

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

September 14, 1981

TO: JAMES A. BAKER, III
FROM: MICHAEL K. DEEVER
SUBJECT: Comments on Rousset Memo

Most of Pete's memo is very good.

I would, however, disagree with some of the recommendations for additional staff. If anything - I'd hope they could cut back. It isn't quantity that they need - it's quality. They need some maturity in their day-to-day relationships with the Press.

My biggest disappointment is that going into our ninth month of the Administration, we still do not have a communications plan. I'd strongly suggest that some of us take a Friday afternoon and put together some thoughts.

Strongly agree that a Weekly News Summary containing out-of-town press is important.

Suggest Rousset might take a look at First Lady's press operation next.

*John Accorelli -
you may
wish to follow
up on this.
Still in TAB's
box as far
as I know.
J*

*Indi
of Press*

MEMORANDUM TO: James A. Baker, III
David Gergen
Larry Speakes

FROM: [REDACTED]

SUBJECT: [REDACTED] press operations

PREFACE

As promised, here follows an analysis and proposals regarding the press office and related operations. Also, as promised, the intent here has not been to turn in a voluminous rhetoric-laden report --the building is already laden with excess memoranda. Rather, the emphasis has been on succinctly identifying potential problem areas and offering specific solutions that can be implemented without disruption to the present system.

The views expressed here are based on two months observation of the operation. Of note, this has also included in-depth, personal visits with all principals concerned as well as staffers at all levels. Thus, this report reflects a broad range of input, not just the subjective views of a few at any one level.

Members of the press were also solicited for comment. Those views are also reflected in the material that follows.

In making this presentation, three criteria were applied:

--Is it comprehensive?

--Is it fair?

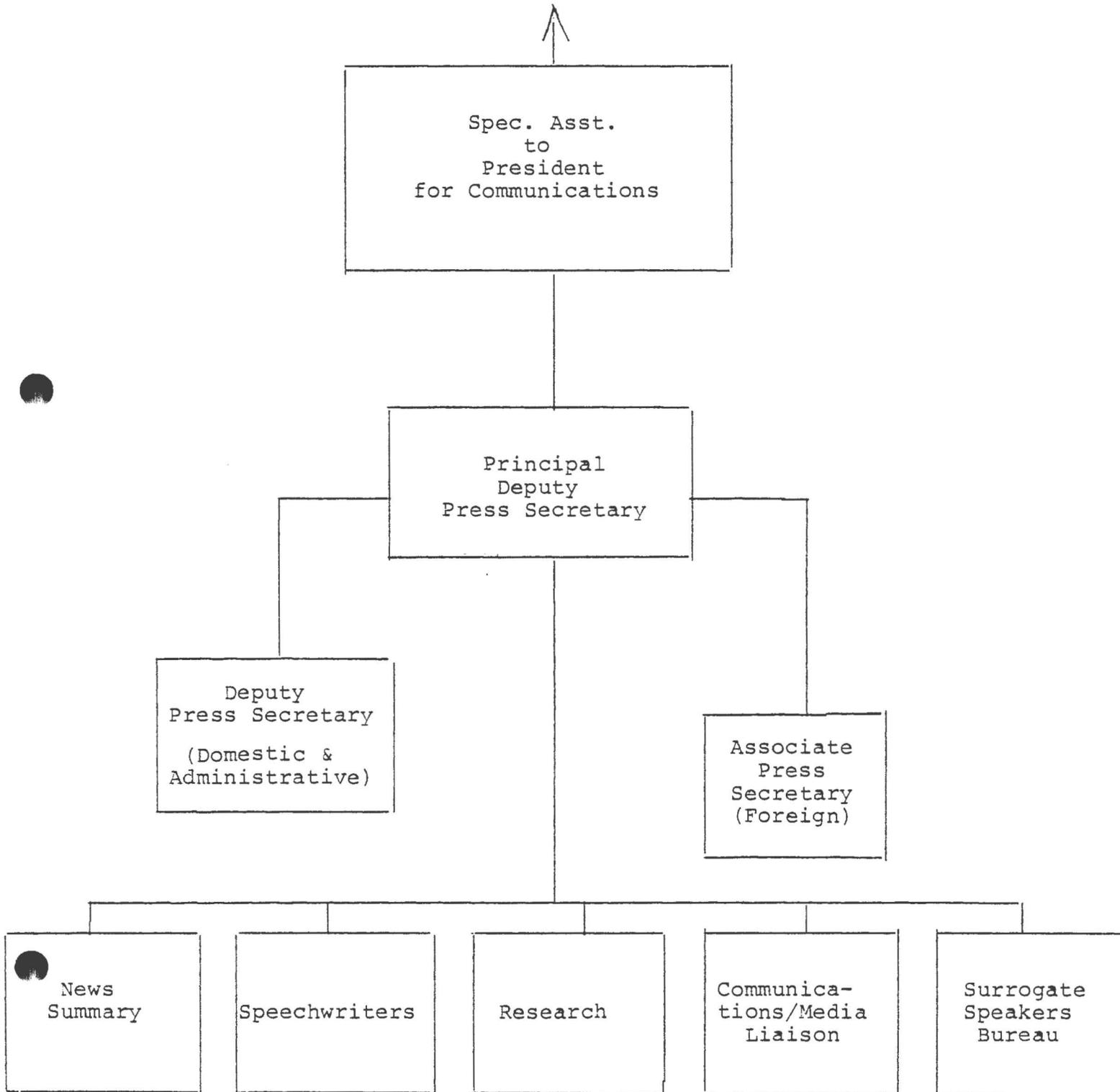
--Is it to-the-point?

With submission of this report, the author has tried to "take a fresh look" on that basis and hopefully fulfill the mandate given him.

First, a proposed organizational chart.

ORGANIZATION

To simply and potentially bring lines of responsibility into a more orderly system, the following table of organization is suggested:



PRESS OFFICE

Summary:

Under current direction, this office has (12) employees. Their primary duties:

- Daily briefings and backgrounders with the House press corps.
- Preparation of issue/background material for the briefings.
- Response to phone call/walk-in press queries.
- Preparation of press plans for trips.
- Responsibility assignment/management of press pools, photo opportunities.
- Preparation, distribution of press releases.

Considering the volume of phone/mail/drop-in traffic that is common to this office, it seems to be fulfilling the needs of the press corps. One particular credibility gap exists at the deputy level. Otherwise, the level of efficiency appears adequate to the demands. The remaining need seems to be one of bringing more order and organization to the system.

Staff Comments:

"Need more help on the phones."

"Suggest the President visit the press office staffers--would be good for moral."

"The 8:45 meetings are helpful in letting us know what is going on so we may be more responsive on the phones. Let's keep as is."

Recommendation:

- 1) Add one more secretary/assistant in upper press office to alleviate phone excess and help on other duties.
- 2) Consider addition of staffer in lower press office at associate press secretary level to handle walk-in/phone queries and help in lessening congestion, confusion in upper area.

- 3) Assign one staff person to be responsible for promptly providing a one-page briefing paper out of all Cabinet Council meetings.
- 4) Assign one staff person to be responsible for attending briefings and immediately following up on the research and posting of questions that are "taken." (This point was emphasized by most of the reporters interviewed.)
- 5) Establish a better system of phone outs for briefings, impromptu backgrounders, etc. (This was the second most mentioned point by reporters.)
- 6) Establish a system of prompt circulation of the briefing transcript to key staff. Also a better system for ASAP distribution of State/DOD briefings to those applicable.
- 7) Establish a policy regarding the Sperling breakfast. Suggest that a press office staffer attend when key administration officials attend, take notes and provide summary to Larry, Dave before the day's briefing. Too many questions are generated out of these breakfasts so that briefers should be apprised of what has been said.
- 8) Establish an orderly system of response/recommendation for Presidential interview requests--David Frost, Readers Digest, etc. Most of these are currently in limbo--no response, no action. Some of these should be given serious consideration and even done. Currently, they are going un-answered. One individual should take responsibility for assessing these and making recommendations. Action is needed here.
- 9) It might be useful at some point to submit a questionnaire to the press corps, soliciting their views on suggestions for refinement of the daily briefing. My interviews brought such random comments as these:

"Think the system is working fine just as it is."

"Like the 2-briefer format because it gives us the divergence of two styles."

"Don't like the 2-briefer format--too much chance of things slipping through the crack and pitting them against each other."

"Briefings are too long."

MEDIA LIAISON

Summary:

Under current direction, this office has (5) employees. Their primary duties:

- Respond to mail and phone call policy inquiries, requests for press releases from out-of-town media.
- Generate issue mailings, press release mailings to out-of-town media.
- Issue credentials for out-of-town media and Washington bureaus for local papers/broadcasters.
- Organize briefings for local press involving the President, Administration officials.
- Arrange out-of-town show appearances by Administration officials.

This office seems to be duplicating, (and often in needless competition with) the Communications Office, particularly in the areas of research, surrogate scheduling and briefings. There is a lack of direction. Morale is low.

Staff Comments:

"Would like to get the President more involved with out-of-town media."

"Need to better define our relationship with Communications Office."

"Would like to see regular weekly meeting with members of press staff to review plans."

"Need a full-time secretary."

Recommendation:

- 1) Abolish this office as it now exists and merge it with the Communications Office.
- 2) Enlarge the surrogate speakers operation now being conducted through both of these offices and make it a separate entity.

- 3) Establish tighter management control over the people and resources of this office, and should such a merger occur, hold the director responsible for assigning specific staff responsibilities within the office.

COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

Summary:

Under current direction, this office has (10) employees. Their primary duties:

- Research/writing for Q&A book, issue book, op ed pieces.
- Long-range issue plans.
- TV office.
- Speakers bureau, surrogate scheduling.
- Liaison with Agency Public Affairs Officers on releases by departments, communications plans.
- Organizing briefings for out-of-town editors.

As stated, this office is clearly duplicating a number of functions with Media Liaison. Because it is a larger operation, however, and better organized, it is also more effective. It too, however, is drifting somewhat and its functions in need of better definition.

Staff Comments:

"We need a better definition of who should be doing what and who we deal with in the press office."

"We would like more meetings with the press office staff."

"Would help if we were on the distribution list for Cabinet Council agendas and minutes."

Recommendation:

- 1) Merge Media Liaison under Communications.
- 2) Establish a permanent point of contact for the Director with an individual in the press office.
- 3) Establish a policy of weekly meetings with: (a) all agency public affairs officers, (b) a working group from the press office staff to review goals, plans, etc.
- 4) Remove the surrogate speakers operation from this office and establish it as a separate entity.

NEWS SUMMARY

Summary:

Under current direction, this office has (4) employees. Their primary duties:

--Preparation of daily news summary.

--Preparation of audio actualities.

Apparently, after some initial problems, this office is steadily improving in the quality of its work. New computer hook-ups are being integrated into the system to expand and improve spontaneity of coverage. The audio actuality unit claims 200 incoming calls per day, but this could be improved upon if additional lines were added.

Staff Comments:

"We feel like step-cousins to the rest of the press operation."

"No one is telling us what to put in the summary and that is appreciated. It's important we have this autonomy."

"Need a full-time secretary."

"Occasionally let one of us, on a rotating basis, go on a trip."

"We appreciate the positive comments Larry has made about our work in front of the press office staff."

Recommendation:

- 1) Let them hire a full-time secretary. Considering the hours they keep and the spread of assignments over a small staff, they deserve such staff support.
- 2) Give consideration to a weekly summary of magazine commentary, 20-25. (While it's nice to have the cartoons, such a compilation of magazine comment might be of greater use.)
- 3) Why not more out-of-town, middle America type commentary in the news summary? Also, what about an occasional inclusion of comment from weeklies, black, minority, trade publications?
- 4) How about more inclusion of newsletter commentary--Evans-Novak, Baron Report, etc.?

CONCLUSION

These recommendations are offered in the spirit that if all, just some, or none are implemented, the author of this memorandum will feel no offense.

Submitted: August 28, 1981

MEMORANDUM TO: James A. Baker, III
David Gergen
Larry Speakes

FROM: Peter Roussel

SUBJECT: Analysis of Press Operations

PREFACE

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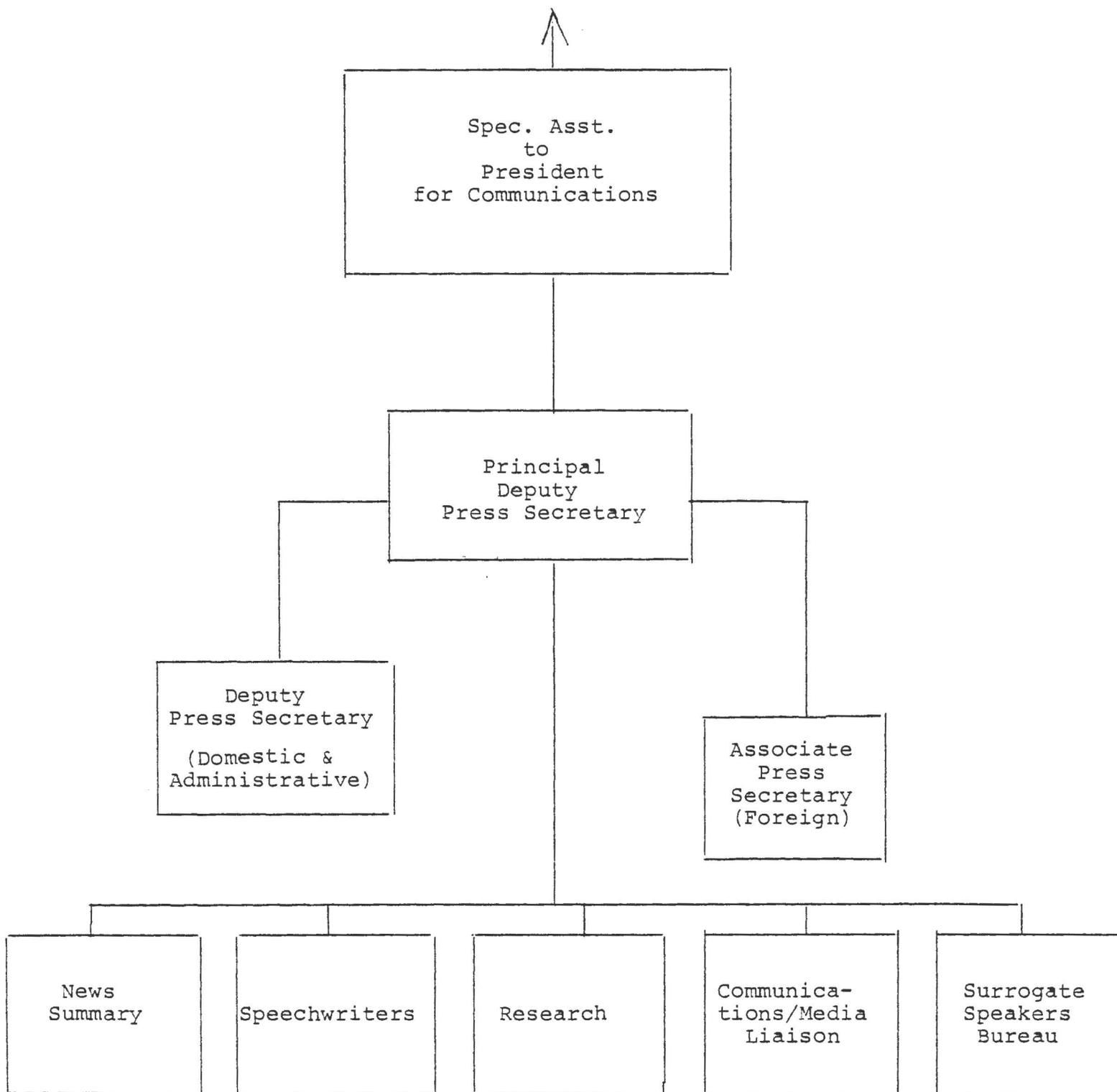
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