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THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

PRESS BRIEFING
BY
LARRY SPEAKES

July 2, 1985

The Briefing Room

12:24 P.M. EDT

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12:47 P.M. EDT

#1480-07/02

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PRESS BRIEFINGS
BY
LARRY SPEAKES

July 2, 1985

The Briefing Room

12:24 P.M. EDT

MR. SPEAKES: The President today is announcing the appointment of Michael E. Baroody to be Assistant Secretary of Labor for Policy.

This afternoon, he has a couple of meetings with a person -- with the 1985 Disabled Veteran of the Year.

And a meeting with Edward Cadman, President of the Rotary Clubs International.

Just a few minutes ago, the President telephoned Patrick Stethem in Waldorf, Maryland, and he said, "I realize that this is an especially difficult time for you --

Q Go slow.

MR. SPEAKES: -- and your family, as you see others arriving at Andrews Air Force Base. With all the happiness that will be there, Nancy and I wanted you to know that our thoughts and prayers are with you and your family. Your countrymen respect Robert Stethem's -- Robert Stethem as an American hero. Give my best to your family."

He then said that he and Mrs. Reagan, before going to Andrews, will go to Arlington Cemetery to place flowers on the grave of Robert Stethem.

Q Travel Pool?

Q Let me just hear that again. The President and Mrs. Reagan will go to Arlington?

MR. SPEAKES: To place flowers on the grave of Robert Stethem.

Q What about a pool for that -- stuff like that?

MR. SPEAKES: Hold your horse. Hold your horse and I'll tell you. The --

Q When you get a chance, can you do that last line -- when he told them --

Q Yes. I didn't either, come to think of it.

MR. SPEAKES: The -- "Your countrymen respect Robert Stethem as an American hero."

The President this morning made the suggestion to his staff when he came to the office that this would be an important gesture he could make, and so he will drive from here to Fort Myer and then go by helicopter to Andrews. Leaves the White House at about 2:55 p.m. as it stands now with the travel pool. The pool should assemble at 2:20 p.m. The travel pool will go by helicopter to Andrews, and then back to the Pentagon at the conclusion. We look

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for the President to be at Andrews at 3:35 p.m., depending on the time of the TWA --

Q Can you go over that again? I apologize for not concentrating.

Q Yes. I'm confused too.

MR. SPEAKES: For not paying any attention, because you didn't think it was anything to it.

Q No, I am paying attention. I want to get it right.

MR. SPEAKES: "This is an especially difficult time for you and your family --

Q No, no, I'm sorry. Not the statement --

Q The logistics --

Q What are the logistics of the travel pool?

MR. SPEAKES: Get in a car, drive to Fort Myer, cover the event. Also, those others who want to cover it can go in there somewhere. You won't get very close. Then, he will go get on a helicopter -- the travel pool gets on a helicopter -- fly to Andrews and stay there.

Q -- for Mr. Stethem, Larry.

Q Is this the expanded pool?

MR. SPEAKES: Pardon?

Q Is this an expanded pool, or the tight travel pool?

MR. SPEAKES: Tight travel pool.

Q Are you permitting a live camera there?

Q Who is it?

Q -- do live coverage of that, Helen.

Q Is that --

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know how we can arrange that.

Let me get Mark --

Q A response from Mr. Stethem?

MR. SPEAKES: Pardon?

Q Does he think --

Q A response from Mr. Stethem?

MR. SPEAKES: He appreciated it very much.

Q I'm just talking about a picture. Just a standard

Q Travel pool is how many networks --

Q What time will he get to Andrews?

Q -- how many people? Could you help us on the pool?

Q You know what it is. It's posted up --

Q I don't know what it is.

Q Is it one network camera?

MR. SPEAKES: You've never been in one?

Q Is it one network camera?

MR. SPEAKES: Thirteen people.

Q All right. Then Air Force One --

Q What time will he get to Arlington?

Q No, not an Air Force One pool. Thirteen persons, standard in-town travel pool.

Q What time does he get to Arlington?

MR. SPEAKES: He would get to Arlington, as I said earlier, at 3:35 p.m., if the plane arrives on time.

Q No, see we are both confused. He is going to Arlington first?

MR. SPEAKES: No -- oh, to Arlington -- I am sorry.

Q What time do you think that he will get to Arlington to lay the flowers?

MR. SPEAKES: He will get to Arlington approximately eight minutes after 2:55 p.m.

Q Is he choppering to Andrews --

Q Well, I mean, they'll want to go live --

MR. SPEAKES: I think we have several briefings going on here, and if you want to concentrate, you may.

What do you want? He is leaving here at 2:55 p.m. It will take about five to eight minutes for him to get to Arlington. So that would put him there at 2:03 p.m. -- 2:00 to 2:05 p.m. He lays the flowers at Arlington.

Q At 3:05 p.m.

MR. SPEAKES: At 3:05 p.m. Then he goes back to the car and drives over to the helicopter. Then he gets out of the car --

Q Pentagon?

MR. SPEAKES: No, Fort Meyer. Then he gets out of the helicopter.

Q No, out of the car. (Laughter..)

MR. SPEAKES: Out of the car. Gets on the helicopter.

Q Flies to the car.

MR. SPEAKES: Bruce, you got it? Drake? Wake Drake up.

Look, I tell you what. We will deal with your producers, who have somewhat more intelligence, about these matters.

Q If you think that will solve it with me.

Q Not all of us have producers, Larry, and some of us need to know where --

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Q Is Bill going to --

Q Is the pool that goes from the Pentagon -- the pool goes to the Pentagon, you said.

MR. SPEAKES: No, the pool goes to Fort Meyer.

Q The pool goes to Fort Meyer, too, and flies from there?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q So then the pool will accompany him to Andrews and will land first and --

MR. SPEAKES: You've got it.

Q -- get his arrival at Andrews.

Q Who is the newspaper pooler?

MR. SPEAKES: Maybe we had better rechoose our pool, because they don't seem very qualified to -- (laughter) -- cover this thing.

MR. WEINBERG: I'll tell you what. There are thirteen slots, and we will put names in a hat and draw them.

Q Last night, on the tape the Boston Globe was said to be pool -- That is a listing -- the pool is not -- and it has QNA as the print pool. The question is, which one is it?

MR. SPEAKES: Who is it? Is it QNA or Boston Globe?

MR. WEINBERG: Boston Globe, just like it says. Travel pool.

MR. SPEAKES: Boston Globe.

Q Larry, did you decide on an answer to that question about whether you would permit a live camera in there just for -- at our -- at Arlington.

MR. SPEAKES: We will permit one if you can get one. That is, we have people --

MR. WEINBERG: The pool producers have been contacted, so work it out with them.

Q Who is the pooler?

Q Do you know, will the new travel plans allow the newspaper pooler, who is theoretically going to have to come back to Fort Meyer with the chopper -- is he still going to be able to brief us before he leaves then?

MR. SPEAKES: The newspaper pooler will come back around.

MR. WEINBERG: To the Pentagon. But the Andrews activities are unaffected by the addition to the schedule, other than --

Q But the question is, will he have the time to brief us -- that still remain in the pool?

MR. WEINBERG: Sure.

Q Who is the mystery pooler?

MR. SPEAKES: The Boston Globe. There he is.

Another announcement. During the period of February 10th through the 22nd, 1985, a joint U.S.-Lao team conducted a full-scale excavation of a U.S. Air Force C-130 crash site near Pakse - P-A-K-S-E - Laos.

Q Larry, you're going too fast with these numbers.

Q Yes. I haven't understood one word you've --

Q Can you start the whole thing again, please?

Q Do you have 305 --

MR. SPEAKES: Okay. Are you tuned up?

Q You're going far too fast.

MR. SPEAKES: Let's cut the -- whatever the noise is in the back down. Maybe that'll be helpful.

Is there something on back there?

Q Well, no, there's --

MR. SPEAKES: No. There's somebody --

Q Somebody on that phone back there.

Q Well, see, he's having as much difficulty making them understand and I did.

MR. SPEAKES: Why doesn't he find a better place to go.

Peter, you want to handle the noise in the back? Tell them to quiet -- just say -- speak the word "quiet" in a loud tone.

Q Nobody's saying anything back here. The only noise is coming out of the front row of the briefing room.

MR. SPEAKES: No.

Q No, there's someone on the phone.

Q Just go. Let's go.

MR. SPEAKES: February 10th through 22nd, 1985 a joint U.S.-Lao team conducted a full scale investigation of a U.S. Air Force C-130 crash site near Pakse, Laos.

Q Spell that.

MR. SPEAKES: P-A-K-S-E. The remains of 13 U.S. servicemen were recovered during the excavation. They have now been identified by the Army's Central Identification Library -- Laboratory in Hawaii. This is a major effort by the identification laboratory that resulted in being able to successfully identify these service men. This was the -- is the first ever of bodies returned -- identified from Laos.

It is the first joint Lao-U.S.-Vietnam effort. The next of kin --

Q Vietnam did you say?

Q Vietnam was in --

MR. SPEAKES: Vietnam?

MR. CHILDRESS: U.S.-Lao.

MR. SIMS: U.S.-Lao, not Vietnam.

MR. SPEAKES: Oh, I thought you said Vietnam.

Q U.S.-Lao.

MR. SPEAKES: The next of kin had been notified by the Air Force. The President will be writing the families personally expressing his sympathy for the anguish of their long ordeal during this period of uncertainty.

Q Do you have a crash date, Larry?

MR. SPEAKES: We hope this is the first of many such excavations in Laos and he greatly -- the President greatly appreciates the cooperation of the Lao government.

In 1972 --

Q Can you go a little slower?

MR. SPEAKES: -- the aircraft was struck by anti-aircraft fire causing a fuel leak inside the aircraft. For approximately 10 minutes the aircraft continued to fly when it caught fire, exploded and fell to the ground in Sedone -- S-E-D-O-N-E -- province near Pakse, Laos.

Search and rescue aircraft recovered two crew members the same night. But there were no other signs, such as strobe lights and beeper signals from the area.

Q Were they alive or --

MR. SPEAKES: On December 22, 1972 a ground search party recovered the remains of another individual

who was later identified. The remaining 13 crew members were declared missing in action.

The date of the crash in December was December 21, 1972.

The remains are scheduled to leave Hickam Air Force Base in Hawaii on July 5th at 9:00 a.m. Hawaii time, and travel to Travis Air Force Base, California.

Q Larry, on that issue, where was the plane hit?

MR. SPEAKES: What part of the plane?

Q What part -- No, what geographic location?

MR. SPEAKES: Ten minutes out of Pakse.

Q Over what country?

MR. SPEAKES: Laos.

Q When did you say it's leaving Hickam?

MR. SPEAKES: July 5th.

Q Those two who were recovered, were they alive or dead --

MR. SPEAKES: They were alive.

Q They were alive.

MR. SPEAKES: Lou.

Q Does this signify any other kind of improvement in relations between the United States and Laos? Is there some other dividend from this?

MR. SPEAKES: Lou, not that I can specify. Bob, want you -- this is Dick Childress, not Bob Childress, Dick Childress.

MR. CHILDRESS: We've been trying to improve relations with Laos. We've told them our principle measure of their sincerity is actions on the POW/MIA issue. We consider Pakse a major step in this process. We're in dialogue with them on future steps to continue the effort. And we hope for more craft-site searches or unilateral Lao efforts to allow us to go forward with an improvement.

Q When will the names be issued?

MR. SPEAKES: The Defense Department has them. How soon will they be ready to do this?

MR. SIMS: They can do it --

MR. SPEAKES: They can do it now.

MR. SIMS: -- this afternoon.

Q Can you tell us what kind of a mission that --

Q What today?

Q This afternoon.

Q -- C-130 was on?

Q What?

Q What was that? We couldn't hear the question.

MR. SPEAKES: Wait a minute. Let's take questions one at a time. When will the Defense Department be ready? They're ready now with the names. What kind of mission was the plane on?

MR. CHILDRESS: It was a gunship --

MR. SPEAKES: Gunship.

MR. CHILDRESS: AC-130.

Q Well, could you be a little more specific on that mission? Because we weren't -- I'm curious in the fact that was in Laos, that plane that was shot. Larry said it was hit while flying over Laos --

Q We were doing that in those days.

MR. CHILDRESS: We had a war in Laos at that time.

Q Yes, I know that. But I was just curious -- more specific mission.

MR. CHILDRESS: It was a gunship, fire-support ship, one of the AC-130's equipped with many guns and that kind of thing.

MR. SPEAKES: Some figures here: 2,464 missing in action are still in Southeast Asia. Nearly 600 in Laos.

Q Wasn't this announced that the President was going to undertake this, or they had an agreement?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q Was that about a year ago?

MR. SPEAKES: What was the date on that, Dick?

MR. CHILDRESS: We started the basic dialogue with Laos in 1982. The excavation took place in February of this year.

Q The first two they found, they were dead, I assume --

MR. SPEAKES: Alive.

Q Alive.

Q And they bailed out of the plane?

Q -- alive?

Q Did they parachute out?

MR. SPEAKES: They did.

MR. SPEAKES: Anything else?

Ira?

Q They know you're ready for general questions?

Q Let's go back with this -- the fellow that Reagan called today -- is that the father of Stethem?

MR. SPEAKES: The son.

Q The son? Brother?

MR. SPEAKES: The parents were not home.

Q Brother.

Q Patrick --

Q That's a brother and not the father?

MR. SPEAKES: -- is a brother.

Q Can't be his son; the kid was 20 years old.

Q Couldn't be his son. He wasn't married. You mean the brother of the --

MR. SPEAKES: -- called the brother of the deceased, the son of the parents.

Q Larry, are there any -- can I ask the question about the families before we get -- is there any -- were there any of the hostage -- former hostage families who were not allowed to come today to the ceremony? Are they all allowed? What were the ground rules? Do you know?

MR. SPEAKES: I think they're all allowed to come. I think TWA might have had some stipulation on the number that they would fly free. But as far as I know, pretty well anybody can come that wants to.

Q Larry, back on Stethem for just a second. Did the President invite the Stethems to Arlington to join him, or are they coming up?

MR. SPEAKES: No.

Q Larry, did you ever say what Patrick said to the President?

MR. SPEAKES: No. He just appreciated the call.

Q Larry, do you have the names of the hostages the President will be greeting at Andrews?

MR. SPEAKES: I do, but I would rather not give them out just to be sure we're right. We now have a number of 30 on board the aircraft.

Q When will we get those?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know that you will get them.

Q Do you know how many family members are on that plane?

MR. SPEAKES: No.

Q Larry, do you know --

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Q Have you identified the guy yet?

Q -- about access to hostages at Andrews?

MR. SPEAKES: Will you have access? I would presume, yes, if they wish, after they get their instructions from the -- in the terminal about how they're going to depart. I would presume you can catch them somewhere there.

Q Larry, on that point, the CAO office at Andrews says that on White House guidance they have been instructed not to provide access.

MR. SPEAKES: No, not true. What's going to happen is, when they finish the ceremony there, then they will walk into the terminal where they will be then directed as to how to board buses, and after they leave the terminal, I'm sure they won't allow people in the terminal, because there would be quite a crowd in there. So after they leave it, I'm sure you can do what you want to, if they want to talk to you when they leave.

Q Larry, as part of the ceremony, you had said the President is going to speak. Is there any provision for any of the hostages speaking?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q Who is going to --

Q Who?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know. Whoever they --

Q You mean, somebody will make a statement at the podium?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. One of the hostages -- members, ex-hostages will, and they will -- I'm sure they will choose among themselves who it is.

Q Larry, would you tell us again about why they are not invited to the White House for a ceremony, and --

MR. SPEAKES: Because it would delay their departure, and they wish to get home, and the President wants them to get home. He doesn't want to interfere with their process any more than he is doing out there. He will say so in his remarks.

Q May I follow up on that? How does that differ from the Iranian hostages who were given a parade and -- at the White House, the President made a speech? What is the difference between them? Is it because those were basically government employees, and these are private citizens?

MR. SPEAKES: Mike, this is just the way he wanted to do it, because he knew they were anxious to get home.

Q Was it his choice the last time as well?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't recall. That was -- very early days. But I'm sorry that there's no controversy here, Mike, but --

Q I want to go back on Stethem. He was certainly a victim of terrorism and many would think him a martyr in this case, but can you tell us how the President means it when he says he's a hero?

MR. SPEAKES: Because he's an American serviceman serving abroad and in a situation that, is now apparent, was dangerous and he died surely -- in the service of his nation because he was wearing the nation's uniform.

Q Well, no one would quarrel, I think, with the description you just gave. But I --

Q Call--

Q But from the dictionary definition of heroism and hero, I think, would not be satisfied by the description you just gave.

Q Oh, come on.

MR. SPEAKES: I would suggest you and Peter do a talk through and you take the side that is not a hero and see how that helps your "Q" rating.

Q Well, let me just tell you something. (Laughter.) I don't make my living off a "Q" rating. Words mean something. Words mean something. And it does not detract --

MR. SPEAKES: The President called him a hero because in the President's --

Q -- from the sacrifice of this man's life --

MR. SPEAKES: -- because the President, in his heart, believes he is a hero, and if you want to quarrel with that, have at it.

Q I'm asking a question.

MR. SPEAKES: Okay. The President believes he's a hero. He called him a hero to his -- to the dead man's brother.

Q Can you give us --

MR. SPEAKES: Now, do you want to call the dead man's brother and tell him he's not a hero, you go right ahead.

Q Can you give us some sense of the President's -- the tone of his remarks today for -- those of us who have to go on the air beforehand.

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. We got to take care of the television here.

Q Well --

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. The tone of the President's remarks are, first of all, welcoming those back, expressing happiness that they're back, discussing that he stayed -- that he visited with a number of their loved ones while they were gone, that both loved ones and the President were ceaseless in praying and working for their return. Then he will call attention to the dangers of terrorism in the world today and pledge that the United States will continue to

fight terrorism and conclude by generally the same type -- we're glad you're home and we want to get you to your families as quick as possible.

Q Does he mention the seven?

Q -- the seven?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, he mentions the seven.

Q How long is --

MR. SPEAKES: Sheila?

Q Larry, do we know any more about the specific --

Q Thank you.

Q -- circumstances that led to Stethem's death? I mean, do we know, for example, whether he had tried to fight with the hijackers?

MR. SPEAKES: I'm sure there's some knowledge of it, but nothing that I want to talk about.

Gerald?

Q Larry, this decision not to bring them to the White House -- are you saying that that was the President's decision and --

MR. SPEAKES: It was the President's suggestion.

Q It was his suggestion? Was there ever any conversation with the former hostages about this or --

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know whether they -- there were or not. But it was the President's desire not to intrude on their personal lives any more than he has to and his sole intrusion is to make absolutely certain that they know that the nation welcomes them home and rejoices in them being free and that he wants to speed them on the way to their families as quick as possible.

Q Do you know whether the President considers these 39 hostages who were released and the others released earlier also heroes in this particular episode?

MR. SPEAKES: When you get hung up on something, you do get hung up on it.

Q I'm not hung up. I would like to know the President's thinking.

MR. SPEAKES: You will be asking that -- listen to his words and he will describe them to you.

Q Larry, do you know, is there some disappointment that a large number of the hostages -- former hostages -- did not want to be debriefed and didn't go through the intelligence -- or whatever the agencies were over there?

MR. SPEAKES: No. No, I don't know whether there was disappointment or not. You'd have to talk to the agencies there to find out.

Q Is that your information as well that they were --

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know but I -- No, I don't have numbers on it.

Q Do you know of any?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know of any.

Q Another subject?

MR. SPEAKES: Another subject.

Q Summit?

Q Summit.

MR. SPEAKES: Right where you were this morning.

Q It's not going to be announced?

Q Will you announce a -- a date today?

Q When is the announcement --

Q Do you have any idea of when -- what day you'll be

--

MR. SPEAKES: I wouldn't look for it today. I can give you that much guidance.

Q Another subject?

MR. SPEAKES: Another subject, yes.

Q What can you tell us about the meeting with business leaders on budget matters?

MR. SPEAKES: I was occupied otherwise and did not go to it, but the President simply discussed his desire to have these people work with us in order to indicate to Congress our desire and their desire to have the deficit reduced through reducing government spending, not through taxes.

Q In the speech last Friday, the President had a line in there about going out and campaigning some more for tax reform. Do you anticipate that in the -- in July, let's say, the month ahead, that he is going to be going out and making any speeches?

MR. SPEAKES: He might make some speeches. There's nothing on the schedule now, Lou. I would judge that we will concentrate more of -- in September or October on getting out and talking to the people about it.

Q Do you see any major effort at all of the President outside the White House on -- this month on any major issue?

MR. SPEAKES: We might make one or two trips this month,

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but not one a week to talk about it.

Q On tax reform?

MR. SPEAKES: I think, as we've always planned, we will talk more about it after they get through this period of hearings and witnesses and so forth, and get down to the business of writing.

Q Back on Peggy Say for a moment. The State Department says that it transmitted a request on her behalf for a meeting with the President here at the White House and was told that it couldn't be fit in and there wasn't time, or some such thing. Do you know when that request was --

MR. SPEAKES: No. It's the first I've heard of it.

Q Do you know, given the fact now that she's headed to Syria, whether there's any intention for her to meet with the President -- with President Reagan before she goes?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know of any plan at the moment.

Helen?

Q Can you tell us whether we can expect any more announcements like yesterday's about Beirut Airport? Are there other steps of that level about to pop in the next day, two, three, four?

MR. SPEAKES: Are you closed for the holiday?
(Laughter.) I really wouldn't say. As you know, the President reviewed a number of options over the past several days, and more particularly yesterday, and I would leave it up to him to decide when and if. I can't really give you any guidance.

Q So there are -- he has other options before him?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

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