that if we are to avoid that it is necessary for us to use our influence more than we have in the past to get the negotiating track moving again, but this time moving to a conclusion—not simply a temporary truce but a permanent peace.

I do not mean to suggest that it is going to come quickly because the parties involved are still rather far apart, but I do say that now there are greater incentives within the area to find a peaceful solution and there are enormous incentives as far as the United States is concerned and the Soviet Union and other major powers to find such a solution.

And there are enormous incentives as far as the United States is concerned and the Soviet Union and other major powers to find such a solution.

Turning now to the subject of our attempts to get a cease-fire on the home front. That's a bit more difficult.

Today, White House counsel contacted Judge Sirica—we tried yesterday but he was in Boston, as you know—and arrangements were made to meet

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with Judge Sirica on Tuesday to work out the delivery of the tapes of Judge Sirica.

Also, in consultations that we've had in the White House today, we have decided that next week the Acting-Attorney General, Mr. Bork, will appoint a new special prosecutor for what is called the Watergate matter. The special prosecutor will have independence, he will have total cooperation from the executive branch and he will have as his primary responsibility to bring this matter which has so long concerned the American people—bring it to an expeditious conclusion.

Because we have to remember that under our Constitution it has always been held that justice delayed is justice denied, it's time for those who are guilty to be prosecuted and for those who are innocent to be cleared. And I can assure you, ladies and gentlemen, and all of our listeners tonight, that I have no greater interest than to see that the new special prosecutor has the cooperation from the executive branch and the independence that he needs to bring about that conclusion.

And I'll go to Mr. Cormier.

QUESTIONS

1. Authority of Prosecutor

Q. Mr. President, would the new special prosecutor have your go-ahead to go to court if necessary to obtain evidence from your files if he felt it was vital?

A. Well, Mr. Cormier, I would anticipate that that would not be necessary. I believe that, as we look at the events which led to the dismissal of Mr. Cox, we find that these are matters that can be worked out and should be worked out in cooperation, and not by having a suit filed by a special prosecutor within the executive branch against the President of the United States.

This, incidentally, is not a new attitude on the part of a President. Every President since George Washington has tried to protect the confidentiality of Presidential conversations, and you remember the famous case involving Thomas Jefferson where Chief Justice Marshall, then sitting as a trial judge, subpoenaed a letter which Jefferson had written which Marshall thought or felt was necessary evidence in the trial of Aaron Burr. Jefferson refused to do so, but it did not result in a suit. What happened was, of course, a compromise in which a summary of the contents of the letter which was relevant to the trial was produced by Jefferson and the Chief Justice of the United States, acting in his capacity as Chief Justice, accepted that.

That is exactly, of course, what we tried to do in this instant case, I think it would be well if I could take just a moment, Mr. Cormier, in answering your question, to point out what we tried to do and why we feel it was a proper solution to a very aggravating and difficult problem.

The matter of the tapes has been one that has concerned me because of my feeling that I have a constitutional responsibility to defend the office of the Presidency from any encroachments on confidentiality which might affect future Presidents in their abilities to conduct the kind of conversations and discussions they need to conduct to carry on the responsibilities of this office.

And of course the special prosecutor felt that he needed the tapes for the purpose of his prosecution. That was why working with the Attorney General we worked out what we thought was an acceptable compromise—one in which Judge Stennis, now Senator Stennis, would hear the tapes and would provide a complete and full disclosure not only to Judge Sirica but also to the Senate committee.

'I Had No Choice'

Attorney General Richardson approved this proposition, Senator Baker, Senator Ervin approved of the proposition. Mr. Cox was the only one that rejected it.

Under the circumstances, when he rejected it and indicated that despite the approval of the Attorney General, of course of the President, and of the two major Senators on the Ervin committee, when he rejected the proposal I had no choice but to dismiss him.

Under those circumstances Mr. Richardson, Mr. Ruckelshaus felt that because of the nature of their confirmation that their commitment to Mr. Cox had to take precedence over any commitment they might have to carry out an order from the President. Under those

circumstances, I accepted with regret the resignations of two fine public servants.

Now, we come to a new special prosecutor, we will cooperate with him and I do not anticipate that we will come to the time when he would consider it necessary to take the President to court. I think our cooperation will be adequate.

2. Presidential Documents

Q. This is perhaps another way of asking Frank's question, but if the special prosecutor considers that information contained in Presidential documents is needed to prosecute the Watergate case, will you give him the documents? Beyond the nine tapes which you have already given him.

A. Well I answered that question before. We will not provide Presidential documents to a special prosecutor. We will provide, as we have in great numbers, all kinds of documents from the White House. But if it is a document involving a conversation with the President I would have to stand on the principle of confidentiality. However, information that is needed from such documents would be provided. And that is what we've been trying to do.

3. Opinion in Congress

Q. Mr. President, you know in the Congress there's a great deal of suspicion over any arrangement which will permit the executive branch to investigate itself or which will establish the special prosecutor which you may fire again, and 53 Senators, the majority of these have now co-sponsored a resolution which would permit Judge Sirica to establish and name an independent prosecutor, separate and apart from the White House and the executive branch. Do you believe this arrangement would be constitutional and would you go along with it?

A. Well, I would suggest that the action that we are going to take appointing a special prosecutor would be satisfactory to the Congress and they would not proceed with that particular matter.

4. Prospect of Resignation

Q. Mr. President, I wonder if you could share with us your thoughts, tell us what goes through your mind when you hear of people who love this country and people who believe in you say reluctantly that perhaps you should resign or be impeached?

A. Well, I'm glad we don't take the vote of this room, let me say. And I understand the feelings of people with regard to impeachment and resignation.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Rather, you may remember that when I made the rather difficult decision I thought the most difficult decision of my first term on Dec. 18—the bombing of—by B52's—of North Vietnam—that exactly the same words were used on the networks—I don't mean by you, but they were quoted on the networks—that were used now—tyrant, dictator, he's lost his senses, he should resign, he should be impeached.

But I stuck it out and as a result of that we not only got our prisoners of war home, as I've often said on their feet rather than on their knees, but we brought peace to Vietnam, something we haven't had and didn't for over 12 years.

It was a hard decision and it was one that many of my friends in the press who had consistently supported me on the war up to that time disagreed with.

Now, in this instance, I realize there are people who feel that the actions that I've taken with regard to the dismissal of Mr. Cox are grounds for impeachment.

I would respectfully suggest that even Mr. Cox and Mr. Richardson have agreed that the President had the right—the constitutional right—to dismiss anybody in the Federal Government.

And second, I should also point out that as far as the tapes are concerned, rather than being in defiance of the law I am in compliance with the law. As far as what goes through my mind, I will simply say that I intend to continue to carry out to the best of my ability the responsibilities I was elected to carry out last November. The events of this past week I know, for example, in your head office in New York some thought it was simply a blown-up exercise, there wasn't a real crisis. I wish it had been that. It was a real crisis. It was the most difficult crisis we've had since the Cuban confrontation of 1962.

But because we had had our initiative with the Soviet Union, because I had a basis of communication with Mr. Brezhnev we not only avoided a confrontation but we moved a great step forward toward real peace in the Middle East.

Now as long as I can carry out that kind of responsibility, I'm going to continue to do this job.

5. Motives of Mr. Cox

Q. There have been reports that you felt that Mr. Cox was somehow out to get you. I would like to ask you if you did feel that and if so what evidence did you have?

A. Well, Mr. Lisagor, I understand Mr. Cox is going to testify next week under oath before the Judiciary Committee and I would suggest he perhaps would be better qualified that question.

As far as I'm concerned we had cooperated with the special prosecutor, we tried to work out in a cooperative way this matter of the production of the tapes. He seemed to be more interested in the issue than he was in the settlement, and under the circumstances I had no choice but to dismiss him.

But I'm not going to question his motives as to whether or not he was out to get me. Perhaps the Senators would like to ask that question.

6. View of Nation's Mood

Q. Mr. President, in 1968 before you were elected you wrote that too many shocks can drain a nation of its energy and even cause a rebellion to get creative change and progress. Do you think America is at that point now?

I think that many would think—would speculate—I've noted a lot on the networks, particularly, and sometimes even in the newspapers—but this is a very strong country, and the American people, I think, can ride through

the shocks that they have. The difference now from what it was in the days of shocks, even when Mr. Lisigor and I first met 25 years ago, is the electronic media.

I have never heard or seen such outrageous, vicious, distorted reporting in 27 years of public life. I'm not blaming anybody for that. Perhaps what happened is that what we did brought it about, and therefore the media decided that they would have to take that particular line.

But when people are pounded night after night with that kind of frantic, hysterical reporting, it naturally shakes their confidence.

And yet I should point out that even in this week when many thought that the President was shellshocked, unable to act, the President acted decisively in the interests of peace and the interests of the country, and I can assure you that whatever shocks gentlemen of the press may have, or others—political people—these shocks will not affect me and my doing my job.

7. Duration of Mideast Crisis

Mr. President, getting back to the Middle East crisis for a moment, do you consider that the crisis is over now and how much longer will the American forces be kept on alert around the world?

A. With regard to the alert, the alert has already been discontinued with regard to NORAD that's the North American Command, and with regard to SAC. As far as other forces are concerned, they are being maintained in a state of readiness, and obviously Soviet Union forces are being maintained in a state of readiness.

Now as far as the crisis in the Mideast is concerned, I don't want to leave any impression that we aren't going to continue to have problems with regard to the cease-fire, there will be outbreaks because of the proximity of the antagonistic forces, and there will be some very, very tough negotiating in attempting to reach a diplomatic settlement.

But I think now that all parties are going to approach this problem of trying to reach a settlement with a more sober and a more determined attitude than ever before, because the Mideast can't afford, Israel can't afford, Egypt can't afford, Syria can't afford, another war. The world cannot afford a war in that part of the world, and because the Soviet Union and the United States have potentially conflicting interests there, we both now realize that we cannot allow our differences in the Mideast to jeopardize even greater interests that we have, for example, in continuing a detente in Europe, in continuing the negotiations which can lead to a limitation of nuclear arms and eventually reducing the burden of nuclear arms and in continuing in other ways that can contribute to the peace of the world.

As a matter of fact I would suggest that with all of the criticism of detente, that without that detente, we might have had a major conflict in the Middle East. With detente, we avoided it.

8. Shortage of Oil

Q. Mr. President, a question from the electronic media related to the Middle East. I have heard that there was a meeting at the State Department this afternoon of major oil company executives on the fuel shortage. Whether or not you can confirm that, has this confrontation in the Middle East caused a still more severe oil problem; and is there any thinking now of gasoline rationing?

A. Well, we have contingency plans for gasoline rationing and so forth, which I hope never have to be put into place. But with regard to the oil shortage which you refer to, one of the major factors which gave enormous urgency to our efforts to settle this particular crisis was the potential of an oil cutoff.

Let me say that I have also noted in the State Department—or from the State Department—today a statement that raised a little difficulty in Europe, to the effect that our European friends hadn't been as cooperative as they might've been in attempting to help us work out the Middle East settlement—or at least, the settlement to the extent that we worked it out, as of the resolution of yesterday.

I can only say on that score that Europe, which gets 80 per cent of its oil from the Mideast, would have frozen to death this winter unless there'd been a settlement. And Japan, of course, gets only approximately 10 per cent of its oil from the Mideast.

What I am simply suggesting is this: that, with regard to the fuel shortage potentially in the United States and in the world, it is indispensable at this time that we avoid any further Mideast crisis so that the flow of oil to Europe, to Japan and to the United States can continue.

9. Note From Brezhnev

Q. Mr. President, against this background of detente, Mr. Brezhnev's note to you has been described as rough or perhaps brutal by one Senator. Can you characterize it for us and for this briefing in any way?

A. Yes, I could characterize it, but Mr. Theis, it wouldn't be in the national interest to do so. My notes to him he might characterize as being rather rough. However, I would rather—perhaps it would be best to characterize it, rather than saying, Mr. Theis, that his note to me was rough and brutal, I would say that it was very firm and it left very little to the imagination as to what he intended.

And my response was also very firm and left little to the imagination of how we would react. And it's because he and I know each other and it's because we have had this personal contact that notes exchanged in that way result in a settlement rather than a confrontation.

10. Funds Held by Rebozo

Q. Mr. President, is it credible—can the American people believe—that your close friend, Mr. Rebozo, for three years, during which time you saw him weekly sometimes, kept from you the fact that he had \$100,000 in cash from Mr. Howard Hughes? Is that credible? Is it credible that your personal attorney, Mr. Kalmbach, knew about this money for at least a year and never

told you about it? And if this was a campaign contribution, as your press secretaries say, who authorized Mr. Rebozo to collect campaign contributions for your re-election or for the Republican party? What campaign committee was he an official of?

A. Well, it's obvious not credible to you, and I suppose that it would sound incredible to many people who did not know how I operate.

In terms of campaign contributions, I have had a rule, Mr. Deacon, which Mr. Stans, Mr. Kalmbach, Mr. Rebozo, and every contributor will agree has been the rule. I have refused always to accept contributions myself. I have refused to have any discussion of contributions. As a matter of fact, my orders to Mr. Stans were that, after the campaign was over, I would then send notes of appreciation to those that contributed, but before the election I did not want to have any information from anybody with regard to campaign contributions.

Now with regard to Mr. Rebozo, let me say that he showed, I think, very good judgment in doing what he did. He received a contribution. He was prepared to turn it over to the finance chairman when the finance chairman was appointed. But in that interlude after he received the contribution and before the finance chairman was appointed, the Hughes company, as you

all know, had an internal fight of massive proportions, and he felt that such a contribution to the campaign might prove to be embarrassing.

At the conclusion of the campaign he decided that it would be in the best interests of everybody concerned, rather than to turn the money over then to be used in the '74 campaigns, to return it intact. And I would say that any individual, and particularly a banker who would have a contribution of \$100,000 and not touch it because it was turned back in exactly the form it was received, I think that's a pretty good indication that he is a totally honest man. Which he is.

11. Disposition of Tapes

Q. Mr. President, after the tapes are presented to Judge Sirica and they are processed under the procedure outlined by the U. S. Court of Appeals, will you make those tapes public? A. No, that is not the procedure that the court has ordered and it would not be proper. Judge Sirica under the Circuit Court's order is to listen to the tapes and then is to present to the grand jury the pertinent evidence with regard to its investigation. Publication of the tapes has not been ordered by the Circuit Court of Appeals and Judge Sirica, of course, would not do anything that would be in contravention of what the Circuit Court of Appeals has ordered.

12. President's Health

Q. Mr. President, Harry Truman used to talk about the heat in the kitchen, and—A. I know what he meant. Q. A lot of people have been wondering how you are bearing up emotionally under the stress of recent events. Can you discuss that?

A. Well, those who saw me during the Middle East crisis thought I bore up rather well, and, Mr. Storrs, I have a quality which is, I guess I must have inherited it from my Midwestern mother and father, which is that the tougher it gets the cooler I get. Of course it isn't pleasant to get criticism; some of it is justified, of course. It isn't pleasant to find your honesty questioned, it isn't pleasant to find for example that speaking of my friend Mr. Rebozo, that despite the fact that those who printed it and those who said it knew it was untrue, said that he had a million-dollar trust fund from me that he was handling. It was nevertheless put on one of the networks—knowing it was untrue. It isn't pleasant, for example, to hear, or read, that a million dollars in campaign funds went into my San Clemente property, and even after we have a complete audit, to have it repeated.

Those are things which of course do tend to get under the skin of the man who holds this office. But as far as I'm concerned, I have learned to expect it. It has been my lot throughout my political life, and I suppose because I've been through so much, that maybe one of the reasons is when I have to face an international crisis I have what it takes.

13. Watergate Influence on Mideast

Q. Mr. President, I'd like to ask you a question about the Mideast. To what extent do you think your Watergate troubles influenced Soviet thinking about your ability to respond in the Mideast, and did your Watergate problems convince you that the U.S. needed a strong response in the Mideast to convince other nations that you have not been weakened?

A. Well, I noted speculation to the effect that the Watergate problems may have led the Soviet Union to miscalculate. I tend to disagree with that, however. I think Mr. Brezhnev probably can't quite understand how the President of the United States wouldn't be able to handle the Watergate problems. He'd be able to handle it all right if he had them.



United Press International
C. G. Rebozo, whom the President described as "a totally honest man."

But I think what happens is that what Mr. Brezhnev does understand is the power of the United States. What he does know is the President of the United States.

What he also knows is that the President of the United States, when he was under unmerciful assault at the time of Cambodia, at the time of May 8th, when I ordered the bombing and the mining of North Vietnam, at the time of Dec. 18th, still went ahead and did what he thought was right. The facts that Mr. Brezhnev knew that regardless of the pressures at home, regardless of what people see and hear on television night after night, he would do what was right. That's what made Mr. Brezhnev act as he did.

14. Criticism of Television

Q. Mr. President, you've lambasted the television networks pretty well. Could I ask you, at the risk of reopening an obvious wound—you say after you've put on a lot of heat, that you don't blame anyone. I find that a little puzzling. What is it about the television coverage of you in these past weeks and months that has so aroused your anger? A. Don't get the impression that you arouse my anger. Q. I have that impression. A. You see, one can only be angry with those he respects.

15. Regaining Confidence of People

Q. Mr. President, businessmen increasingly are saying that many chief executive officers of corporations do not get the latitude you have had, if they have the personnel problems that you have had, to stay in the job and correct them. You have said you are going to stay. Do you have any plan set out to regain confidence of people

across the country and these businessmen who are beginning to talk about this matter? Do you have any plans besides the special prosecutor, which looks backward, do you have any plan that looks forward for regaining confidence of people?

A. I certainly have. First to move forward in building a structure of peace in the world in which we have made enormous progress in the past and which we're going to make more progress in the future.

Our European initiative, our continued initiative with the Soviet Union, with the People's Republic of China—that will be the major legacy of this Administration. Moving forward at home in our continuing battle against the high cost of living in which we are now finally beginning to make some progress and moving forward also on the matters that you refer to, it is true that what happened in Watergate, the campaign abuses were deplorable. They have been very damaging to this Administration, they have been damaging certainly to the country as well.

Let me say too I didn't want to leave an impression with my good friends from C.B.S. over here that I don't respect the reporters. What I was simply saying was this: that when a commentator takes a bit of news and then with knowledge of what the facts are distorts it viciously, I have no respect for that individual.

you happen to dodge my questions all the time, Mr. President! A. You had three last time.

16. Waiver of Executive Privilege

Q. Last May, you went before the American people and you said executive privilege will not be invoked as to any testimony concerning possible criminal conduct or discussing of possible criminal conduct including the Watergate affair and the alleged cover-up. If you have revised or modified this position as you seem to have done, could you explain the rationale of a law and order Administration covering up evidence—prima-facie—evidence of high crimes and misdemeanors?

A. Well, I should point out that perhaps all the other reporters in the room are aware of the fact we have waived executive privilege on all individuals within the Administration—it's been the greatest waiver of executive privilege in the whole history of this nation—and as far as any other matters are concerned, the matters of the tapes, the matters of Presidential conversations, those are matters in which the President has the responsibility to defend this office, which I shall continue to do.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.