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THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

PRESS BRIEFING
BY
LARRY SPEAKES

November 16, 1984

The Briefing Room

9:15 A.M. EST

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#1227-11/16

9:31 A.M. EST

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MR. SPEAKES: Good morning. Here we are once again on Friday. Today at 9:45 the President's seeing the Administrator for the Agency of International Development, The Right Reverend Peter McPherson. McPherson has been in Ethiopia recently to check on the delivery systems of U.S. aid to Ethiopia and to have further discussions on the African -- the famine on the African continent. Mr. McPherson will report on the present -- already in FY85, which is just a little over a month, we've provided \$45 million in aid, the bulk of it, I believe, going to Ethiopia.

Six other countries have been targeted by AID as critical countries and we will be responding. They are Sudan, Kenya, Mozambique, Chad, Niger, and Mali. In the meeting will be the President and Vice President, Bud McFarlane, and Fred Wetters, who is an NSC staff person that is active in this area. Peter McPherson will come to the Briefing Room, and that should be shortly after 10:00 a.m., and he will be available for your questions on camera for radio and television coverage.

This afternoon at 1:15 p.m. --

Q Larry, can I ask you, is the session with the President basically to update him or is there any possibility that he's going to make --

MR. SPEAKES: No, it's basically to update. It's a report on that. I think our AID package to the drought areas is generally in motion already.

Q When you say the \$45 million in aid, is that what's already been targeted or what's actually been sent, or what?

MR. SPEAKES: It is allocated and is being sent.

Q To Africa?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, and I think the bulk of the \$45 million to Ethiopia, right, or is that Ethiopia exclusively?

Q Don't all speak up at once. (Laughter.)

MR. SIMS: You got me --

MR. SPEAKES: Well, you'll have Peter at 10:00 a.m. Today at 1:15 p.m., in the Rose Garden, the national Thanksgiving turkey arrives. This will be the 37th consecutive year that this turkey, same turkey, has come to the White House. (Laughter.) The National Turkey Federation makes the presentation and that's about all I can say. John Hendrick is the President of the National Turkey Federation and he brings along G. L. "Lew" Walts, who is Executive Vice President.

MORE

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Q What do they do with it, again, Larry?

MR. SPEAKES: Ms. Hendrick and Ms. Walts -- I'm sorry, what do they do with it?

Q Yes.

MR. SPEAKES: I think they take it back home with them.

Q They come and give it and then take it back home with them?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know whether we keep it or not. We don't exactly have a place for a turkey, nor do we --

Q I thought you did something with --

Q You don't kill them and eat them?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know. We'll check and see if we keep the turkey.

Q Is it true they're named "Landslide" and "Mandate?"

Q And don't they also bring dead turkeys and --

MR. SPEAKES: I think they do bring a frozen turkey and they take their turkey back.

Q Aren't those the ones that they bring out with them to the ranch?

Q Open coverage?

Q We've got to get this chain of command down.

MR. SPEAKES: One turkey. There's been a question as to whether they're going to give two turkeys or one. I think they bring a backup turkey, but they keep their -- (laughter.)

Q Are they called "Landslide" and "Mandate?"

MR. SPEAKES: Pardon?

Q Are they called "Landslide" and "Mandate?"

MR. SPEAKES: I heard that, but we'll have to ask. I don't know.

Q Are they heavily drugged?

MR. SPEAKES: I hope not. The --

Q Open coverage?

MR. SPEAKES: At 2:00 p.m. -- it's open coverage in the Rose Garden -- at 2:00 p.m. Foreign Minister Yaqub Khan of Pakistan comes in to meet with the President. We need to have silence in the back, please, or I'll have to clean house back there -- put Franny on all of you. At --

Q Where's he going to be? Here --

MR. SPEAKES: At noon today we'll have the regular briefing and tomorrow the President leaves at 12:20 from Andrews for California. He'll work at the ranch for the week, Thanksgiving with the family on Thursday, returning to Washington on Sunday.

Q How long is the Khan meeting?

MR. SPEAKES: It's scheduled for 30 minutes.

Q And there's no coverage of that?

MR. SPEAKES: No coverage of that. The President will meet with Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Tariq Aziz, T-a-r-i-q, last name A-z-i-z, on Monday, November 26. During the course of his visit to Washington, the Deputy Prime Minister will meet with several other U.S. officials for a series of meetings on bilateral relations and regional issues.

Tariq Aziz is the most senior Iraqi official to visit Washington since relations were broken in 1967. His visit is further evidence of the continued development of improved bilateral relations. I will not -- I am not in a position to speculate as to what the meeting will -- what the outcome of the meeting will be. There's been speculation, as you know, that it will be the resumption of full diplomatic relations. I cannot address that.

But since 1972, we have had an interest section

in Baghdad that's staffed by Americans. It's conducted its business under the auspices of the Belgian Embassy. The government of Iraq has had a similar arrangement in Washington with the Indian Embassy serving as its protecting power.

Our position since this matter has been of interest in the last several weeks is that Iraq has indicated since 1980 it was prepared in principle to resume full diplomatic relations. And since relations were broken in 1967, we have, through the years, indicated we would be prepared to exchange ambassadors whenever they wished to do so. We of course still maintain our policy of neutrality in the Iran-Iraq war, but we point out that Iraq has indicated a willingness to reach a peaceful solution that would preserve the sovereignty and territorial integrity of both sides; and that Iran has refused to negotiate. If there were a change in diplomatic status between Iraq and the United States, we do not anticipate any dramatic developments, but, given Iraq's strategic location and economic potential, we would regard it as a positive development of regional significance and represent a further normalization of our relations with an important Arab country.

It's also of note that Iraq has publicly renounced the use of terrorism as an instrument of state policy and has curbed the activities of terrorist groups within Iraq. And in 1982 the United States, recognizing this fact, removed Iraq from our list of countries that we have denounced as supporting state terrorism.

Q -- support what?

MR. SPEAKES: That support state -- support terrorism.

Q Larry, what's the attitude toward selling arms to Iraq?

MR. SPEAKES: -- selling arms to Iraq -- I think we have refrained from selling arms to both sides in that conflict because of our declared neutrality in that conflict. I don't know that there will be any change in that should diplomatic relations be resumed.

Q But, how come you're saying everything but we're going to do it?

MR. SPEAKES: Because we haven't done it.

Q Well, can you say who requested this meeting, and specifically what the purpose of it is?

MR. SPEAKES: The Iraqis requested the meeting, and we were pleased to have them -- what was your second part?

Q Specifically, what the purpose of the meeting --

MR. SPEAKES: The purpose of the meeting is for an exchange of views on bilateral relations.

Q Oh -- (laughter.)

Q Well, while you won't speculate about the outcome, you obviously aren't ruling out the possibility of resumption of diplomatic relations?

MR. SPEAKES: No. We -- we've always said we would welcome it.

Q Is one possible outcome that the President will announce, following the meeting, that the two nations have agreed to resume diplomatic relations?

MR. SPEAKES: As I indicated, I wouldn't speculate.

Q Will you be surprised at that outcome, Larry?

MR. SPEAKES: I'm never surprised.

Let me comment -- or no comment, as the case may be -- on the following: the arms czar story this morning in The Post by Mr. Oberdorfer and the Fed story by Mr. Hoffman and the medicare story. I think they're going to be essentially "no comments."

On the czar story, we are right where we were yesterday. The person in the White House who talked to Mr. Oberdorfer, notwithstanding, the President's -- the state of policy on that is exactly where the President said it was in the Time magazine interview on election day, saying that we have not fully discussed it; we have not decided whether it would be advantageous or would add anything or not. We've talked of many ways -- how to approach the Soviets, or what is the best way. We've volunteered some proposals to them. He did so to Gromyko. But, "I couldn't rule it in or out," he said. He actually said it in reverse order -- "I couldn't rule it out or couldn't rule it in."

Q -- what -- czar or envoy or what?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, the possibility of the question that there would be some sort of an arms control coordinator or something like this --

Q And that is still the position?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. To sum up -- and Baker said on election day that it's not anything that's been decided on or formally considered. It's simply something the President has said he's going to take a look at. So, I would characterize it as something that is -- would be a subject for further discussion within the White House. And if it would be helpful in the process, I think the President then would make a decision as to whether to pursue it or not.

Q Take that, Weinberger.

Q Wouldn't it be fair to say, though, that -- oh, I'm sorry -- you were --

MR. SPEAKES: No, I don't have anymore -- go ahead.

Q Wouldn't it be fair to say, though, that the idea of a czar is dead in terms of being some kind of super person who would try to knock heads on an interagency basis and that it's only being considered now as a kind of a technical assistant.

MR. SPEAKES: It hasn't been considered; so, as to what status it would be, or what level the Soviets, if they were interested, might pursue it on -- it just -- there's not enough to comment on, and certainly not enough for whoever talked to Oberdorfer to be commenting. Clearly, whoever talked to Oberdorfer didn't know what was going on.

Q Well -- is it conceivable that this is a separate thing from the umbrella talks; because I thought --

MR. SPEAKES: Yes --

Q -- thought from previous conversations that whoever led the delegation to the umbrella talks was going to be considered the arms czar.

MR. SPEAKES: No. Like I say, both ideas are simply suggestions the President has made and will be willing to talk to the Soviets about to see whether they would bear fruit.

Q They're not necessarily the same is what you're saying?

MR. SPEAKES: That's right -- not necessarily.

Roy?

Q Since it hasn't been decided in the White House, are you disturbed that both the Secretaries of State and Defense have made their pronouncements on the subject -- or is this part of the decision process?

MR. SPEAKES: We would -- the President has always asked for men and women in his Cabinet with strong views, and has no objection to them voicing them.

Charles?

Q Objection to what, Larry?

Q Are these public?

MR. SPEAKES: -- to voicing them. No, they'll have opinions -- doesn't trouble us.

Q Are these developments more contingent upon the Soviet response, or upon working out agreement within your own administration?

MR. SPEAKES: I think it's more contingent upon the President. The President will make the decision on arms control and how we proceed. I think he will take in a lot of factors including the views of his own Cabinet and the views of the Soviet Union, and just decide whether it would be helpful in the process.

Q But to what degree have these things been tossed out to the Soviets?

MR. SPEAKES: Well, the umbrella idea's been discussed at certain levels. We'd like to discuss it more. The czar idea -- I do not know whether that has been discussed with the Soviets.

Q So, if the Soviets came back somewhat positive, then you would be more inclined to --

MR. SPEAKES: More inclined, but I think it would be something -- the President would weigh all the factors.

Q I thought the President last Wednesday said, in referral to a question involving the word "envoy" not czar -- I thought he said he had -- this had been brought up with the Soviets.

MR. SPEAKES: No. "Do you think there's a need for a kind of a super arms control coordinator in the White House who would report directly to you and Bud McFarlane and Secretary Shultz?" And he says, "I'm surprised to see this subject brought up," -- something of that kind -- "... we've never really sat down and said, or asked ourselves, is such a thing needed, would it be advantageous, would it ..." --

Q No. I'm talking about his press conference on Wednesday -- not the Time interview.

MR. SPEAKES: Yes --

Q He talked about the channel -- the informal channel in the news conference --

Q And the word "envoy" was in the question. I forget what his reply was; but I thought he said this had been brought up

with the Soviet Union.

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know -- you're talking about the second level --

Q We expect it to be considered?

MR. SPEAKES: Pardon?

Q We expect it to be considered?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. I think that the President and the foreign policy people will talk about it at some time, and -- okay -- on the matter of the Secretary's comments, Secretary Regan's comments, in the Cabinet meeting regarding the Federal Reserve Board, on that I have no comment.

The medicare story today -- for once we get a leak that's on our side. But I, once again, I just won't comment on these stories. There will be a story today out of the department, so I won't comment.

Q What? what department?

Q What about the story that the U.S. and the Soviet Union are working on some kind of joint space mission.

MR. SPEAKES: I didn't see that. Where did that --

Q It's in The Post --

Q -- The Post --

MR. SPEAKES: I quit reading it -- spent too much time with the Washington Times.

MR. SIMS: The President's mentioned that there's a possibility, I think in his January 16th speech, as one of the things he'd be pleased to work with the Soviets on. But this is something you'd have to ask NASA as to the status of discussion on it.

Q It's being handled by them? Not by State or --

MR. SIMS: It would be their responsibility.

Q Larry?

MR. SPEAKES: Owen, then Al.

Q Yesterday at the briefing, you quoted Regan saying the administration was sticking with its forecast of 4 percent growth which is consistent with its past forecast and would not represent a slowdown. Are you still standing by that statement?

MR. SPEAKES: He didn't change it in David's story, did he? No.

Al?

Q Do you have any comment on those new Soviet ships or Soviet-bloc ships that seem to be moving toward Nicaragua again?

MR. SPEAKES: No, nothing new on that.

Q And on the Soviet statements yesterday about the U.S. fabricating all the charges against Nicaragua and making threatening moves --

MR. SPEAKES: I don't think I'd better comment on that, either.

Yes, sir.

Q Larry, regardless of what Regan said, without commenting on his statements, what is the White House position as far as Fed policy? Does the administration --

MR. SPEAKES: Fed policy? Sufficient money supplied to allow growth without inflation.

Q Are they doing it?

MR. SPEAKES: I think you'll have to make your own judgment. I just don't have anything on it.

Q Right. I've been saying that --

Q You can't say you're satisfied with the current Fed policy, Larry?

MR. SPEAKES: Just not making any comment, period.

All right. See you at noon.

END

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