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.... In Washington, legislation was introduced, to separate international politics from impeachment politics. Jeff Loeb [phon] reports:

Loeb: Rep. Les Aspin, Democratic Congressman from Wisconsin, today introduced on the floor of the House three resolutions designed to compensate for the effect that an impeachment trial might have on President Nixon's actions and on the ability of the executive branch to act in the case of a national emergency during that period of time. The first resolution provides for the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of State and the director of the CIA to give regular briefings to the Vice President and Congressional leaders regarding the status of their respective activities. The second resolution, if adopted, would prevent the signing of any treaties or executive agreements with foreign countries during the impeachment trial, and the third would prevent the President from travelling abroad on official business or from inviting foreign heads of state to visit the United States during this interim. Rep. Aspin state that the primary purpose of these resolutions is to quote "keep the President from playing fast and loose with our National security during an impeachment trial, and to make sure at the same time that no foreign powers tries to take advantage of the situation" unquote. He elaborated as follows on his reasons for proposing the resolutions:

Aspin: All three of these resolutions are about what happens to national security during an impeachment trial in the Senate. It's becoming more and more evident that the House of Representatives will vote favorably on an impeachment resolution. And then the question is, what happens during the trial in the Senate if the President tries to create some kind of an international crisis in order to win support for himself ?

Loeb: Regarding the effect that their adoption would have on the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty, he had this to say:

Aspin: What it says is, the Congress thinks that during the impeachment trial, for various reasons -- both reasons of fear that he might be playing impeachment politics or that foreigners might be playing politics, international politics, with our impeachment process -- we want to isolate this. Just postpone the visit, just postpone the signing of the agreement, keep on negotiating, keep on with diplomatic contacts, but don't sign anything.

Loeb: When asked about the reason for the moratorium on official visits and treaty-signing, he responded:

Aspin: We had the problem during the Watergate hearings when Secretary Brezhnev came here. They abandoned the Watergate hearing, they interrupted the hearings, because Congressmen and Senators are reluctant to put the President on trial while he is negotiating with foreign officials.

Loeb: In addition, Aspin feels that the regular briefings of Congressional officials would alleviate the problem of the public under-estimating a real crisis, should it occur. The chances for the adoption of these or similar agreements seem rather slim in the face of what will surely be overwhelming White House opposition. They constitute what would most likely be interpreted by the administration as the strongest encroachment to date on the separation of powers by the legislature. White House officials have issued no response in regard to the resolutions, but are expected to comment in the near future on their propriety. This is Jeff Loeb, for Pacifica Radio in Washington.

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