

Ronald Reagan Presidential Library

Digital Library Collections

This is a PDF of a folder from our textual collections.

Collection: Press Secretary, Office of the: Press Releases and Briefings: Records

Folder Title: 07/25/1985 (#1512)

Box: 37-Press Briefings

To see more digitized collections visit:

<https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/digitized-textual-material>

To see all Ronald Reagan Presidential Library inventories visit:

<https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/white-house-inventories>

Contact a reference archivist at: **reagan.library@nara.gov**

Citation Guidelines: <https://reaganlibrary.gov/archives/research-support/citation-guide>

National Archives Catalogue: <https://catalog.archives.gov/>

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

PRESS BRIEFING
BY
LARRY SPEAKES

July 25, 1985

The Briefing Room

9:21 A.M. EDT

INDEX

SUBJECT

PAGE

ANNOUNCEMENTS

President's Schedule.....1
Cabinet Meeting

DOMESTIC

Budget.....9-12
AFDC/Cigarette Tax/Oil Import Fee/Revenue Increase

FOREIGN

Soviets/Nuclear Cutbacks.....1-2
Chemical Weapons.....2
South Africa.....2-9, 12
Pastora.....12
Hostages.....12
PM Thatcher.....13
TWA.....13

9:45 A.M. EDT

#1512-07/25

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

PRESS BRIEFING
BY
LARRY SPEAKES

July 25, 1985

The Briefing Room

9:21 A.M. EDT

MR. SPEAKES: This morning, the Vice President and the Chief of Staff go over at 9:30 a.m. to the Residence to meet with the President.

At 9:50 a.m., Bud McFarlane goes over.

And at 10:15 a.m., the President comes over to the Cabinet meeting.

We will have a first trip over to the Oval Office photo in the Rose Garden. Everybody and his brother can go out there and watch --

Q What time?

MR. SPEAKES: Oh, around 10:00 a.m. Whenever the President comes over. And we'll have a photo of the Cabinet meeting also so everybody can look at him.

Q In his PJs or is he dressed?

MR. SPEAKES: Sam already asked that.

Q Does he wear Dr. Denton's?

Q Where have you been?

Q That's a handout?

MR. SPEAKES: No, no. We'll get everybody out there.

This morning --

Q Oh, but I mean for the Cabinet Room.

MR. SPEAKES: No, we'll take writing pool and photo.

This morning at the Cabinet meeting, five Cabinet officers are scheduled to brief the Cabinet on various subjects. Deputy Secretary of State Whitehead will brief on China and the Li visit. Director Stockman will give an update on the budget. Secretary Baker will report on tax reform and Secretary Block will review the farm bill. And, finally, Attorney General Meese will talk about the legal steps in the TWA hijacking.

That takes care of the President's day. He'll spend a little time in the Oval Office afterwards and then go home, oh, 11:30 a.m., or so this morning.

Several stories out there that we will give you brief comments on. There's a New York Times story talking about still another Soviet offer of 30 percent cutback in strategic nuclear missiles and bombers, talking about also bombs and warheads -- missiles and warheads.

The Soviets have not tabled such a proposal at the Geneva arms talks. If they would like for us to discuss it, they may table it and we'll discuss it.

There's a -- conferees have agreed on DOD legislation to end the 16-year moratorium on the resumption of production of chemical weapons. We're pleased and welcome this action taken by the conferees. It is important to take this step because of the threat we face from the Soviet Union's chemical weapons stockpile and programs.

We have on the table a treaty -- on the table in Geneva -- a treaty to ban all chemical weapons and hope that our negotiators can achieve success in making progress toward this desirable goal.

South Africa. There's a report this morning of a planned meeting between the United States officials and South African officials in Europe. The report is speculative. We have no plans for a high level U.S.-South Africa meeting in Europe.

In our view, the policy that we have laid out toward South Africa and the southern African region is the correct one. We are reviewing the situation in South Africa, but we are not doing a wholesale review of our policy.

Q What's on -- what is that --

MR. SPEAKES: We're reviewing the situation in South Africa, but we're not --

Q In what respect?

Q But we're not what?

MR. SPEAKES: We're reviewing the situation in South Africa, but we are not doing a wholesale review of our policy. We're watching the situation. And we're --

Q If the meeting is not in Europe, where is it going to be?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know if any meeting's scheduled, Sam.

Q But it's not significant that you say you know of no meeting and no plans for a meeting in Europe?

Q Yes, I believe --

Q You know, are there plans for a meeting anywhere?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know of any plans for any meeting.

Q When you say speculative, do you mean that a meeting has been discussed but it hasn't been arranged yet, that it's being considered?

MR. SPEAKES: No, apparently people are speculating that there is a meeting, but there is -- no plans for a meeting.

Q What do you mean --

Q Anywhere? There's no plans for a meeting anywhere?

MR. SPEAKES: There are no plans for a meeting in Europe. There are no plans for any other anywhere else that I am aware of.

Q Well, there's also a report the South Africans have requested a meeting with someone like Armacost. And I think that's a Times' report.

MR. SPEAKES; I don't know.

Q What do you mean you're reviewing the situation?

MR. SPEAKES: If I could ever finish this statement, you would understand all of the above.

We're continually reviewing the situation in South Africa, given the serious events there which led to violence and death.

Q Could you go slower on this, please?

MR. SPEAKES: We have made clear our view that the South African government must move promptly away from apartheid which we find to be repugnant and which is the basic cause for the violence South Africa is witnessing today.

Q You said "basic cause"?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

We remain prepared to stay engaged actively in South Africa and in southern Africa to bring about the needed reforms in South Africa and a negotiated settlement of the Namibia problem with the end result being independence for Namibia and the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola.

Q Can I ask you a question on that --

MR. SPEAKES: One more sentence, Ralph.

Q Okay. Sorry.

MR. SPEAKES: The basic question is that we believe our policy is the most effective policy to achieve the ends we all want.

Q Yes, I wanted to ask you if you had any comments on the French action yesterday?

MR. SPEAKES: No comment. It is up to each government to determine its own policy. As far as we're concerned, our policy -- we believe it is the correct one.

David?

Q Has your view of the emergency actions changed at all? Do you now want the emergency actions lifted? Have they been abused in your view?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't think that we will comment specifically on the emergency action, but I think this is a fairly encompassing statement, in my view.

Ira?

Q Well, let me ask you, how does -- you talk about how our policy is the most effective one. How does our policy of constructive engagement view these emergency actions -- lifting of civil rights and so forth?

MR. SPEAKES: Well, we believe that to move promptly away from apartheid is the proper step. And as we say in our statement that apartheid is the basic cause for the violence, moving away from apartheid, we believe,

would lessen the cause for violence and will remove the cause for violence and then would result in no need for those type of emergency sanctions.

Ira?

Q Would our policy toward South Africa be different were it not for Cuban troops in Angola? When you make a statement --

MR. SPEAKES: No.

Q -- you make it as though you intend to add onto the situation --

MR. SPEAKES: No, we take an original approach as we do to most problems. South Africa is one situation and a related situation is the regional problems, including Namibia and the Cuban troops.

Q Well, is our policy still based on the fear that if the ruling government of South Africa were somehow toppled or forced to change violently, that that would help the communists in that region today?

MR. SPEAKES: There's no doubt that the communists would be prepared to move into a vacuum there or anywhere else.

Q Well, but is that an underpinning of our constructive engagement policy?

MR. SPEAKES: Certainly it is, yes.

John?

Q Larry, regarding the French pulling out their Ambassador -- pulling him home -- since the American Ambassador is already back here, is there anything else the United States can do that would be a one-notch escalation short of sanctions that would still come within your constructive engagement policy?

MR. SPEAKES: John, I'm sure there are a variety of steps, but the steps that we are taking right now are the ones that we intend to stick with.

Q Are such steps being considered?

MR. SPEAKES: -- always options there, but what we have stated now is our policy and, as I indicated, there's no wholesale review.

Owen, and then Jerry.

Q On that particular point, isn't it correct that there are additional steps being weighed right now that would bring more pressure to bear on the government within your broad framework of engagement?

MR. SPEAKES: As I indicated, there are always a number of options, but I'm not aware of any specific steps at the moment. We're making our views known.

Jerry?

Q What is the -- what are the instructions that our United Nations delegation has for the Security Council meeting?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know specifically. I would judge that they will be working to keep abreast of the wording of any resolution or any action being taken, and then would ask for

instructions there. They know -- as we all know, those things tend to change by the hour and we've never made a blanket statement in advance. So, I don't know.

Helen?

Q What steps are being taken besides your statements every day?

MR. SPEAKES: We've made our views known to the South African government and --

Q And why do you say it's effective?

MR. SPEAKES: Why do I say it's effective? Because we believe that our policy -- and our policy includes a prompt move away from apartheid -- our policy, thus far, has made progress within South Africa as far as change in laws and other things. Our policy, indicating a prompt move from apartheid, could go a long way toward relieving --

Q Do you think that the U.S. pressure was the cause of any change in the laws in South Africa?

MR. SPEAKES: I can't make a judgment on that, Helen.

Q Well you have made a judgment.

MR. SPEAKES: I -- I didn't finish my sentence. I said I can't make a judgment on it, but I don't think there's any denying the fact that we have had an effect on South Africa.

Q Larry, why -- what is the reason that the United States government is not calling for a lifting of the emergency measures?

MR. SPEAKES: As I laid out to you, that we think that the prompt removal of -- steps away from apartheid --

Q Yes, but -- I understand that.

MR. SPEAKES: -- would remove the basic cause.

Q Why don't you --

MR. SPEAKES: And removing the basic cause --

Q Specifically, what is the reason that you don't specifically say --

MR. SPEAKES: That's the way we prefer to state it.

Q But what -- can't you tell us why you're not being more direct about the emergency there?

MR. SPEAKES: That's the way we prefer to leave it.

Q Can we assume that Nichol will stay here so long as a state of emergency remains in effect in South Africa?

MR. SPEAKES: He is here for consultations. And I don't have any timetable, specifically, for his return.

Q Can you say if it's possible that he might return while this state of emergency --

MR. SPEAKES: I can't say either way.

Q The South African government claims that the state of emergency is meant to try to quell disturbances, specifically, they claim, blacks against blacks in these townships. Is there something to that? Is there some justification for this kind of action?

MR. SPEAKES: I think you'll have to make your judgment on that, Sam.

Q Yes, but is that your message? Do you -- That's the point. Is that what -- the message you're trying to send, that you think that the emergency --

MR. SPEAKES: The message we're trying to --

Q -- is called for in this --

MR. SPEAKES: The message we send is spelled out explicitly in my words, and that's where it stands.

Q Larry, how would the administration now characterize the U.S. relationship with South Africa?

MR. SPEAKES: Oh, I don't think we've been called on to make a characterization. I've stated our views and that's it. We don't normally rank our relations with a country on a scale of 1 to 10.

Bernie.

Q Is anything being done or contemplated in terms of U.S. business in South Africa?

MR. SPEAKES: Anything being done?

Q Or contemplated, in terms of pressuring U.S. -- in South Africa.

MR. SPEAKES: No. I think the basic thrust of U.S. business there has been to take a leadership role in this.

Frank.

Q When you say "promptly move away from apartheid," what kind of time frame are you setting up?

MR. SPEAKES: I'm not setting a specific time frame, but promptly is promptly.

Ira.

Q Have we told the South African government there's a point beyond which they can't go to retain our support? Have we --

MR. SPEAKES: We have made our views known. The South Africans understand our views, and I'm not going to go any further, extend into those.

Q Well, are they the same views that you've expressed or a different set of views?

MR. SPEAKES: No, same views.

Steve.

Q Well, Larry, if we're not willing to use trade sanctions or to take steps, even such as France has taken, what fear does South Africa have about apartheid? And what pressure can we exert on them? We've obviously told them that we're not going to exert any pressure, except to tell them what we think.

MR. SPEAKES: No, I think that they have seen -- very often the pressure of public opinion is the most effective pressure, and that's what they're experiencing. They have moved without any sanctions applied to them by the United States and they, I think, are prepared to move farther, once that this violence is behind them.

I've got budget discussions, if -- unless you want to ride this horse anymore.

Q Yes. What federal agencies are involved in this review, in addition to state and NSC?

MR. SPEAKES: The State Department, mainly, is the one monitoring the situation. And when I say "review," I mean

monitoring, reviewing the current status of events there, so forth.

Q Are you saying that it's limited only to State?

MR. SPEAKES: Pardon?

Q Are you saying that this is limited only to State?

MR. SPEAKES: There are a number of agencies that monitor events worldwide, but the State Department is the primary person to do it, the primary agency to do it.

Frank?

Q Larry, at his news conference a couple of months back, the President said that one of the principal causes of -- I don't think he said that, but he referred to the violence as being related to those who are perpetrating the demonstrations, and the indication was the black demonstrators, themselves. What has happened to now lead you to say that apartheid, itself, is the principal cause of the violence?

Q What was that?

Q What was the answer to that?

Q What's the answer?

MR. SPEAKES: I'm just not going -- go ahead.

Q Wait a second. The President did say that, or words to that effect.

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. That's fine. Put in a "no comment" if you'd like it.

Q The answer was to Mr. Donaldson on March 23rd.

Q All right. No comment on the President's statement. Is that a fair reading of your response to Frank's question?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. I mean --

Q You said you have made --

Q He is kind of --

Q -- your views known to the South African government. What kind of response did they give?

MR. SPEAKES: We're not going into diplomatic exchanges.

Budget and related items. The Ways and Means Committee has taken a number of steps yesterday. Some of them are implementing the budget resolutions which have been passed by the House and Senate. However, they have added a couple of new items.

One is the Welfare AFDC that is being expanded. We do not think a budget bill is the place to expand a system like this.

Cigarette tax which they've proposed to increase to -- keep at 16 cents -- we're opposed to that.

The Medicare provisions that they've said one percent increase -- it saves, what, Rusty? 19 or 10? How much?

MR. BRASHEAR: Well, the whole package saves about \$10 billion.

MR. SPEAKES: Okay. That suits us.

Q That what?

MR. SPEAKES: What?

Q That suits us.

Q That suits us?

MR. SPEAKES: That suits us.

Q Where would you make up the money that they make up from the cigarette tax?

MR. SPEAKES: There are a number of ways. I mean that's a rather --

Q Name one.

Q Social Security.

MR. SPEAKES: -- simple action -- simple question for a very complex program that's coming together.

Now, the Senate budget conferees -- there are a number of options that are floating around up there that have been either announced publicly or privately or that have been discussed with various caucuses on the Hill. You've seen them -- oil import fee, delay of COLAs, delay of indexing, every other year -- those kind of things.

We will not, as I said yesterday, will not comment on the specifics in these various options that are being proposed in various forums until the package is finalized. Some of them we have discussed with the Senate, but we will wait until we see the final product.

We have not discussed the oil import fee with the Senators and, as I say, we are not going to comment on inclusion of any of these items until the package is complete.

The next steps --

Q Quick question on this?

MR. SPEAKES: Next steps will be a possible meeting of conferees. There have been some discussions that it could resume today or tomorrow. At the moment, there are no meetings scheduled

between the White House and the Senate conferees, but we will keep in touch with them.

Q Can I --

MR. SPEAKES: Owen?

Q Is the President still firmly opposed to any revenue increase?

MR. SPEAKES: Revenue increase? Yes. His position hasn't changed on that.

Q Would he consider an import fee revenue increase?

MR. SPEAKES: Obviously, it's a revenue increase. Yes.

Q And, so -- it seems he's also spoken out on the question of indexing as well. When you say you aren't going to discuss that --

MR. SPEAKES: He's spoken out on all of these, but as far as they relate to this package, we would wait until we see the entire package. That goes for all import fees, indexing, COLAs, every other year -- those type things.

Q Is he still firmly opposed to any tampering with indexing?

MR. SPEAKES: Well, as I say, the President's statements are there, and they stand for what they've said. But we will not comment on these specific proposals because many of them are purely in the stage of being floated in the thought process. They're not firmly a part of a package. Until we see a package, we won't deal with it.

Andrea?

Q Well, if they're being floated, don't they want your opinion on it?

MR. SPEAKES: Not necessarily. For instance, on the oil import fee, we have not been asked.

Andrea?

Q How about --

Q -- on the oil import --

Q May I ask one more? Just on the question of cigarette taxes: Because it's a tax per se, that's the -- and the President doesn't want to tax increase -- that's --

MR. SPEAKES: No, the 16-cent sales tax on cigarettes had been set in the budget to drop to 8 cents. That's what we had proposed, what we had agreed to. A number of states have moved to take this up as part of their revenue sources and are counting on it to do so. So, I think we would stick by our original proposal.

Q I know you say that you haven't been asked about the oil import fee, but some of the players who are also members of Senate Finance did bring that up, did they not -- with Bush and Regan and others at that luncheon?

MR. SPEAKES: No. The Senate Finance Committee?

Q Well --

MR. SPEAKES: Oh, all right. Now, the --

Q -- the oil import fee --

MR. SPEAKES: Well, you're talking about two different things.

Q No, I know that, but it's the same oil import fee and it was raised as sort of a broader discussion, not the tax reform issue.

MR. SPEAKES: In the Senate Finance Committee luncheon and discussion of the Tax Reform Proposal, it was raised by some Democrats on the Senate Finance Committee in a general discussion. There were no opinions asked and none given.

Frank, you're waiting? Had enough?

Q Do you have any information on what has happened to Eden Pastora, the anti-Sandinista?

MR. SPEAKES: No, I do not.

Q Larry --

Q Larry, could I go back to South Africa, a question I forgot to ask you.

MR. SPEAKES: You may.

Q You said the report in The Times was speculative and there were no plans to hold a meeting. But the report actually said that the South Africans had asked for a meeting.

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q You haven't address that --

MR. SPEAKES: I do not know the answer to that. Do -- we don't know the --

Q Sorry.

Q -- we don't know whether they've asked, right?

Q Ed?

MR. DJEREJIAN: We don't --

Q You don't know, Ed?

MR. DJEREJIAN: No, I --

Q Can you check with State --

MR. SPEAKES: Ira?

Q The sister of Reverend Jenko said the President promised her that those seven would be included in the release of the TWA hostages. She seems quite adamant on that.

MR. SPEAKES: What they have told the -- what was said in that private meeting at which I was present is exactly what we've said in public.

Q Speaking of that, they say they're going to come, I think, on Tuesday and have some sort of -- all seven members of the -- all seven families here to Washington. Is there any plan for the President to meet with these families?

Q Oh, yes! (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: None that I'm aware of.

Q Any meeting with Thatcher tonight -- special --
anything?

MR. SPEAKES: No.

Q What's the Meese thing on the legal steps in TWA?

MR. SPEAKES: He's going to tell what he's done legally
so far on TWA.

Q Is there anything we're going to hear about it?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know. I'll listen --

Q Is that legally to get the plane back or to get the
--

MR. SPEAKES: I would imagine --

Q What's the schedule look like tomorrow, Larry?

Q Is that indictments?

MR. SPEAKES: What does what look like?

Q What's the schedule look like tomorrow?

MR. SPEAKES: Haven't looked at it, Gary. I imagine it's
going to be just staff. I don't know of any outside meetings.

Q -- Camp David?

Q Camp David?

MR. SPEAKES: Probably.

Q Your briefing today?

Q By helicopter?

MR. SPEAKES: Probably.

Q Your briefing -- time --

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q He's not leaving today for Camp David?

END

9:45 A.M. EDT

#1512-7/25