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THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

PRESS BRIEFING
BY
LARRY SPEAKES

July 11, 1985

The Briefing Room

9:25 A.M. EDT

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9:45 A.M. EDT

#1490-07/11

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MR. SPEAKES: The President at 10:00 a.m. this morning is meeting with three Senators, Strom Thurmond, Orrin Hatch, and Paul Laxalt on the Balanced Budget Amendment. The Senate Judiciary Committee is beginning hearings on the Balanced Budget Amendment. They want to talk to the President about how he wishes them to proceed.

Q What time is that?

MR. SPEAKES: At 10:00 a.m.

We had on the schedule a Senate Finance Committee lunch today. That is being rescheduled. Dole had a lunch on the Hill with the Class of '86, so that will be rescheduled.

Q As long as we have our priorities straight.

MR. SPEAKES: Domestic Policy Council -- this meeting --

Q Another day? Another day?

Q He's still pissed off.

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, another day. It is hard to have lunch other than --

Q That man works wonders.

MR. SPEAKES: Two lunches?

Q Well, I always thought the President asked you to lunch, that probably took priority, but I guess I don't understand Senator Dole's --

Q Unless you are angry at the President

MR. SPEAKES: The Domestic Policy Council meeting this afternoon takes up a number of subjects -- the Fair Labor Standards Act and the court decisions affecting it, federal employee health benefits and integration legislation. I don't expect any decisions that will be announced out of that.

Q How long is the Balanced Budget Amendment meeting scheduled for?

MR. SPEAKES: About fifteen or twenty minutes?

I don't have anything really to go into this morning. Have you got any questions pending on anything?

Q Can you elaborate on what Don Regan said to the wires about the list?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, he said that Drew Lewis and -- who was the other one -- Mac Baldrige head a long list of candidates for that job. That is what he said.

MORE

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Q What did he mean by "heading the list?"

Q Yes, because --

Q That can mean everything and nothing.

MR. SPEAKES: Could be. The wires interpreted it as if they were leading candidates, but the way he said it -- and you will have to do your own interpretation -- they head the list.

Q One of those people has said that he is absolutely not interested, so it is really strange that the Chief of Staff would --

MR. SPEAKES: Take him off the list.

Q Regan won't have Darman, will he?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't think Darman wants it. The Wall Street Journal has a clarification of Mr. Darman's remarks this morning, right?

Q Of course he wants it, but he can't be seen to be wanting it.

MR. SPEAKES: No, I don't think that is true.

Q No, I don't think he does want it, no. How can he follow Stockman? There is no opportunity to do anything in the next three years.

Q I don't see why he would come back after the way he was treated.

Q Well, he could probably save the Republic, because this crowd is running into the largest deficits that we have ever had in our country.

Q Could you give us a minute Larry? We would like to hash this out. Go ahead, Bill. What do you have to say to that? (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: Does he or doesn't he? Does Darman dye his hair, huh? (Laughter.)

Ira.

Q Does the President have a view --

Q And where would he go to dye it?

Q Does the President have a view of Senator Laxalt running for President?

MR. SPEAKES: No.

Q Does he --

Q You won't tell us?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know that Laxalt has announced yet.

Q What is the President's stand on the budget lobbying and trying to get something together?

MR. SPEAKES: It is in the hands of the committee of the conference now, and I don't know that the President has any direct involvement today.

Q Does the President have any reaction --

MR. SPEAKES: To urge them -- to ask them to move quickly.

Q Does the President have any reaction to what seems to be the outrage by many Senate Republicans that they were undercutting this and that they had -- many of the expressions were, gone to the well, and all of that, and now they're left high and dry?

MR. SPEAKES: Not specifically. We are aware that they did take a courageous stand in the Senate over a long period of time and the President appreciates that. That's the only way we would have gotten a budget, and the only way we will get a budget is because the Senate Republicans were willing to step forward and make the hard choices. And the President is grateful for that.

Q He betrayed them, right?

MR. SPEAKES: No. As you know, the President was reluctant to -- always -- to do anything to Social Security, but he went along reluctantly, knowing that that was the only way to put the package together from the Senate side. When it became apparent in the committee that it was -- in the conference -- that it was -- there was an impasse, then the President said perhaps we should look for other ways to achieve the same amount of savings. And that's the state of the play, right where we are.

Mike?

Q Yes. North Korea, the other day, said that the President's --

MR. SPEAKES: Close.

Q -- speech on terrorism was tantamount to an act of war. Is there any reaction from the White House on that?

MR. SPEAKES: No, there's not.

Q How about to Castro?

MR. SPEAKES: Helen.

No, there's not for Castro either.

Q Back to the polyp, does the President go on a special diet today?

MR. SPEAKES: He may have some diet restrictions, but I don't know what the timetable for --

Q Do you know now what time he may go to the hospital?

MR. SPEAKES: I think he's going to get out of here at 1:30 p.m. and go directly into the procedure when he gets there.

Q On that subject, doctors have said that for a period of about four hours he really, with the combination of Demerol and Valium or whatever the sedatives they use intravenously, would be out of commission. Are you --

MR. SPEAKES: Doctors are generalizing there. I know for a fact from my past medical education that it varies from patient to patient and it depends on tolerance for the test and it depends on --

Q There's no way of knowing that.

MR. SPEAKES: -- the patient. That's exactly right.

Q So what Andrea wants to know is what happens if he goes bonkers?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't think he will go bonkers.

Q Is Bush being told to stay in town?

Q Thank you, Bill.

Q Can we quote you on that?

Q Speakes denies Reagan bonkers. (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: No, Bush has his travel schedule, which the Vice President's office has announced, and he'll be keeping to his travel schedule.

Q Will he be out of town?

Q Can we go over the schedule tomorrow a little bit in terms of what you plan to do? If he leaves here at 1:30 p.m, are you -- you're going to talk to no one up there?

MR. SPEAKES: That's right.

Q And you'll come back here?

MR. SPEAKES: Just in time for network broadcast. No, when --

Q You're going to take a pool out there --

MR. SPEAKES: The pool will go out with the President, see him in at the hospital, and then return to the White House because he doesn't come out again. I will stay there --

Q You started to say something about your timing.

MR. SPEAKES: What?

Q You started to tell Chris something about your timing.

MR. SPEAKES: I'm trying to get into it. I will come into the -- I will stay there through the procedure, sit down with the doctors after it's finished, get the story from them, get in the car and come back here and make a statement to you, whatever hour that may be. I don't -- I can't give you a guess.

Q Let me ask you about that, because I remember one time -- I guess it must have been after he had the first polyp -- it got delayed for several hours, as you remember, because it turned out he had a polyp, and I guess you waited until the biopsy results were in. Would you be likely to do that, because --

MR. SPEAKES: I will come tell you the exact state of play as soon as I can talk to the doctors and get here. If there are further tests to be done, I'll tell you there are further tests to be done.

Q Well, if you could give us a mid-term report and say, "There were umpty-up polyps removed and we're waiting for the biopsies."

Q Roto Rooter, should do it.

Q -- have the names of the doctors? It won't be just Cattau, will it?

MR. SPEAKES: Cattau heads them. We will give you -- when we complete it -- give you everybody that participated, right down to the guy that sweeps the floor.

Q Larry, what --

Q Do all these guys have medical licenses, Larry?
(Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: No, a bunch of them are newspaper people.
(Laughter.) They are Republicans, though. (Laughter.)

Q I've never understood why the President doesn't go to Walter Reed. He was in the Army. He says he was in the Horse Cavalry. Why does he go to the Naval Hospital?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know, but I think it's something that we should appoint a committee to look into. Would you like to head it?

Q Larry --

Q Well, no, because I think it probably would find the same results. There's no reason. He just wants to do it.

MR. SPEAKES: Maybe you can play catch-up with CBS by exploring that on your show tonight.

Q Will he stay --

Q Is there -- is one of the reasons --

Q -- in the Presidential Suite?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q And Mrs. Reagan's still coming back to the White House?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. She's going to go out there with him and come back.

That suite, for those of you who are interested in those kind of things -- are magazine's here today -- the suite is -- get my papers straight here -- the suite normally goes for \$452 a day there at Bethesda.

Q -- that's cheap.

MR. SPEAKES: Once we get the bills back here from it,

they will be reviewed by the Counsel's Office and the President will pay whatever he's supposed to pay on them.

Q Does he have Blue Cross?

MR. SPEAKES: The President will spend the night -- I think he does -- in the Medical Evaluation and Treatment Unit, it's called. There's a bedroom there, a couple of additional bedrooms in the suite, a sitting room, a meeting room, a kitchen and two medical exam rooms, in that suite where Presidents have gone, as long as I've been going out there with them.

Q It's \$452 a night?

Q Larry, is one of the reasons he's spending the night because he would be there and ready and prepped in case they find something that has to be taken out?

MR. SPEAKES: That is the normal -- no, that's not it.

Q Because doctors have said to us that that's not normal --

MR. SPEAKES: You shouldn't pay attention to all these doctors that you --

Q Larry --

MR. SPEAKES: -- careen up out there somewhere.

Q -- let me finish my question.

MR. SPEAKES: You can get anybody to talk. What is -- the reason he's staying there is because that's the way Bethesda does it with this procedure. If you go out to Bethesda and get that, you'll stay overnight, too.

Q They would keep me there overnight?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. I say, if you go out --

Q My consultant is Roto Rooter.

MR. SPEAKES: -- you'll spend the night there. So, that's the normal procedure.

Bernie.

Q Is the President planning to speak to Dole --

Q And Otto the Orkin Man.

Q -- today, or before he goes into the hospital?

MR. SPEAKES: On?

Q Sam, people who are 50 years old and --

MR. SPEAKES: I don't think so, Bernie.

Q -- over shouldn't talk too much about this procedure in a joking way.

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know of any specific plans to talk -- Something might come up he wants to talk to him, but I don't know of any plans to.

Helen.

Q I know of another individual --

Q Aside from the suite -- the cost of the suite, will the President pay his own medical bills and the doctors and --

MR. SPEAKES: Whatever -- Sure. Yes. Whatever he's supposed to pay, he pays. I don't know what kind of benefits he gets.

Q I want to follow that up. Wouldn't you expect the President gets some kind of either free or cut-rate care by virtue of his office? Has this been settled some time before or --

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know. Maybe he's -- being the Commander-in-Chief, he gets some sort of what military get when they go out there. But I don't know. Whatever it is, he'll pay it.

Joe? Had something?

Frank?

Q President Assad was thanked by State, I think, yesterday for showing interest in tightening security in Beirut Airport. He has also been thanked for his role in the 39. Have we got any indication that he is being anymore helpful in finding the seven?

MR. SPEAKES: Well, we know he is in the position to be helpful. And other than that, we don't have any specific comments. We are continuing to work for the seven there. We are doing everything we can to facilitate the release of the Americans and the other Europeans in captivity. We'll continue our maximum effort.

We're profoundly concerned about the risk to countless other innocents -- Americans and Europeans included -- who travel by air in that region every day. The problem is that no governmental or other authority is able or willing to treat hijacking at Beirut Airport as a crime --

Q Who has?

MR. SPEAKES: -- that have to be isolated so they can be dealt as they are everywhere else in the world. We will keep our effort to deny Beirut International Airport to terrorists in an effort to suspend commercial activities at the Airport.

We have been in discussions with Lebanese officials on this specific as well as the general problems regarding the security situation at Beirut. Many of these precautions which need to be taken are very standard -- tight screening to keep passengers, visitors, employees from bring weapons in the Airport; a complete ban on militias at the Airport; improved physical security measures, such as good fences or walls to protect the perimeter of the Airport; and an effective security force which will take control of the Airport and, just as important, maintain control of the Airport.

The problem has not been really knowing what the standards are. And these are examples that I've given you. The problem is finding the ability to enforce effective control and doing so on a sustained basis.

Q But it sounds like you're saying that if Lebanon will now only take these measures and enforce them effectively that will satisfy our requirement about the Beirut Airport?

MR. SPEAKES: That's what I've told you for three straight days, and you've chosen to ignore it. But one of these days it'll soak in.

Q Well -- yes, but I was listening to what's-his-name, and, you know, he kept yelling and screaming, "We're going to close the Beirut Airport." And, apparently, we're backing away from that kind of talk.

MR. SPEAKES: No. We've indicated that we want to close it to hijackers. That's it.

Q But you're indicating now that if Lebanon would only take the kind of action necessary that will be -- that'll do the job.

Q Where do we stand on the administration taking action --

MR. SPEAKES: -- didn't catch it. Went right by --

Q Where do we stand on the administration taking action against the hijackers in terms of rewards or indictments or things like that?

MR. SPEAKES: We are considering a number of legal steps, as the Attorney General said yesterday. And these are under consideration. And at such time as we wish to announce what we're doing, we'll be pleased to do so.

Let me go --

Q Do you expect anything soon?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't have a timetable.

Sheila?

Q Larry, can you give us some guidance on what kind of alternate -- back on the budget -- what kind of alternate savings does the White House plans call for? For example, are you trying to insist on a certain number of programs be zeroed out or --

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. That would be a logical way to do it. There are a number of Senate-passed

programs that have been zeroed out that would be -- if the House would take those -- would be a logical way to proceed. There are also some other areas such as the taxing of Social Security benefits for state and local employees, things like that.

Dave?

Q Larry, how does the White House interpret the remarks in the past from Congressman Solarz about the Soviet crack regarding the cutback of 25 percent not only in launchers, but warheads?

MR. SPEAKES: We've seen the story and -- about the -- Solarz' comment by the Soviet official where he indicated that they would extend their 25 percent cut not only to missiles but to warheads. We would welcome Soviet flexibility in this area, especially in the area of warheads, which would be a new statement on their part. But until this is tabled officially at Geneva, we don't have any specific comment. If the Soviets are serious, they should lay this on the table at Geneva where it can be discussed in the proper form.

Q As far as you know, this has not been discussed in any form in Geneva?

MR. SPEAKES: It has not, no.

Q Even around the table --

MR. SPEAKES: It has not, no.

Paula?

Q Is the President planning to issue any time soon the statement on affirmative action in response to --

MR. SPEAKES: That story is --

Q What's that --

Q Affirmative --

MR. SPEAKES: Affirmative action -- the Juan Williams story -- David, that's puzzling to us. We don't know where that -- I can't find where that came from -- not from the White House. The President's position on affirmative action is well-known. We've stated it many times and I don't know of any plan to issue --

Q Desperate, isn't he? (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: -- a new statement on it. So --

Q What about his position on the use of hiring goals and timetables.

MR. SPEAKES: Quotas -- no.

Q No, it's distinctly different from quotas.

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know specifically about the so-called hiring goals. The President's position is clear. We have a number of laws that mandate various affirmative action goals within the various departments -- Labor, Education, others -- and we certainly follow the letter of the law on those.

Ira?

Q Will the President be taping his radio addresss?

MR. SPEAKES: He plans to give it from Camp David provided that he is released -- depending on how -- when he gets out of the hospital and if logistics work. I think we'll probably do a backup taping in case he doesn't get out before noon or isn't able to get up to --

Q It'll be a hospital containment --

Q Are you going to be around Saturday morning to --

MR. SPEAKES: No. What will be done when the President gets out of the hospital is Mark will tell the pool or whoever's out there -- I guess you have to come on your own Saturday morning -- that -- what the current situation is.

Q When is he leaving roughly?

Q How's is going to work --

MR. SPEAKES: When?

Q Nine? Ten?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't really have a timetable for his leaving. You know how it is checking out of the hospital. You got to pay your bills and get the little thing off your wrist.
(Laughter.)

Q Can we go through that a little bit? Will there not be a pool on Saturday?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't think so. Why don't you see if Mark will come out here and see if we need a pool. I don't think we need a pool Saturday.

Q Take a wheelchair to the door?

Q And there's one other thing I had. Is that -- is Bethesda available to reporters after the pool leaves or --

MR. SPEAKES: They have an auditorium out there that we've always used and I think that facility will be available where there's some phones. But we're not doing anything out there.

Q Isn't there going to be coverage of the helicopter lift-off?

MR. SPEAKES: From Bethesda? I -- open coverage at Bethesda Saturday morning? Yes.

Whoever wants to come out, they're welcome to it.

MR. WEINBERG: Just like all the other times.

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. And Mark will tell the pool that the President got up feeling fine, and going to Camp David.

Q Are you going to place a departure time on the --

Q Will he drive?

Q There's no --

MR. SPEAKES: Don't have a departure time. It just has to be loose as to when he gets out of Bethesda.

Q He will drive from the entrance to the pad?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

MR. DJERIJIAN: Not necessarily.

Q -- no?

Q Bicycle there.

Q Larry, back on Beirut Airport, does the White House have anything to say about these countermeasures that are being called for by some of the Arab states against U.S. carriers?

MR. SPEAKES: Not really. Ed, anything to say on that?

MR. DJERIJIAN: No.

MR. SPEAKES: No.

Q What is it that you think you threw at us that we didn't catch in your statement that --

Q Don't be paranoid. (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: Well, you know, it might not play for television -- if they can't boil it down to a minute, thirty or so.

Q -- backing out of that saloon with guns blazing, isn't it? (Laughter.) It's always rough.

MR. SPEAKES: No. I mean -- (laughter) -- I just happened to tell you exactly what we're telling our allies there, and we're telling the Lebanese in private conversations. I just happened to drop it here on you, but you didn't catch it, so --

Q Well, we all wrote it down. I mean we -- asked you about it.

MR. SPEAKES: You didn't write it down.

Q No, I didn't write it down. You're right.
(Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: Bill?

Q I wrote down Lebanon Airport, and I'm going to --

MR. SPEAKES: We're getting a little ragged.

Bill, anything?

Q Yes, that's what you're saying to them. What are they saying back to you?

MR. SPEAKES: Well, we're indicating to them what we want, and they're claiming they're making some steps, and whatever they make as far as security is concerned, we welcome it, but they have not done enough yet.

Q The briefing at noon?

Q -- they're doing a bunch of these things that you have got in your list?

MR. SPEAKES: Pardon?

Q They're telling you that they are doing a bunch of the things that you've got on your list?

MR. SPEAKES: No. They've told us that they're making some steps, which they've said publicly.

Q What about banning the militia from the airport? That hasn't been done, has it?

MR. DJERIJIAN: It's important to note that that is not an all-inclusive list that -- mentioned.

Q We might raise the ante later, right?

Q What about the banning of the militia from the airport? Has there been any progress on that that you know of?

MR. SPEAKES: Not that I'm aware of, no.

Q -- ABC reported that Pakistan has managed to obtain Krytons to make switches for nuclear weapons. Do you have anything on that?

MR. SPEAKES: I've seen that, but that's an old story.

Q They bought it from Israel, I think.

MR. DJERIJIAN: That is an old story.

Q Is that John Scalli?

MR. DJERIJIAN: Kryton case, yes.

Q Yes, but I mean, nine months ago, I mean, someone was arrested here --

Q Is that Scalli?

Q Sound like it's Scalli.

Q -- yesterday, they tried 50 of them?

MR. DJERIJIAN: No. There was a Seymour Hirsch TV program on that subject, and that was followed up by a couple of news stories. It is an old story, and we have intimations --

Q So, it's still a good story.

Q The old stories are the best stories.

Q His polyp was an old story.

Q Obviously, they've found some non-nuclear device with those Krytons. I mean, that's what I heard this morning; I don't know.

MR. SPEAKES: Go to the French --

Q -- we can get you the statements we've made on that several months ago.

MR. SPEAKES: Okay, anybody got anything else? We're getting a little loose here. Whatever it's worth, we're going to --

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

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