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THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

PRESS BRIEFING
BY
LARRY SPEAKES

July 1, 1985

The Briefing Room

5:46 P.M. EDT

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5:58 P.M. EDT

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MR. SPEAKES: Sam's announcement here that he's been making all afternoon --

Q Is wrong.

MR. SPEAKES: No, it's right.

The President, as you know, as soon as the hostages were free, he expressed a desire to greet them as soon as they returned to American soil. And he laid down three or four criteria. The one was that he wanted to personally greet each one and he did not want to intrude in their homecoming any more than necessary and he wanted minimum disruption for the people, knowing that they wanted to be with their families as quickly as possible and to get to their hometowns without delay.

The staff went to New York today to confer with TWA officials and they discussed the possibility of going to JFK. TWA recommended to us that we go to Andrews. Two or three reasons -- first of all, 3:00 p.m., which is the approximate time they'll arrive at Andrews -- or at JFK is the busiest time of the day for TWA and it would have disrupted people going in and out of the terminal. And Air Force One flying in would have delayed traffic in and out of JFK.

So the families can go from here -- from Andrews to Dulles or BWI or National almost as quickly as they could go through JFK and go. So the President will be going out by helicopter tomorrow afternoon for an arrival expected now about 3:00 p.m. on TWA. And he will greet all of those returning and will make brief remarks.

Q Well, now, will he go on the plane? I mean, they'll come off the plane. Will it be on the tarmac or will he go inside? What's the --

MR. SPEAKES: The tentative plan is outside, but the weather may not be good and he may decide to go on board and greet them personally first. He may stand at the bottom of the ramp. They haven't --

Q Will there be a ceremony and do you know how many are there involved?

MR. SPEAKES: How many are returning?

I think the majority of them are. I think they decided among themselves in Germany today that they would like to come back generally in a group.

Q They'll be bused to another airport --

MR. SPEAKES: True.

Q -- from where they will fly off to their homes?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. Or whatever they want to do.

Q And the government will bus them?

MR. SPEAKES: I guess so, yes.

Q Or TWA?

Q Gary Wright's going to order some cabs for them.

(Laughter.)

Q -- family members be with them, and all? This is a

--

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q -- a TWA charter with -- you're saying the majority of the 39 and their --

MR. SPEAKES: Family -- families, I think TWA flew one member of the family over there. There may be others with them. And then TWA is offering to fly other members of the family -- I don't know how many -- here for the greeting.

Q So they all fly to Andrews.

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q Will Mrs. Reagan go with the President?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q Thank you, Sam. (Laughter.)

Q When you said there could be -- if the weather doesn't permit, would you then move into a hangar?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q Hangar?

Q And have a ceremony --

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q A hangar? (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: Ceremony, yes. It will be a welcome -- he'll make remarks and shake hands. And I think that's about --

Q Are you going to have the band out there and so on?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know whether it'd be that much or not.

Q So will the families who -- will the families --

MR. SPEAKES: The whole thing is to express the President's welcome home to them and to allow them to move as quickly as they can to get to their hometowns and be with their families and

friends.

Q Do you know what time they're leaving Germany?

MR. SPEAKES: What?

Q Do you know what time they are leaving Germany?

MR. SPEAKES: Around 1:00 p.m. local.

Q How long a ceremony would you anticipate? The whole thing a half an hour or --

MR. SPEAKES: It won't be that long, no.

Q Larry, it sounds, from the way you've -- events that the advance team found out from TWA what could have basically been found out in a phone call.

MR. SPEAKES: No.

Q I mean, why -- I mean --

MR. SPEAKES: They went to New York and met with TWA and discussed and looked at TWA's terminal with TWA, and they said, "For all these reasons, we'd rather do it here."

Q Well, then, if it was --

Q -- don't want to go to New York --

Q If it was clear that, you know, that immediately that Kennedy wasn't a good idea, what was the reason that it was sort of on hold so long, just announcing that it was Andrews without announcing --

MR. SPEAKES: Having more discussions with TWA, working out the time, talking to the people who were dealing with the hostages --

Q Larry, do these people have to clear customs somewhere?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q Where?

MR. SPEAKES: They will do it at Andrews. Or else they'll have Customs people on board the aircraft, as some privileged few get when they travel abroad.

Q Will the families who are in Frankfurt fly on this plane -- the TWA --

MR. SPEAKES: I assume, yes.

Q Are you sure that the families will be flown --

Q -- plane?

MR. SPEAKES: I've got four questions at one time. What?

Q And the other families will be flown from all over the country by TWA into Andrews?

MR. SPEAKES: Some -- TWA can tell who they are. Not into Andrews, but into the hospital.

I realize you've got to disperse crews to three airports to interview these people.

Q Into the hospital?

MR. SPEAKES: No, into the various airports here.

Q -- difficult.

MR. SPEAKES: Then they'll drive out to Andrews and they'll walk out on the tarmac and say --

Q "Hi."

MR. SPEAKES: Norm.

Q Are you taking a travel pool?

MR. SPEAKES: No. We'll just probably have a small pool to operate on the side or something, as we customarily do.

Yes, sir.

Q Is the President going on vacation afterward or is he coming back --

MR. SPEAKES: No. He'll come back here and be here for the Fourth of July, probably go up to Camp David, may go up a little bit earlier than usual on Friday, but nothing --

Norm.

Q Is that the TWA plane that was in --

MR. SPEAKES: No.

Q -- Syria?

Q Yes. Yes. (Laughter.)

Q The one with no windows.

Q Are you --

MR. SPEAKES: Sam, you're in trouble with Naomi already.

Q Larry, do reporters go to the airport themselves --

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q -- get in the Press Room. You form the pool in the press room or --

MR. SPEAKES: No, there really won't be a pool. It will be open coverage out there and if there's a pool, it would be just one or two on the side to get a different view, or something like that.

Joe.

Q How long is the ceremony?

MR. SPEAKES: Long enough for him to shake their hands and make brief remarks and get them on their way.

Q Do you know if Allyn Conwell or anyone else is going to be given a chance to speak? (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know that much about it.

Q So right now, you're just --

MR. SPEAKES: No. You know, it's going to be hard to make a controversy out of this.

Q Oh, no.

Q Uh-uh.

MR. SPEAKES: It's going to be hard for you to make --

Q What are you going to do if one of those guys --

MR. SPEAKES: Because you're trying to say either the ceremony is long and it's going to delay them getting to their place or short because we don't want to greet them.

Q What if they don't show up?

MR. SPEAKES: None of the above.

Q How about instead of retaliating --

Q What if they don't want to go to Andrews?

MR. SPEAKES: I think they do. I think they do. And you can't write that story either.

Q -- tried to smooth with --

MR. SPEAKES: Pardon?

Q Speakes' rule.

Q Instead of retaliating, President tries to --

Q No, it's a frustrated --

Q Ah-hah.

MR. SPEAKES: No. I mean, I bet if we took -- half of you would write it one way and half would write it the other.

Q Are you sure about that, Larry?

Q Which way is right?

Q As long as both sides are trashy, it doesn't matter. (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: You can't make controversy out of this and you really shouldn't.

Q We've been challenged.

Q Yes, we've been challenged.

Q In keeping with the hostages' experience in Beirut, do you suppose it would be possible if we have an expanded TV pool that accompanies the President onto the airplane and down the aisle? (Laughter.)

Q Yes.

Q Yes.

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know of any plan to do that. There could be TV traveling with them -- we've heard, but we don't know.

Q Do you have times --

Q Yes, they'll be on the plane, that's my understanding.

MR. SPEAKES: You?

Q Not I. It may be ABC News. I don't know.

MR. SPEAKES: Did you pay?

Q Is he avoiding New York to avoid Cuomo?

Q He's not involved in any Fourth of July formal ceremony except the evening, watching fireworks?

MR. SPEAKES: No. They're just planning a private Fourth.

Q Larry, do we have any word from TWA as to approximately how many? Two of the three or which of the three? Do you expect to have that by the morning?

Q Was there any discussion on why --

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know what you're talking about.

Q The other seven won't be there.

MR. SPEAKES: What? What other three?

Q The three airports, as to whether it's one-third, one-third, one-third or BWI and Dulles are the main ones?

MR. SPEAKES: It depends on where they're going.

Q Why did you decide not to bring them to the White House?

Q Yeah.

Q It's easier to get to National from here than from Andrews. What was the rationale behind that?

MR. SPEAKES: They've still got to get here some way.

Q Why?

Q Well, I mean, if they're going to go to National from Andrews, they might as well come here and then go to National.

MR. SPEAKES: No, it would be a delay to go from -- come through --

Q Well, you had also said earlier -- you know, there's no plans to bring them to the White House. What's the reason for that?

MR. SPEAKES: Did not want to delay them getting on their way. It's as simple as that.

Q Anything on the Cabinet meeting?

MR. SPEAKES: You can't make a controversy out of it, try as you -- try as you can.

Q How about the Cabinet meeting?

MR. SPEAKES: What?

Q Wait, wait --

MR. SPEAKES: What about it?

Q Do you have anything?

Q A readout?

MR. SPEAKES: No. I direct you to the senior administration official's backgrounder, you'll get the same information.

Q Larry, if you could -- all of us are going to be going --

MR. SPEAKES: You got more on background than you got in the Cabinet.

Q A lot of us will be going live tomorrow. Can you see if you can get details on the length of the ceremony and what band, or whatever, is going to be there?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know that there is going to be any bands. It's just going to be a very simple greeting ceremony to express the President's welcome home to them and to get them on their way as quickly as possible because the President wants as little disruption in their lives as he can, but he does want to make the gesture of saying, "I'm proud to have you back."

Q And it is your -- I want to make sure I'm straight. It's your position that bringing them to Maryland saves time in the long-run compared to just letting them go through JFK?

MR. SPEAKES: That's TWA's recommendation to us. That it does, because it would be -- I don't say that it saves time, but it would be virtually the same time of getting off the plane and going through the terminals at JFK and off to other -- there, getting their baggage sorted through, going through customs, all of that. It would be virtually as quick to get off the plane, put their bags on a bus and go to BWI, Dulles, or --

Q Chris, I've already filed.

Q Larry, you would deny any suggestion that it was the White House that came up with this plan and changed TWA's plan to go through New York?

Q You're filing?

Q I've already filed.

MR. SPEAKES: You can't make controversy out of it. Keep trying, but you won't do it. Anybody -- have you got a controversy?

Q Yes. I have a question. (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: Oh, just a question.

Q Are you going to give us an advance text?

MR. SPEAKES: We might. Yes, we'll try to, but I don't know.

Q Larry, logistics again. I'm not sure I understood. Are we to get out to the airport ourselves --

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q -- or is there going to be a bus from here?

MR. SPEAKES: No bus. Get out by yourself.

Q And you did say 1:00 p.m. local. That seems to me to be longer -- 1:00 p.m. and a 3:00 p.m. landing?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q That seems like a long time.

MR. SPEAKES: No. It's about eight and a half hours from Frankfurt to here and you do a six-hour time change, and you minus three and it comes out between 3:00 and 4:00 p.m.

Q Besides Mrs. Reagan, who else will be going up with the President?

MR. SPEAKES: That's it.

Q Shultz, maybe?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know whether Shultz will from here or not. It will be me and Regan and McFarlane, Kuhn, the military aide and the doctor.

Q I'll bet someone will find someone afterward that will say, "I wish the President hadn't come."

MR. SPEAKES: I know.

Q We'll have to go to all three airports now to track that one person down. (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, you've got to get out there early to get them coming in.

Q If very few come in, if fewer than the majority, you would be surprised?

Q Watch out, it's a trap. (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: Keep playing.

Q If anyone can find that one person, Sambo will. (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: I'll tell you what I'll do, it's -- whose time is it to print the full transcript? You did -- did you do it?

Q Oh, no, we're not going to do that.

MR. SPEAKES: No, print the full transcript and say that Speakes said they're trying to make controversy out of this and bring all the controversial questions.

Q Well, I don't want to scare you, but George Watson locked up what he thought was every copy of the television tape of Ronald Reagan saying, "Boy, after saying "Rambo" last night --"

MR. SPEAKES: I'll tell you what --

Q But he missed one. (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: If George -- what's his name? -- Watson has got a tape of this, these people lied to me and he'd better get to them.

Q They also lied to NBC.

Q He locked them all up and burned them. (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: No. He said it didn't exist. Your producer in --

Q They may not. That may be why I haven't seen one.

MR. SPEAKES: I know it didn't exist initially. Your producer in the Oval Office --

Q You mean a video tape or --

Q Video.

MR. SPEAKES: Video tape.

Q I heard the audio tape on CBS.

MR. SPEAKES: Oh, yes, I've heard that, too.

Q We were told there was no video tape.

MR. SPEAKES: So were we.

Q Was the White House ever --

MR. SPEAKES: You may have spilled the beans. (Laughter.) You may have spilled the beans.

Q Was the White House ever considered as a place to welcome them?

MR. SPEAKES: Oh, it certainly was thought of, yes. But, as I say, the President thought that would delay their getting home and he simply doesn't want to intrude upon their personal lives any more than to give them this expression of welcome home.

Q Larry, one other question. On the Fourth of July, usually the President is not here and the grounds are open to --

MR. SPEAKES: The grounds will be open to staff. Staff passholders.

Q The grounds will be open to staff? Is there any chance he's going to make any kind of an appearance?

MR. SPEAKES: Don't plan to right now. He may sit up on the porch, but that's it.

Q Well, I know the President is having a small number of guests that night, including --

MR. SPEAKES: And you're not included.

Q No, I'm not included, but including an associate of

mine --

MR. SPEAKES: Oh, I see.

Q A regular Sunday associate of mine.

MR. SPEAKES: Oh, Brinkley's coming in?

Q I can't say, but my associate said that after the President sees his column tomorrow in the newspaper, he might get dis-invited. (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: Or he might get his ear blistered when he gets here.

Q I think my associate's view is the President has caved to terrorism. But I won't speak for my associate.

Q I think the President ought to invite him to -- with him to greet the hostages --

MR. SPEAKES: Who, George?

Q -- who he said were morally reprehensible.

MR. SPEAKES: George said that?

Q Yes.

MR. SPEAKES: Maybe we could get George to withdraw his column so he can keep his invitation. (Laughter.)

Q Well, George is a nice fellow. I want the record to show that George is a nice fellow. Turn the machine back on, Mary. I'd like the record to show that George Will is a very nice fellow, a nice man. He's brilliant, and I admire him. He's wrong, but I still admire him. (Laughter.)

Q Sambo.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

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