

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

October 9, 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR: DR. HENRY A. KISSINGER

FROM: RON ZIEGLER  
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SUBJECT: Press Plans for China Coverage

I. POLICY DECISIONS NEEDED BEFORE ADVANCE TRIP:

- A. Whether to establish a ground station in Peking for joint use by the White House and all news media.
- B. Whether to favor establishment of Network Pool Production and Transmission Center in Peking linked to Ground Station.
- C. Approximate number of press and news production technicians to be accredited by White House to cover the President's visit.
- D. Tentative press coverage plan for controlling movements of accredited news personnel.

II. NECESSARY INGREDIENTS FOR PRESS COVERAGE:

A. GROUND STATION

1. What is it?

50'x50' quadrangular box with 24' locator dish which can be flown to Peking Airport in a single aircraft. (See photo and specifications Tab A.)

2. What Does It Do?

Will simultaneously serve all communications requirements of Presidential party to failsafe proportions along with those of all news media except for television. Television requirements can be met only if linked to Network Pool Production and Transmission Center as will be discussed in Section III. (See Tab B)

3. Precedent:

An earlier model of this kind was flown in and installed by the White House in Indonesia, India and Pakistan for Presidential and press communications requirements. The new third-generation model is somewhat smaller but offers even more capability and flexibility for meeting both requirements. No transportable ground station was necessary for limited live TV coverage and press communications of the President's visits to Romania, Yugoslavia and other European points. These countries already had permanent facilities for sending signal to London which relayed output via ground station-satellite link-up there.

B. ALTERNATIVE TO GROUND STATION

To allow the Chinese either alone, or with American technicians arriving at least 6-8 weeks in advance, to beef-up China's inadequate internal communications network. The purpose would be to try to establish better links with third countries which would relay written copy and audio only broadcasts and radio-telephone messages but no television picture, either live or film

1. Advantages:

It would rely on the Chinese to provide communications facilities.

2. Disadvantages:

a. Transmission from Peking would be delayed up to 12 hours or more, depending on degree of modernization accomplished and third country cooperation in one-half dozen relay points.

- a. No television coverage would result except for film.
- b. Television coverage would be delayed even longer because film shot in Peking would have to be air-shipped to nearest country with commercial aircraft link to Peking, then trans-shipped to nearest network production facility for processing and editing, then satellited to United States. This delay would average 18 to 24 hours.
- c. Number of American telephone, cable, technical experts needed for advance work of some kind unknown at this stage. Highly conservative estimate would be 50.
- d. Would not provide margin of safety President and party need to react to any important domestic or international event.
- e. Runs almost certain risk of embarrassment to White House that first television pictures and majority of trip coverage would be provided first by foreign news representatives either already in Peking or accredited by Chinese for visit. Highly likely, initial television pictures would be picked up in Hong Kong from Canton television.
- f. Almost certainly would arouse storm of protests from American press which would charge President, because of weakness, did not insist on adequate communications to cover highly important visit for American people.
- g. Would make it more difficult to control American press movement and actions inside China because newsmen, recognizing their reports would be substantially delayed, would compete more zealously for exclusive picture and/or news interpretation so their product would not be outdated by delay.

III. NETWORK POOL PRODUCTION AND TRANSMISSION CENTER:

1. What is it?

Indispensable accompanying facility if ground station is to be used. This is headquarters which would serve as control room, switching point, processing, editing, and network communications link to outside points. This would be manned by estimated 63 technicians. (See Tab C.)

2. Where Would It Be Located?

On or near Peking Airport, or some out-of-the-way locale, close to ground station with which it is essential that it be directly linked.

3. How Would It Be Constructed?

ALTERNATIVES:

- a. Could be located in existing hangar facility with necessary partitions, tables, etc., constructed by Chinese labor, supervised by American technical experts arriving 3-4 weeks in advance.
- b. Could be specially configured 747 aircraft already envisioned by networks after preliminary conversations with us. This would be a self-contained unit meeting all network television and radio requirements. (See Tab D for concept and dimensions.)

ADVANTAGES FOR BUILDING ONE ON THE GROUND:

- a. Participation by the Chinese.

DISADVANTAGES:

- a. Uncertain results because of presumed inexperience of Chinese in working with such highly sophisticated equipment.
- b. On-ground facility would make it more difficult to rigorously control movements of technicians who otherwise would be mostly hidden from view in 747.

*Chinese  
Observer*

- c. Long time required for construction (3-4 weeks) whereas 747 could arrive on scene with all equipment already in place and with 63 technicians on board at same time, one week before the President's arrival.
- d. At least three, probably four, flights would be required in advance to bring equipment and technicians if facility was to be built on ground from scratch.

ALTERNATIVE TO ESTABLISHING GROUND STATION  
AND NETWORK POOL PRODUCTION AND TRANSMISSION  
CENTER IN PEKING:

- a. Minimum of four courier flights daily to Tokyo production center established by networks and cable companies as relay point. This would handle film only shipped from Mainland China and taped radio, still photos reports, plus anticipated overflow of dispatchs by written press.

Advantages

- 1. Would eliminate Peking ground station, Network Pool Production and Transmission Center.
- 2. Would permit slight decrease in numbers of press-technical news personnel covering the President's trip.

Disadvantages

- 1. Requires asking permission for four daily jet courier flights to Tokyo. Presumably these would require Chinese navigators and radio operators.
- 2. Certain 9 to 12 hours delay, perhaps longer, in appearances of any film television coverage on American TV. The 9-12 hours estimate is based on complete cooperation by Chinese in rushing film to Peking Airport, prompt takeoffs, landing at Tachikawa American AFB outside Tokyo, not Tokyo International Airport and special helicopter flights to Tokyo processing centers.

3. Virtual certainty foreign television, radio and written reports on President's activities would be first to reach outside world.
4. This built-in delay, coupled with the 13 hours time difference, means that each day the first pictures available on the American networks would be available for airing in early morning hours where there is minimum audience viewership.
5. Number of television camera personnel would have to be increased from three per network to nine, total increase of 18, aboard press plane.

IV. APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF NEWS PERSONNEL RECOMMENDED FOR CHINA TRIP

In the three major overseas trips the President has made so far, he has been accompanied on each occasion by two 707 press planes, specially configured to provide adequate working and storage space. The news contingent accompanying the President on these press planes is as follows: Europe, 1969, 191; Around the World Trip, 1969, 151; Europe 1970, 139. (A breakdown of these organizations and their identities is attached at Tab E.)

However, it is critically important to understand that the total number of American correspondents covering the President's activities in each of the main stops was far higher. This was so because on each occasion, networks and major news organizations sent hundreds of news personnel in advance to specific cities in order to supplement the coverage of the few correspondents who accompany the President. For example, last year, one network (CBS) alone, pre-positioned 10 camera crews, 13 correspondents, 15 producers, in each of the major stops in advance. The other major networks and news-gathering agencies sent equivalent advance contingents. In many cases, they leap-frogged ahead of the President by commercial, sometimes chartered, aircraft.

In weighing the size of the proposed press contingents for the China trip, it must be recognized that this additional supplementary assistance which news organizations have relied on in the past as necessary (200 to 300 people in each city) will not be available for them in covering the President in China even though the visit is judged far more news worthy than his previous trips. None of these plans envision allowing news correspondents on the scene in Mainland China in advance of the President's arrival. The only persons to be permitted to fly there ahead of time would be technicians needed to establish necessary

communications as previously described.

In devising press plans, we have sought to maintain two important objectives: accrediting a minimum number of news representatives who traditionally cover the President, and to obtain a diversity of reporting. The following plans accomplish this goal:

PRESS PLAN # 1 (OPTIMUM)

(This assumes ground station, Network Pool Production and Transmission Center)

News Personnel Accompanying the President: 151  
(This provides for good selection of representatives from among the nearly 2,000 applicants for accreditation on trip including foreign news delegation which normally accompanies President.)

Technicians flown in advance to Peking to man Network Pool Production and Transmission Center: 100  
(This increases the bare minimum required to 100 in order to insure efficient operations and to cope with any technical-production breakdowns.)

TOTAL: 251 U.S. technicians and News Reporting Personnel

*63*  
*We will have this problem off.*

PRESS PLAN #2 (MINIMUM)

(This assumes ground station, Network Pool Production and Transmission Center)

News Personnel Accompanying the President : 115  
(This provides what we consider to be bare-bones minimum for the news-gathering contingent, made up of reporters, soundmen, cameramen, photographers and a very few foreign newsmen.)

Technicians flown in advance to Peking to man Network Pool Production and Transmission Center: 63

TOTAL: 178 U.S. technicians and News Reporting Personnel

IF IT BECOMES IMPOSSIBLE TO OBTAIN APPROVAL OF PLAN #1, WHICH WE BELIEVE IS REASONABLE, THIS IS THE PLAN WE FEEL IS THE ABSOLUTE MINIMUM ESSENTIAL FOR THE TRIP. (SEE RATIONAL TAB F.)

PRESS PLAN #3: (MINIMUM)  
(This assumes no ground station, no Network Pool Production and Transmission Center)

News Personnel Accompanying the President: 140

TOTAL: 140

X 34  
32  
66 (206)

With Press Plan #3, even though the ground station and Network Pool Production and Transmission Center are eliminated, there will be a reduction of only 38 persons. This follows because it would then become urgently necessary to add more television-film cameramen and other technical help to compensate for the lack of capacity to originate transmissions from Peking.

Find in Tab G a general breakdown of how all these plans would be divided among the various news reporting segments. We would like to emphasize that each of these plans provide minimum flexibility to accommodate those U.S. organizations who regularly cover the President. This leaves virtually no cushion to accommodate important news figures whom it might be desirable to take with us.

Only Press Plan #1 provides for even a limited number of foreign press representatives to accompany the President, a privilege all U.S. presidents have traditionally extended to those foreign news organizations with bureaus in Washington.

V. NEWS POLICY PLAN

As we proceed with all of our press planning, we must keep uppermost in our mind that we have a responsibility to maintain the posture and the role of the free press in our American society. As antagonistic as our relationship may be at times, we must not overlook the fact that the free flow of information is fundamental to our system of government. Therefore, we must be extremely sensitive and cautious in agreeing to press coverage arrangements that, in any way, imply a willingness on our part to compromise these principles unnecessarily to the point where it would appear to all a display of American weakness and lack of commitment to these principles. What we must keep in mind is that in visiting Moscow in 1959, Vice President Nixon supported the right of newsmen to cover his activities to the point where he threatened to call off his visit unless they were permitted to accompany him outside Moscow. We must not allow ourselves to abandon this Nixon tradition thereby suggesting that our zeal to visit Peking overrode all other consideration.

At the same time, all recommendations we have made for news coverage stem from a complete understanding of the need to ensure that news coverage is dignified, controlled and orderly in order not to impair attainment of vital foreign policy objectives. It is fully recognized that pushing, shoving, milling around, noisy and aggressive behavior are to be taboo.

In addition to whatever restrictions will be imposed by us from the outset, there will be another important factor helping ensure good press conduct -- the hope of most of the news organizations represented that they will be allowed to establish a permanent news bureau in Peking after the President's visit. This will make it very likely that news representatives, including technical help, will behave with decorum, lest their conduct offend the Chinese, thereby eliminating their chances for such a bureau.

With or without a ground station, rules would be laid down in advance to insure full compliance with whatever reasonable restrictions the Chinese would lay down. For example, it undoubtedly will work out that limited size pools of newsmen will be all that the Chinese and American authorities will want on hand to cover specific events, such as internal photo opportunities and other non-public events.

If a decision is made after consultations with the Chinese not to permit complete freedom of movement by American news personnel, a typical day of covering the President's activities might be something like this:

1. Press vehicles would pick up limited size pool at press hotel to proceed to President's guest house to accompany him to first day meeting. This group of newsmen would cover the photo opportunity, hand shaking prior to beginning of talks. The pool would then return to established press headquarters to brief full press contingent who, in the meantime had been transported by bus to press center. Newsmen would file result of pool report.
2. Before event #2 of the day, newsmen, if arrangements had been made ahead of time, perhaps would go, escorted by Chinese hosts, on a tour of selected sites. Later, a group of newsmen would go by press vehicle to cover, for example, the start of a luncheon and/or dinner or departure of President from initial meeting place for his guest house.

This could be, although not totally desirable, the general pattern of movement of U. S. press corps in Peking. However, it must be part of our goal to obtain for the visiting, accredited American press, privileges at least equal to those granted by the Chinese to foreign newsmen now accredited in Peking. It also is recognized in advance that it is highly unlikely that the Chinese would agree to allow American newsmen to conduct "man in the street" interviews, to roam everywhere unchecked, to photograph anything they desire. It also seems like a logical starting place to assume that the Chinese will not permit interviews with foreigners already in Peking, such as the Canadian Ambassador and other diplomatic envoys. However, these assumptions must be confirmed in discussions with the Chinese. In the unlikely event they desire to extend unusual cooperation, we must consider whether it is desirable and whether it fits within our objective of maintaining decorum and dignity.

Before we fix a final attitude toward our press, it is important that we find out from the Chinese, as best we can, what their attitude will be toward foreigners whom they might accredit for the visit, the numbers, communications to be provided them, as well as the resident newsmen now in mainland China. (See TabH) It is our impression that American news personnel are ready to cooperate in orderly fashion to an unprecedented degree in order to insure that the President's visit is a success. They recognize

that for this historic visit they will be not only representatives of their various news agencies, but in effect, will be representatives of the American people.