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THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

PRESS BRIEFING
BY
LARRY SPEAKES

July 10, 1985

The Briefing Room

9:24 A.M. EDT

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9:47 A.M. EDT

#1488-07/10

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PRESS BRIEFING
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July 10, 1985

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9:24 A.M. EDT

MR. SPEAKES: This morning at 11:00 A.M., the President's meeting with the Budget Conference Committee. They will put out a list of them -- it looks like about 25 of them -- and the President will be -- the President and Vice President, the OMB Director and the National Security Advisor, Chief of Staff, Congressional people and others -- opportunity for the President to come in and stress to them the four points that I made yesterday in his name, and --

Q Wait -- you told us those were quotes.

MR. SPEAKES: -- and go from there.

Q Yesterday, you told -- those four points were quotes.

MR. SPEAKES: At 12:00 noon the President meets with the U.S. delegation to the UN Conference on Women. It will be an opportunity for the President to honor this delegation as they prepare for the United Nations conference in Nairobi, Kenya.

The 1985 world conference, which ends a decade of -- UN Decade for Women will review and appraise achievements of the decade, and develop strategies for continuing advancement of women to the year 2000.

The President and Mrs. Reagan, the Vice President and Mrs. Bush, the members of the delegation, some members of the Cabinet, and Maureen Reagan who heads the delegation and who briefed on it yesterday, will be there.

We'll brief again here at 12:00 noon.

Q -- today?

MR. SPEAKES: Oh yes. I'm sorry. You'll cover the delegation -- writing pool and photo coverage in the -- at the lunch -- about --

Q And that'll be a photo op for the conferees?

MR. SPEAKES: No.

Q How about a White House photo?

MR. SPEAKES: We'll see.

The President on Friday will go to the Naval Hospital at Bethesda to have the benign polyp that was discovered during his physical examination on March 8 to have it removed.

The procedure will be done in the outpatient procedure room at the gastroenterology division of the hospital. As you recall, when the President's physical examination was conducted earlier this year, we indicated the procedure would probably be done

at some point. The President decided it would best fit into his schedule this Friday. He will also undergo an examination of the large intestine to determine if there are more polyps present.

The formal medical names for these procedures are polypectomy, which is the removal of the polyp, and colonoscopy, which is the examination of the upper part of the colon.

The procedures will be conducted under the supervision of Commander Edward L. Cattau, M.D. and a Naval officer who is the Chief of the hospital's gastroenterology division.

The President will remain overnight at Bethesda, and will travel to Camp David with Mrs. Reagan on Sunday morning.

Q Sunday morning, or Saturday morning?

MR. SPEAKES: Saturday morning, I'm sorry.

Q Questions. Did he ever go on the restricted, no red meat diet, and if he did, did he then have a further test to see whether or not those indications of blood were --

MR. SPEAKES: He did, and they were negative.

Q Are you going to have facilities for us overnight at the hospital?

MR. SPEAKES: No.

Q It's down the street from my house --

Q What's the President's understanding, whether there was a deal yesterday? What did he think happened there?

MR. SPEAKES: On the budget meeting? The situation, as far as the budget,

the President emphasized the four points that he and I emphasized yesterday. And --

Q I understand that, but I'm asking --

MR. SPEAKES: -- we --

Q -- what he thought --

MR. SPEAKES: Well, let -- if you finish, I'd tell you.

Q Sorry. Sounded like you were going off in --

MR. SPEAKES: Or do you want to talk?

Q -- some other direction.

MR. SPEAKES: Do you want to talk?

Q No, but I'd like the question answered that I asked.

MR. SPEAKES: The meeting yesterday was a good discussion. There was a spirit of cooperation among the leadership -- bipartisan leadership. There is a desire toward -- working toward an agreement. I would describe it as movement toward a framework on agreement.

On defense, there was a solid discussion on the proposal for budget authority, except in the budget authority in the Senate and in the House outlays. If they accept the budget authority in the Senate, we would accept the House outlay number.

Q Did they agree to that? Or --

MR. SPEAKES: As far as Social Security is concerned, if the COLAs are not included -- the one-year COLA freeze -- then we must search for ways to find funds to replace those savings. We firmly insisted yesterday on solid cuts in domestic spending.

Q What about --

Q Larry, are you saying we must search for ways -- I mean, has the President laid it down as a condition that if the COLAs are removed that he must find equal offsetting savings? How strongly does he feel about --

MR. SPEAKES: I don't think we have said equal offsetting savings, but we are determined to find as much savings as possible in order to offset that number, which is an important part of the package.

Q Was this a point of disagreement? The Democrats seem to be saying, "Well, now that Social Security is off the table, we're home free and clear." I mean, are they less willing to come up with offsetting savings?

MR. SPEAKES: I would have to let events play themselves out and let them see where they go. But our position is that if Social Security COLAs are not included, then we will have to find additional savings to make up at least some of the difference, to have a credible budget package.

Q Will those additional savings come out of pension -- other pension programs? Or are you talking now about additional savings from anywhere in the budget?

MR. SPEAKES: Well, additional pension programs is one source to go to. And we are firm also on -- that they need to come close to the Senate version as far as other savings.

In other words, the additional pension funds would provide an offset of some extent for Social Security, while you'd have to go and get close to the Senate numbers as far as domestic budget cuts.

Helen and then --

Q Does the President go for the military pensions of --

MR. SPEAKES: I think we would look closely --

Q He would --

MR. SPEAKES: -- at that, and that might be a solution to it, to freezing --

Q And does he agree that Social Security is off the table?

MR. SPEAKES: Off the table? There seems to be an impasse on it, yes, that's obvious. But if you're going to -- not to act on Social Security COLAs, as the Senate proposed, then it's important that you find savings somewhere else.

Q And while I have you, may I just ask, did any one thing prompt the President to decide to go to the hospital?

MR. SPEAKES: No.

Q Has there been any blood in the urine or anything that would have --

MR. SPEAKES: No, nothing whatsoever.

Q -- provoked --

MR. SPEAKES: This was determined when they found the polyp the last time, that they would consult on it, decide -- (laughter.)

Q Thank you for your views.

Q Part of the budget?

MR. SPEAKES: Pardon?

Q We didn't hear the question. You went from budget to polyps. That's all.

MR. SPEAKES: She -- Oh, I'm sorry.

Q What was --

MR. SPEAKES: She asked was there anything that prompted him to go this time.

When they found the polyp last time, they agreed to discuss it. They discussed it and decided it was prudent to remove the polyp and they, ever since that time, have just been trying to fit it in the schedule.

Q So there's no one symptom or anything?

Q Are the Democrats that came out saying that Social Security was off the table incorrect as far as you're concerned?

MR. SPEAKES: They'll have to speak for themselves. The Republicans came out and said it was not, so in our feeling that, as I said, it's obvious there is an impasse on it, that it would be difficult to get approval of a Social Security COLA freeze. However, we've got to find something to replace those savings.

Q They came out as though the impasse had been resolved, swept away.

MR. SPEAKES: The impasse -- there's an impasse on passing it. There's not an impasse on not passing it.

So, Andrea.

Q Is there also, in terms of Social Security, is the Tip O'Neill tax idea, moving it from 50 to 80, also sort of semi-off the table and not really --

MR. SPEAKES: Tip couldn't muster anybody to join in ranks behind him.

Q And secondly, is -- Jim Wright was indicating that it was a one-year deal, the \$6 billion savings on outlay and authority. Our impression earlier from people here was that it was a three-year deal.

MR. SPEAKES: I think it's a one-year.

Q A one-year deal?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q It's not as Bob Dole said yesterday --

MR. SPEAKES: We will address it in the next budget.

Q -- the three years, the \$22 billion.

MR. SPEAKES: No. I think it's one year. So maybe it's not been clarified, the defense figures.

Bruce?

Q Isn't it correct that officials here did not take issue last night with -- when Wright said that this -- Social Security was off the table?

MR. SPEAKES: Once again, for -- there's obviously difficulty in passing. There is an impasse as far as passing. But if it is taken off the table -- it could stay on the table and they could have a permanent impasse. But if it taken off the table, our position is we must have the savings to replace it. So I think we're dealing with semantics.

Steve.

Q On the defense outlays versus authorization, Larry, I mean don't you have a Democratic victory -- with the House outlay figures? Who cares what the authorization is. The real question is what money is spent, and you seem to be going with the Democratic

House figures.

MR. SPEAKES: You've got it flip-flopped. We care what the authorization is. The authorization to us is very important. The outlay figure is an estimate of what the Defense Department can spend out. We're pleased with it and we don't consider -- we consider it satisfactory.

Q Larry, you said that if the Social Security issues are off the table, they need to find savings elsewhere. Are you restricting that to domestic spending or are you saying that they need to find the savings somewhere else in anything?

MR. SPEAKES: I think in the domestic area, yes.
Non-defense area.

Q Just doing some rough arithmetic on this, if Social Security COLAs are discarded, then you've got a \$22 billion gap to make up, right?

MR. SPEAKES: Over three years.

Q Over three years?

Q \$22 billion?

MR. SPEAKES: Oh, Social Security. No, you've got a -- over three years, you've got \$33 billion over three years. You've got \$8 billion in the first year.

Q But I'm talking about next -- fiscal '86. You have a \$22 billion --

Q No, that's --

MR. BRASHEAR: \$22 billion for Social Security or \$33 billion with the others --

MR. SPEAKES: If you take Social Security and other retirement reforms out, you would come -- you'd have about \$8 billion.

Q \$8 billion for one year?

Q One year?

Q Right, the first year.

Q \$22 billion over three years.

MR. SPEAKES: No. \$33 billion over three years.

Q No, no. He says that that includes --

Q That's all pensions.

MR. BRASHEAR: The \$33 billion includes all pensions.

MR. SPEAKES: That's what I mean. All of it includes all pensions.

Q That's all pensions, right?

MR. SPEAKES: All of it includes all pensions.

Q And that's in '86 --

Q Well, is \$8 billion all pensions or just Social Security?

NR. SPEAKES: No, that's all pensions.

Q What's Social Security?

MR. SPEAKES: All pensions. Social Security is \$5.8 billion, other COLAs are \$1.7 billion, retirement is half a billion -- total of \$8 billion. That's one year.

Q Well, that means that in '86 alone you only have to cover \$8 billion, right?

MR. SPEAKES: That's right.

Q And you get six of that, wouldn't you, by going to the House figure on defense?

MR. SPEAKES: I'm not sure how that fits into the totals on it.

Q It doesn't.

Q It's not -- they're not equivalent --

MR. SPEAKES: I don't think so.

Q I'm unclear now. When the Democrats are talking about Social Security COLAs off the table and there's an impasse on all this -- are we talking about just Social Security COLAs or are we talking about all pension --

MR. SPEAKES: We're talking about Social Security.

Q Social Security only? So with Social Security off the table or not being considered, it's \$5.8 billion for one year, \$21.9 over three years, correct?

MR. SPEAKES: Let's see -- on COLAs, \$5.8 for one year, \$21.9 for three years. Right. Okay.

Dave?

Q Larry, over three years, if the plan that the Democrats roughly outlined yesterday were to come to pass, what will be the total deficit reduction over three years?

MR. SPEAKES: I'm not sure what the Democrats outlined, to tell you the truth.

MR. BRASHEAR: It's not that specific.

Q That you would get -- the House figure on --

Q \$22 billion.

Q -- outlines for defense, Senate figure on BA and then Social Security will be off the table.

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, but that's not the end of the story. You still got to go for more savings -- that's our position. So, I don't know what -- if we came out with just that, Dave, I don't know what it totals up to. We can give you a sheet here and maybe you can figure it.

Ann?

Q Larry, is it accurate to say that Social Security is off the table as far as the White House, but not the Senate Republicans? Is that what's --

MR. SPEAKES: No. The Senate's running the show.

MORE

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(Laughter.)

Q Never mind.

MR. SPEAKES: Okay.

Joe?

Q Yesterday after the meeting Byrd kept touting the idea of a minimum tax on corporations as a substitute for the savings if you throw out Social Security. Was that seriously discussed at all during that meeting?

MR. SPEAKES: That what?

Q Minimum tax on corporations to make up --

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know. Not being in the meeting, I don't know. I don't think -- from us it would be --

Q He brought it -- said he brought it up. I just wondered if it's being given serious --

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know --

Andrea?

Q What's the White House view on the proposal that Gray and some others have suggested for -- another Social Security commission to address the --

MR. SPEAKES: I'm not familiar with it. I don't know what we -- need it for.

Q Because we -- it'll be discovered any day now that the Social Security fund is not, in fact, solvent and we're going to have to repair it.

Q Until the year --

MR. SPEAKES: Carter was the one that told you that.

Q Supposedly there's a commission --

Q There already was a difference between the House and the Senate on domestic savings and you say that you want them to go for as much as they can get of the Senate savings on the domestic side. Would that be enough to make up for Social Security or are you asking them to make up, I mean, to go for the Senate side on domestic savings plus trying to make up something around \$5.8 billion.

MR. SPEAKES: It just depends on, really, where they go, Chris, and

how close they can get to fill in the gap.

Q But -- I mean, are you saying that the domestic -- the Senate side on other domestic savings would be enough or not? That's --

MR. SPEAKES: Would it be \$8 billion?

Q Yes.

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know whether it would be \$8 billion. It just depends on how much they go to.

Q -- you're saying it's negotiable.

Q Is there any progress towards securing the release of the seven Americans being held in Lebanon?

MR. SPEAKES: We're continuing to work on that.

Q Back on the budget, you said a moment ago that they must obtain a maximum savings to have a credible budget. Yesterday, you mentioned that if there's not a credible budget essentially that the President would prefer to have no budget at all. At what point are continuing resolutions preferable to a budget?

MR. SPEAKES: I didn't say the no budget at all.

Q Well, you indicated that -- okay.

MR. SPEAKES: CNN might; Speakes didn't.

Q Fine. (Laughter.) At what point is a budget not a credible budget?

MR. SPEAKES: It depends on -- it's in the eyes of the beholder.

Q Mmmmmmm.

Q They know who they are. (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: That's right.

Q Well, what does that mean? What does that --

MR. SPEAKES: Well, it means what impact it would have on the economy. To be credible, it has to have an impact on the economy, and it has to be read by those who deal in economic matters as being credible. So --

Norm?

Q Is that \$50 billion figure, to follow up Frank's question, is that the minimum in terms of savings?

MR. SPEAKES: Well, as I say, you look at Wall Street; Wall Street's figured certain things are going to happen. Where they stand would be a question up to them. I'm just not going to be specific.

Q If I could follow up on Joe's question, too, on the minimum tax: You started to say "I don't think we..." and trailed off. What --

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know what came up in the meeting in regard to that.

Q But what about that? It seems like earlier in this process you all indicated that you didn't want to see any kind of tax

reform proposals or revenue --

MR. SPEAKES: Isn't there a minimum tax in our tax reform?

MR. BRASHEAR: Yes, minimum corporate.

MR. SPEAKES: That's --

Q Did you want it there? You don't want it into any kind of deficit reduction package?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't think we've really addressed it in detail, Norm. I wouldn't want to say, but my judgment is no.

Ann?

Q Larry, do you expect to name Stockman's replacement in time for this person to work on this current budgeting stuff -- this week, next week --

MR. SPEAKES: I would anticipate that he would hopefully be in place -- begin work on the new cycle. But as to whether we would -- how quickly we'd be able to appoint somebody, it depends.

Q Are you ruling out a woman?

MR. SPEAKES: Pardon? (Laughter.)

Q You ruling out a woman?

MR. SPEAKES: No, do you want the job?

Q Ha! God, no.

MR. SPEAKES: Dave?

Q -- good future.

Q Larry, will this defense change, mean any elimination of weapons systems or procurement or does this just mean that you're going to spend the same amount of money but in different years? You'll spend it in later years rather than earlier --

MR. SPEAKES: I think Defense would have to be more specific on that than I'm prepared to.

Paula?

Q As far as finding alternate savings in place of the Social Security freeze, are you planning to pursue this idea of a six-month freeze rather than a one-year freeze?

MR. SPEAKES: There was talk of that in the leadership -- GOP leadership meeting yesterday, but as to whether

there's any interest on the Democratic side about that or whether the Republicans in the House would buy it, I don't know.

Q What about Dole's proposal to make state and local governments pay into the Social Security and Medicare systems?

MR. SPEAKES: That's a possibility, too.

Frank?

Q Do you have anything on General Vessey resigning today or a replacement?

MR. SPEAKES: No.

Q Is that anticipated? Is he going to be here at the Joint Chiefs meeting?

MR. SPEAKES: Don't know that there's a Joint Chiefs meeting.

Q Admiral Crowe going to be nominated to replace him?

MR. SPEAKES: We'll just have to wait and see.

Q Larry, do you expect anything on that today?

Q On the Israeli jets thing --

Q What was the question? What did he say?

MR. SPEAKES: -- expect anything on it today. I don't think so. The Post said it was, so maybe --

Q Larry, Israeli jets today attacked Palestinian refugee camps in northern Lebanon --

Q We struck back.

Q -- in retaliation for a car-bombing of only yesterday. Does the administration have any view about the appropriateness of this kind of retaliation?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't think we've had an opportunity to consult on that, Ed. Anything?

MR. DJERIJIAN: No, we have nothing.

MR. SPEAKES: We'll wait and talk to the State Department and get the details on that before we comment.

Mike?

Q On the President's operation --

MR. SPEAKES: Not operation.

Q Well, procedure.

MR. SPEAKES: Procedure.

Q Surgical procedure -- could you tell us when

Q Scraping.

Q -- the polyp was discovered -- examination -- just the date?

MR. SPEAKES: March -- I think I read it out here. March 8.

Q This year?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q Didn't he have part of a polyp removed earlier, though?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. He did.

Q When was that? Do you remember?

MR. SPEAKES: A year ago.

Q And this was a new polyp?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. It was while you were out.

Q Do you know --

Q When I was in the hospital.

Q Four centimeters -- very small.

Q Do the President's physicians know that this is still benign?

MR. SPEAKES: That it was judged to be benign, the biopsy was benign, so it would be an extremely remote possibility that it would be anything other than benign. It's that type of a polyp.

Mike?

Q And when was the biopsy in March --

MR. SPEAKES: It was immediate -- yes, it was -- I announced the results on March 11. The physical was on March 8.

Q Is there anything --

Q Larry, during a colonoscopy, it's standard procedure to heavily sedate the patient with painkillers and tranquilizers.

Q Looney tunes! (Laughs.)

MR. SPEAKES: Will the Vice President be at the White House during that period?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know whether the Vice President will be in that period, but the procedure, or the amount of sedation -- analgesic -- depends upon the individual patient. It varies from patient to patient, so it just depends.

Q -- visit?

Q What -- do you know what the time will be?

MR. SPEAKES: He will leave here shortly after 12:00 noon, and go right in for the procedure.

Q In the outpatient -- and it's lower intestine, you said?

MR. SPEAKES: Well, it's -- 45 centimeters is where the polyp is -- 45 millimeters. The -- but the examination will take place through the entire intestinal tract.

Q Is there any reason to believe that there are more polyps -- you said he was -- I mean, has there been any bleeding or any signs of --

MR. SPEAKES: There's no reason to believe it; there have been no symptoms of it. No.

Q If more are found, will they be removed as well?

MR. SPEAKES: Probably, yes.

Q Will he have a general anesthesia?

MR. SPEAKES: No. It will be a combination of an analgesic and a sedative, which is the standard procedure for this.

Q Larry, what are all the reports on the current state of military medical --

Q Analgesic and sedative.

MR. SPEAKES: I think he'll be all right.

Q Why is he staying overnight?

MR. SPEAKES: That's what they do at Bethesda, and in many cases when they have this procedure, they make them stay overnight.

Q Will Mrs. Reagan stay at the --

MR. SPEAKES: She will not stay at the hospital overnight, no.

Q Does he trust Bethesda?

Q Is this doctor qualified --

Q If this is outpatient, why is he staying overnight?

MR. SPEAKES: It will be conducted in the outpatient facility. It is standard procedure for people who have this procedure at Bethesda and most other hospitals, I would judge, to stay overnight.

Q Does the President agree with his daughter that Meese was wrong to

cut off funding for certain programs?

MR. SPEAKES: I will let the President's daughter and Mr. Meese discuss that.

Q The President has no view on this?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know whether he does or not, to tell you the truth.

Q Larry, with that kind of medication would a patient generally be unconscious or not?

MR. SPEAKES: Wouldn't describe it as unconscious. We believe that during the course of this procedure that the President will be able to discharge his duties and responsibilities as President.

Q So there will be no --

Q -- impairment --

Q There will be no temporary transfer?

MR. SPEAKES: There's no temporary transfer planned.

Q And you absolutely rule out any cause for concern about this? It's totally routine and nothing that prompted this that --

Q The Soviets will not strike. They will not select --

MR. SPEAKES: There's nothing that prompted it except that after the last medical examination, the doctors conferred and decided it was good medicine to remove the polyp. And that's what they're going to do. And as long as they're doing this, they will do a full examination of the intestines.

Q How are you going to handle the report on this?

MR. SPEAKES: I'll stay out there with the President until the procedure's completed and come back here and tell you what I can about the procedure.

Q Will you brief at all out there or only here?

MR. SPEAKES: No, only here.

Q Well, will a pool go out?

MR. SPEAKES: A pool will go out and --

Q And stay?

MR. SPEAKES: -- watch the President go and come. You're welcome to stay but --

Q We'll stake it out. We'll besiege the hospital --

Q Is there an "guesstimate" as to how long --

Q -- with a 24-hour hotline.

Q -- the two procedures together should take?

MR. SPEAKES: It varies. It could take a couple, three hours until I'm able to report on it. The entire -- the procedure, itself, will take less than an hour -- 30 minutes, 45 minutes.

Q Both procedures together?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. It's a continuing procedure.

Q Is there going to be a spokesman at the hospital as there was here when he was in overnight that will be available 24 hours a day?

MR. SPEAKES: We'll be available 24 hours a day, at home, by telephone, as standard and as we are every day, every night.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

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9:47 A.M. EDT