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THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

PRESS BRIEFING
BY
LARRY SPEAKES

July 2, 1985

Andrews Air Force Base
Suitland, Maryland

MR. SPEAKES: The President was -- came on board with Mrs. Reagan and was greeted first by Ed Myers, President of TWA, then the flight crew -- Zimmerman, first, who is the flight officer, I believe; Maresca, who is the number two guy; and then Captain Testrake.

Captain Testrake walked back to the center cabin where the ex-hostages were seated --

Q I'm sorry, who was that third one?

MR. SPEAKES: Testrake, the pilot. And said, "Folks, I want you to -- no, he said to the President, he said, "Folks, let me take you back here. I want you to meet some good friends of mine."

Q "Let me take you back here -- "

MR. SPEAKES: "I want you to meet some good friends of mine." Then he said, "Ladies and gentlemen -- "

Q Hold on just a minute.

Q Wait, wait, wait.

Q The pilot to the President and his wife?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. And then he said to the group, "Ladies and gentlemen, President and Mrs. Reagan." The ex-hostages stood and applauded for a good minute.

The President walked to the center of the cabin on the far side of the aircraft and down the aisle, shook a few hands as he went.

Q On the far side?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. Then he said, "I want to apologize for keeping you waiting."

Q Hold it, hold it.

Q Yes.

Q Shook a few hands?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. " -- apologize for keeping you waiting." He said, "We stopped by Arlington Cemetery and placed flowers on the grave of Robbie Stethem. And his sister was there."

Q Stopped by Arlington Cemetery and --

Q -- placed --

Q Flowers on the grave of Robbie? He did use the name

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"Robbie"?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. Robbie Stethem.

Q Okay.

MR. SPEAKES: He said, "This is the one --"

Q Bobbie?

MR. SPEAKES: Robbie. "This is the one sad note --"

Q And said his sister was there?

MR. SPEAKES: Sister there. "This is the one sad note today. And there are seven other sad notes. And we're going to continue to work on that."

Q All right. Let me make sure I have that. "This is the one sad note today and there are -- "

Q This was the one sad --

MR. SPEAKES: This is the one sad note -- or was.

Q Seven other --

MR. SPEAKES: Seven other sad notes. "And we're going to continue to work on that." He says, "I know you have family and friends out here and I'm not going to take too much longer." He said --

Q What was that again?

Q Repeat it.

MR. SPEAKES: "I know you have family and friends and I'm not going to take too much longer. What a great day this is. Thank you."

Mrs. Reagan spoke and said, "So happy you are home."

Q Too much longer. This is -- what did he say about this is a great --

Q What a great day?

MR. SPEAKES: "What a great day this is."

Q And she said, again.

MR. SPEAKES: "So happy you are home." And that was it.

Q Did she shake hands at all or --

MR. SPEAKES: She shook a few hands, yes.

Q And then what happened?

MR. SPEAKES: Then he walked back out and stood right here.

Q All right. And did Regan or McFarlane or anyone say anything?

MR. SPEAKES: No.

Q It was you and Regan and McFarlane? Is Ed Myers the one who was walking down the stairs first?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q This tall guy with the -- balding guy?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q "I know you have family and friends here"?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q "I won't take much longer. What a great day."

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. That's it.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

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