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THE WHITE HOUSE  
Office of the Press Secretary

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PRESS BRIEFING  
BY  
LARRY SPEAKES

July 24, 1985

The Briefing Room

12:13 P.M. EDT

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12:37 P.M. EDT

#1511-07/24

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PRESS BRIEFING  
BY  
LARRY SPEAKES

July 24, 1985

The Briefing Room

12:13 P.M. EDT

MR. SPEAKES: The President is announcing the appointment of Frank Shakespeare to be Ambassador of the United States to the Republic of Portugal. Also the appointment --

Q What was his name?

MR. SPEAKES: -- of Julius Belso, Frank G. De Balogh and Guadalupe F. Hinckle to be members of the National Selective Service Board -- Appeals Board.

Q Who was the Ambassador to Portugal designee?

MR. SPEAKES: Frank Shakespeare.

Q Yes, I remember the name --

MR. SPEAKES: Tomorrow Mrs. Reagan will be travelling to Grandville, Ohio where she will visit and participate in the second annual National Youth-to-Youth Conference sponsored by the Ohio Federation of Families for Drug Free Youth. The conference is held at Denison University. Youth-to-Youth is a five day summer camp program for teens based around the drug abuse prevention and education activities. Mrs. Reagan will return to the White House later tomorrow. Mrs. Reagan's press office has the details.

The President this morning met for about an hour with the leadership that included the Speaker and the Majority Leader of the House together with the Minority Leader, Bob Michel and the President of the -- and the Majority Leader of the Senate -- President pro tem of the Senate, and -- I'm trying to think --

Q Byrd --

Q You said Thurmond was --

MR. SPEAKES: Byrd, and the Minority Leader of the Senate. So -- all of that.

Q Why was Thurmond there?

Q President pro tem.

MR. SPEAKES: President pro tem of the Senate -- number one ranking Senator.

Q Third in line for the Presidency.

MR. SPEAKES: The choice quote of the day -- and then I'll begin -- I'll give you the choice quote -- top of the news -- and then I'll go back. At the conclusion of the meeting, the Speaker of the House stood up, the President stood up and they shook hands and the President -- and the Speaker said, "Mr. President, you look good." The President replied, "I'll feel better when I get a

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budget."

Q That's the top --

Q Are you aware that the Speaker told reporters on Capitol Hill that he thought he was coming down here because the President wanted to show him his operation?

MR. SPEAKES: No, I didn't -- he didn't.

Q He said I get a budget or we get a budget?

MR. SPEAKES: I get a budget. The session began with a tour of the Lincoln bedroom and the study. (Laughter.) The President showed the leadership the Lincoln bedroom and its adjoining study --

Q Why?

Q They've been redecorated?

Q Did Bob Dole take out a tape measure?

Q Show what?

MR. SPEAKES: Some of them haven't seen it.

Q Ever, ever you mean?

MR. SPEAKES: Pardon?

Q They've never seen it?

MR. SPEAKES: Some of them hadn't, no, surely haven't.

Q I haven't seen it.

Q Where did they -- what room did they meet in?

MR. SPEAKES: The meeting was held in the -- what's known as the Treaty Room. This was the name chosen in the term of John Kennedy for this room. It had been the Cabinet Room for ten administrations, beginning with Andrew Johnson's in 1865 and continuing until 1902 when they were moved from the -- when the offices of the President were moved to the West Wing.

It is redecorated in the '60's to resemble the Cabinet Room during President Grant's term. It was a room where -- (laughter) --

Q I never went -- I've never been to the family quarters --

MR. SPEAKES: In 1963, President Kennedy signed the instrument of ratification for the partial nuclear test ban treaty. In September 30, 1972, President Nixon signed the United --

Q You're going too fast.

-- United States -- (laughter.)

Q You asked a gilded cage question.

MR. SPEAKES: So there is a lack of sense of history. There are two people making notes; if the rest of you wish to be excused, you may.

Q -- stories, Larry.

Q I'm reading all this into my camera.

MR. SPEAKES: September 30, 1972, Nixon signed the treaty for the limitation of antiballistic missile systems there. Going back in history, the table there is the actual table from the Grant administration. It and several of the chairs are the -- the table from the Grant --

Q Did something historic happen here that we need to know this today?

Q How many bathrooms --

MR. SPEAKES: The table and original chairs appear in a painting that's in the room that's entitled, "The Signing of the Peace Protocol," and on this table on August 12, 1898, the document which established an armistice in the Spanish-American War was signed.

Q That's very interesting. (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: At the meeting -- you're showing your intelligence, or lack of, there, Sam.

Q Yes.

Q The British burned the White House once.

MR. SPEAKES: The President began the meeting by talking about the impending summer recess and indicated that it was important that the administration and the Congress produce a budget before the recess. He said, "It is something that is very much on the minds of the people." He said, "Every village, every town, every municipality, every state has a budget, yet --

Q Larry, are these quotes?

Q Could you give us -- again?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. "Yet the greatest economic entity in the world does not have a budget. How can the --

Q What entity? I'm sorry.

MR. SPEAKES: Economic. "How can the country go forward without a sound economic plan?" He proceeded after that --

Q Mondale.

MR. SPEAKES: -- expression on the part of both Democrats and Republicans as well as the President that they all agreed on the need for a budget. Each side indicated that they have made proposals. The Senate indicated they would make an additional proposal to the House through the conference, and the President urged them to get to work on it and to do so.

The President also outlined a number of other, or several others -- items that he would like to be acted on prior to the August 2nd recess. They include the supplemental appropriations bill which contains Contra aid, water projects and other items, the farm bill,

and the DOD authorization, which is in conference now.

Q Did he --

Q What kind of a response did he get to any of this?

MR. SPEAKES: To -- well, the response on the desire for a budget was positive on both sides, and an agreement that they would proceed through conference in order to try to reach -- to break the logjam.

Q Did anybody give the President any sign that they were -- of either a timetable or when they would come back to --

MR. SPEAKES: Senator Dole indicated that they hoped to be able to present something by the end of the week.

Q But did they talk about specifics at all, and the specific logjams? Were there discussions of how much they needed to cut --

MR. SPEAKES: I think there were some discussions of the desire to reduce domestic spending on both sides and the desire on the part of the Senate to fill the gap by the -- left by dropping the Social Security COLA cuts with additional domestic spending.

Q Were there -- any specific talk about Dole's idea of every other year on Social Security COLAs or every other year on indexing increases --

MR. SPEAKES: No. No.

Q -- or an oil import charge?

MR. SPEAKES: No. None of those specifics, no.

Q None of that ever came up?

Q What about -- can you get us some guidance as to whether Regan, Jim Baker and Bush, as reported, did they -- sort of left the door open on that oil import fee or on -- in fact --

MR. SPEAKES: Don't know anything about that.

Q -- a larger tax increase?

MR. SPEAKES: -- don't know anything about that.

Q Is there any flexibility on that subject of a tax --

MR. SPEAKES: We've had some discussions with the Senate but I do not have the details on it.

Q About what? Dole --

Q You mean, -- the oil tax or taxes in general?

MR. SPEAKES: No -- discussion about -- no, not taxes in general. The President, once again, was adamant on taxes -- no taxes.

Q We've had discussion about what?

MR. SPEAKES: We've had discussion about budget.

Q About the oil tax?

MR. SPEAKES: No. Not that I'm aware of.

Q Well, what did you mean -- discussion about?

Q I was asking about taxes --

MR. SPEAKES: I understand. I said we have had discussions with the Senate, not necessarily on that subject. I do not know if that subject came up.

Q Did they discuss it today?

MR. SPEAKES: No.

Q Well, you've had discussions with the Senate about --

MR. SPEAKES: On the budget -- budget in general. The federal budget -- budget for the federal government for 1986.

Q Okay, but the oil tax thing that someone wrote about in the paper today, said it came up --

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. I don't know anything about that.

Q Did Dole say that he would have a budget plan to present to the President?

MR. SPEAKES: No -- an additional proposal to the conference.

Q Did taxes come up today -- increased taxes?

MR. SPEAKES: Well, Jim Wright talked about the idea of using taxes to reduce the deficit, but the President once again was absolutely firm, adamant, hard-nosed about no taxes.

Q Well, where does the -- pardon me.

Q Larry, does the President --

Q Where does the President then propose that they get the cuts to reduce the deficit?

MR. SPEAKES: Additional domestic spending. Senate budget would do it.

Q Well, could you be more specific? As Helen pointed out repeatedly, the non-defense, non-payment of interest sections only amount to \$200 billion. All told, how do you -- where do you get them?

MR. SPEAKES: The Senate proposed a budget that would give you \$56 billion.

Q But I thought the President had accepted now that the Social Security COLAs --

MR. SPEAKES: That's right.

Q -- would not be considered.

MR. SPEAKES: That's right.

Q So where does he now think we get them?

MR. SPEAKES: It would include an additional -- the House adoption of additional domestic spending cuts.

Q Where?

Q Can you be more specific?

MR. SPEAKES: This has all been in the paper, Sam. If you'll go back and look at --

Q Well, I'm asking you what he likes and what he does not like.

MR. SPEAKES: Well, we're working with the conference on that, but the Senate has proposed a budget, the House has proposed a different budget, we have eliminated COLAs from the Senate budget. The two budgets, although somewhat different, do contain cuts. The question is, to fill the gap the House will have to come further on domestic spending cuts toward the Senate version. They're not that far; if they would come closer to that, they would fill the gap adequately.

Q And in return, what do the Republicans give?

MR. SPEAKES: What do the Republicans give? I don't know that they need to give anything. We've discussed the -- you know, I hate to

have to go through all this again, but we've discussed the DOD, 033, the Senate mark, the House mark on that. All that's been discussed.

Q How about defense -- I was interested to ask how about defense because the Senators were complaining that the House had not come as far as they thought they'd agreed in the Oak Tree Compromise on defense.

MR. SPEAKES: That's true. But we're close enough that if we would follow the Senate version and continue to work for the domestic cuts, you'd get --

Q Well, was there any agreement today? Was there any agreement on another framework or --

MR. SPEAKES: Oh, no. It was not that type of meeting, no. It was simply that the two met --

Q What was --

MR. SPEAKES: -- the President underscored his desire to have a budget produced before the recess and that the two sides agreed to continue to work on it, Dole indicating that they would be back to them in conference, hopefully by the end of the week.

Q I want to be clear about your answer to Lesley and Andrea's question, whether or not it came up at the meeting today.

MR. SPEAKES: Did not come up, no.

Q But is the idea of an oil import fee -- is that included in the President's blanket prohibition against any taxes? Is he --

MR. SPEAKES: Lou, I've not heard it discussed. Did not come up in today's meeting. I did not sit in on yesterday's meeting with the Republican leadership. I don't know whether it came up in that. I've not heard it discussed anywhere. We can check it and let you know.

Q Did any new ideas come up today? And can you tell what the tone of the meeting was?

MR. SPEAKES: I think the tone was positive, a desire on both sides to work for a deficit-reduction package prior to the recess.

Q Any new ideas projected?

MR. SPEAKES: No.

Bruce.

Q Larry, aside from the meeting today, the House Ways and Means Committee is talking about not letting the cigarette tax drop from 16 cents a pack to 8 cents like it was scheduled. Is that effect -- come anywhere within the realm of the President's tax principle here, not letting --

MR. SPEAKES: We haven't -- There are going to be a lot of things that are considered and pop up. And I don't think I'm going to try to pass immediate judgment on them here. We'll just continue to work. We'll look at the total package and so forth. I don't know specifically on that.

Q Larry, did the President oppose having that tax --

MR. SPEAKES: What'd I just say, Paul?

Q -- 16?

MR. SPEAKES: What'd I just say?

Q You told us --

Q You said that it would be -- it might be --

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. I'm not going to comment --

Q -- you were looking at --

MR. SPEAKES: No, no. I'm not going to comment on specifics. We will look at the package in its entirety --

Q Your most recent statement on that was to rule it out, Larry.

Q -- change in policy statement in the budget in February, tax should go to 8 cents.

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. There's no change in policy. But, once again, I'm not commenting on everything that might -- every idea that might be raised in there.

Q What's the President --

Q What was the reaction from the leadership to the President's --

Q What?

Q -- desire to have these other things taken care of before recess?

Q Question?

MR. SPEAKES: They would like to do so also. The desire to have the DOD appropriations, the farm bill and the supplemental acted on. They also would like to see it.

Q But, I mean, do they feel it was realistic --

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, I think so.

Gerald.

Q How long -- how much of the meeting was spent on the budget?

MR. SPEAKES: Oh, I'd say 95 percent of it was on the budget --

Q And how would you characterize the President's appeal? Was it -- was he emotional about it? Was he --

MR. SPEAKES: Straightforward. Matter of fact.

Q Cordial? Genial?

MR. SPEAKES: Always.

Q Hoarse?

Q Magnificent?

MR. SPEAKES: Affable.

Q Larry, you indicate that they didn't get into a lot of the specifics, and Dole says that they didn't get into them. Does the administration -- does the President know what the new ideas are

that the Senate is working on?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. We'll continue to work with the Senate on them -- not going to be specific at this time.

Q Do you see a possibility that those -- can break the deadlock? Is there something in there that's --

MR. SPEAKES: No. You know, the possibility for breaking the deadlock has remained there before both Houses of Congress for a number of weeks. I think it's going to take some give and take on both sides to reach that compromise.

Paul?

Q You mentioned three bills -- supplemental, farm bill and DOD appropriation. What about line-item veto?

MR. SPEAKES: Line-item veto is before the Senate today. We'd certainly like to have the Senate an opportunity to vote on it, but it depends on if 60 Senators decide to allow that.

Johanna?

Q Did that come up?

MR. SPEAKES: Mentioned in passing.

Q That was my question. I have others on a different subject.

MR. SPEAKES: Pardon?

Q I -- different subject. Do you want to --

MR. SPEAKES: Probably not.

Dave?

Q Did they wind up, Larry, when all was said and done, closer to an agreement at the end of the meeting than they were at the beginning?

MR. SPEAKES: It wasn't a meeting to try to work out details on a budget, it was simply a meeting to underscore, from the President's point of view, the need for a budget and an expression and the desire of both Democrats and Republicans, House and Senate, to have a budget.

So -- yes, ma'am?

Q You say it really needs to be done before the August recess. At what point do you think this becomes sort of a pointless exercise with the end of the fiscal year only a couple of months away?

MR. SPEAKES: The clock's ticking every day.

Q Well, is it weeks or is it months -- I mean, how much time is there?

MR. SPEAKES: I think it's essential that we have something before the August recess.

Ira?

Q O'Neill, as we discussed this morning, has said there may not be a need for a budget, but you said at this meeting everybody agreed that there was. Did O'Neill not say anything about --

MR. SPEAKES: O'Neill mentioned his House resolution which would hold his House committee's to the House budget. House budget, when you compare it with the Senate budget or the President's budget, would -- is considerably over the expenditure levels. So, holding it to that level is an interesting prospect, but it does not go far enough.

Q Well, did he agree with the rest that there should be a budget before the recess?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Leo?

Q In the five percent that was not devoted to the budget, was there mention of tax reform?

MR. SPEAKES: Tax reform? The Speaker indicated that he planned to act on tax reform in the House before the conclusion of the session and he predicted the conclusion of the session could take place on the eve of Thanksgiving, as he put it.

Q Well, what does that do to the President's timetable of the Christmas complete enactment --

MR. SPEAKES: It's entirely possible, sure?

Q You said that O'Neill wants to finish by Thanksgiving, right? Would that still give the House time enough to wait for the Senate and the conferees to act --

MR. SPEAKES: It's in the realm of possibility.

Andrea?

Q Did the President reiterate his desire to have tax reform enacted this year?

MR. SPEAKES: The President's desire to have tax reform doesn't need reiteration.

Q Did Dole or any of the rest of them give the President their best estimate as to whether there could be a budget or a farm bill or any of the other priorities?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't think they made any predictions, no.

Q What's the White House estimate now, Larry? What do you -- what -- does it seem to --

MR. SPEAKES: We know it's possible. We're hopeful. I don't go much beyond that.

Q Are you talking about tax reform or budget?

MR. SPEAKES: Budget.

Q Two questions. One, are you going to give us a White House photo of the meeting?

MR. SPEAKES: We made some up there today. We'll take a look at them and if we have them, we'll let you know as quickly as we see them.

Q And, secondly, what does the administration, especially the President, do now on the budget? What are your plans for him and the rest --

MR. SPEAKES: The plan is to continue to work with the Senate conferees as they head into the conference and have the President and other administration officials prepared to step in and make our views known in the conference.

Q New subject?

Q Is the Senate still planning to work within that framework that was set up when they make their offer to the House or is there talk of changing the --

MR. SPEAKES: You mean the --

Q The framework that was worked out with the President at that last Oak Tree meeting.

MR. SPEAKES: I would presume that general framework, but I don't know.

Q Who was at the meeting besides the Congressmen and the President?

MR. SPEAKES: Regan, the Vice President, Stockman, Max, B. and me.

Q Does the President plan any more meetings with any members of Congress, tomorrow or --

MR. SPEAKES: None are scheduled at the moment, no.

Q And what about phone calls? Are there any plans to push through this budget in phone calls the next few days?

MR. SPEAKES: If need be. None are presently scheduled.

Q On the Contra aid, did the Congressional leaders give an idea of how the result of the conference might be?

MR. SPEAKES: I think that's --

Q I mean the level of funding and the CIA --

MR. SPEAKES: -- being worked out in conference. I don't know the details of it.

Q They are -- I think they are working on it but --

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know.

Q They didn't say anything?

MR. SPEAKES: No, they did not.

Bob?

Q Secretary Brock told the Urban League that he favors flexible goals and timetables regarding affirmative action. Is that administration policy?

MR. SPEAKES: Secretary Brock said -- are you talking about Block or Brock?

Q Brock.

Q Brock.

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, that's his view and that's generally our view. When you look at the context of his speech in its entirety, and I would urge you to do so, then you get a comprehensive view of how we approach affirmative action. I would stand on his words.

Q Are there plans for the President to make a statement on affirmative action?

MR. SPEAKES: Don't know of any specific plans, Bob.

Q Sir, many Americans, especially those who have had operations similar to the President's, are concerned that he is not giving himself sufficient time to convalesce. Is he acting in accord with permission of his physicians to conduct this level of activity?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q Tell them nothing.

Q Larry, Bishop Tutu has launched a personal attack on President Reagan, saying that his policies on apartheid are very weak and asking rhetorically, what would he say and do if the people being murdered in South Africa were whites. Do you have any response to him?

MR. SPEAKES: No. I've seen Bishop Tutu's statements, which are somewhat along the lines of what we've said. Bishop Tutu expressed what we believe is a central need for South Africa that black and white enter into a dialogue on the future of their country. We applaud him for

his call for an end for township violence. We, again, condemn violence to resolve South Africa's violence. We, again, do not minimize the responsibility of the South African government to create a climate for talks that would result in a change away from apartheid.

Q Well, what about the personal attack on Reagan that he --

MR. SPEAKES: No comment on that.

Q What about the French?

Q Larry, on South Africa --

Q Yes.

MR. SPEAKES: What about the French?

Q Yes.

Q Well, if it's been reported correctly to me --

MR. SPEAKES: It's a really broad question. (Laughter.)

Q That's quite true. (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: Wouldn't you like me just to start at the top?

Q If it's been reported correctly to me, the French have recalled their Ambassador and have said that they are no longer going to trade with South Africa.

Q No, invest.

Q Invest, sorry.

MR. SPEAKES: That's their business.

Q Well, I mean, it seems to be a much tougher stance than we have at the moment. Is that correct?

Q Are we all still talk --

MR. SPEAKES: You'd have to make that judgment.

Q Did that come up at the Cabinet meeting?

Q We have no plans to take any action at all in terms of economic restraints or --

MR. SPEAKES: We have opposed the legislation on the Hill for a variety of reasons, although we've said there are some good things in it. And that's on the record for what we feel about that.

Gerald?

Q Did it come up today?

MR. SPEAKES: No.

Gerald?

Q On Presser: There is a suggestion at the -- that there were political considerations involved in the Justice Department decision. How do you respond to that?

MR. SPEAKES: Gerald, I don't know any of the facts on that. And it's a matter that has been an investigatory matter by the

Justice Department, and they would have to address it. I just -- I don't know anything about it.

Q Do you know if the White House was informed of the decision?

MR. SPEAKES: I'd have to check. Not that I'm aware of. And I don't know that there's been any official announcement of a decision in that case.

Johanna?

Q To follow up on South Africa and the French, I understand they have recalled their Ambassador. Is the U.S. considering similar action?

MR. SPEAKES: Anybody heard that question before? (Laughter.) Sam asked the same question. You may not -- could have heard it.

Q No, but I didn't hear you answer.

MR. SPEAKES: He's normally very reserved and quiet in his questioning. And I'm sure you missed it.

Q But he didn't ask you if we're considering recalling ours.

Q He didn't ask if we're recalling --

Q Our Ambassador's already here.

Q He's already --

MR. SPEAKES: Oh.

Q Well, that's --

MR. SPEAKES: Pardon? No -- yes -- no --

Q -- it's not a recall, though, is it? Ours isn't a recall.

MR. SPEAKES: No. No, there's --

Q He's already in the shop.

MR. SPEAKES: -- no plan to recall our Ambassador, no.

Q Excuse me. The French are also talking about taking action in the UN. Would the United States support some sort of general statement condemning South Africa?

MR. SPEAKES: Well, we never comment on what's going to take place in the UN until we see what's there. Very many times there's changes by the hour.

Q Also, is there a Cabinet meeting tomorrow and what's on the agenda?

MR. SPEAKES: Well, we're announce tomorrow's schedule at the end of today, and I'll certainly be glad to give an agenda.

Q Thatcher?

Q Has --

Q Nothing?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't think so.

Q Can you give us some general sense of the rest of the week?

Q What did you say on recalling on the Ambassador?  
Did you say --

MR. SPEAKES: No plans to recall the Ambassador, no.

Q No?

Q Can you give us some sense of the rest of the week?

Q -- consultations?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes -- pardon?

Q Can you give us some sense of the rest of the week?  
(Laughter.)

Q Tomorrow's Thursday.

MR. SPEAKES: No. We'll just publish it each day. The President will have meetings each day.

Q Is Dr. Smith seeing the President today?

MR. SPEAKES: I haven't talked to Smith, have you?

Q How did he look? Give us your assessment.

Q Smith was --

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. (Laughter) -- Burton was fine.

Q Larry, Camp David this weekend?

MR. SPEAKES: Don't know yet, Jerry. They'll make a call -- the President and Mrs. Reagan if they want to go up.

Q Larry, can you give us your impression of how he looked today?

MR. SPEAKES: My impression was he looked good. He said he felt fine.

Q Was he friends with Rock Hudson?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know. (Laughter.)

Q And if so, how close? (Laughter.)

Q How close? (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: -- had any contact with Rock Hudson --  
(laughter) --

Q How close are they? (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: -- is that the question?

Q Did --

Q Do know about Thatcher yet?

MR. SPEAKES: No.

Q Didn't the President's meeting run a half hour over his schedule?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q Was he -- did he show any fatigue or --

MR. SPEAKES: No wear and tear.

END

12:37 P.M. EDT

#1511-7/24