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THE WHITE HOUSE  
Office of the Press Secretary

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PRESS BRIEFING  
BY  
LARRY SPEAKES

November 28, 1984

The Briefing Room

9:17 A.M. EST

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#1238-11/28

9:40 A.M. EST

THE WHITE HOUSE  
Office of the Press Secretary

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PRESS BRIEFING  
BY  
LARRY SPEAKES

November 28, 1984

The Briefing Room

9:17 A.M. EST

MR. SPEAKES: Today the President meets with the core group, the budget working group. The President, in the meeting today at 11:00 a.m., will review a lengthy list of domestic and military programs that could be reduced or eliminated to reduce the deficit to his target levels.

The President will provide guidance to OMB on many of the items listed but not on all of the spending decisions that need to be made.

This afternoon he has a photo with the representatives of the Alzheimers Disease Foundation at 1:25 p.m.

Q Can we have a photo too?

MR. SPEAKES: No.

And at 7:50 p.m. tonight the President goes to the Senate Republican Unity dinner at the Library of Congress. He will be met by Howard Baker there, and the new Senate Majority leader who will be elected this morning, we trust.

The President will speak at 10:15 a.m. today, and that follows remarks by Senator Baker and by the new Majority Leader. And at 10:45 a.m. he's back in the White House.

Q Do you have a text, advanced text of his remarks?

MR. SPEAKES: We'll look to see -- do you think we might have an advanced text?

Q Are they substantive or --

MR. SPEAKES: Pardon?

Q Are they substantive? Will he talk in fact?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't think so.

Q How would you characterize that dinner, is it a fundraiser, or --

MR. SPEAKES: It's called a unity dinner, I don't believe it's a fundraiser, I think it's a traditional dinner attended by members of the Senate, I believe.

Q Is military spending included --

MR. SPEAKES: Why don't we finish here, and I'll come back to all of that.

Q -- you mean traditional -- every four years, or traditional when there's a change in the leadership, or --

MORE

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MR. SPEAKES: No, every year.

Q Every year?

MR. SPEAKES: Every year there's been a Howard Baker dinner.

Q I think he's gone every year almost.

MR. SPEAKES: Howard Baker has?

Q No. Ronald Reagan.

Q Same thing.

MR. SPEAKES: The President will probably call the new Majority Leader, hopefully before noon -- as soon as he's elected -- but we trust it may be before noon. They meet at 9:00 a.m. today.

Q Can't we have a photo op on that? Please?

MR. SPEAKES: The briefing today will be at 12:00 p.m. here in the Briefing Room. And we have a notice to the press concerning the meeting of the White House Outreach Working Group on Central America at 2:30 p.m., room 450 Old EOB.

Q Has anyone ever covered that?

MR. SPEAKES: The Honorable Jay William Mittendorf, II, who is the OAS representative will speak on the highlights of the OAS General Assembly. And Dr. Charles Fairbanks from the Woodrow Wilson Center of International Scholars, former Assistant Secretary for Human Rights, will speak on human rights in Nicaragua. Those who wish to cover will go -- will call 456-6623.

Tomorrow at 10:00 a.m. we'll have Assistant Secretary Richard Burt on background speaking on the visit of Helmut Kohl. Chancellor Kohl will be here on Friday for a meeting, a luncheon, and departure statements.

After the briefing today we'll have the complete text of The Washington Times interview which took place yesterday afternoon at 4:30 p.m., and it will be for immediate release.

Q After which briefing today?

MR. SPEAKES: After this briefing here. Sims hasn't produced his item, right?

The President in the interview -- and this made some news this morning -- says he will meet with Jeane Kirkpatrick this week. That's true. He will meet with her Thursday afternoon at 1:00 p.m. The President in the interview basically says that he can't say what will -- what position she will want, or what she will do in government -- until he has an opportunity to talk to her. You can see his words in the briefing.

Q Is it true -- I heard on the radio this morning -- he said that he has pleaded with her to stay at the U.N.?

MR. SPEAKES: Over the past couple of years, yes.

Q But he also said that he has no job for her.

MR. SPEAKES: There is no opening, but until she can -- until he can state a job that is interesting, of interest to her --

Q You mean he would create a job for her?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know.

Q Maybe she and I will swap.

MR. SPEAKES: I can't comment on any of this until he has an opportunity to meet with her.

Q Does he have a replacement for the U.N.?

MR. SPEAKES: No -- not at the moment --

Q How about Council of Economic Advisors?

MR. SPEAKES: There's not a vacancy there at the moment.

Q Well, when? There is about to be -- is he thinking in terms of any candidates?

MR. SPEAKES: I'm sure he's thinking of some, but he doesn't have any -- CEA, no, he doesn't have one for that.

Q Does he ever intend to fill CEA?

MR. SPEAKES: I would assume he will, yes.

The Italian police say the embassy in Rome was a target of terrorist attack by an Islamic group. We have noted that and Secretary -- or, Ambassador Rabb was on television this morning discussing it. It's our position that this is an example of excellent cooperation between our foreign service and the Italian police in blocking what they believe was a plot by an Islamic group.

The President, in The Washington Times interview, says that six Russian ships are enroute to Nicaragua with more arms.

That's what he said and that is what is true. We will not have anything more specific to say about that since it is a matter of dealing with how we gather intelligence.

But we, once again, condemn the Nicaraguan government and their Soviet Eastern bloc and Cuban arms suppliers for their efforts to build up Nicaragua's military far in excess of the needs, and as the President says in the interview, "in excess of all other Central American countries combined."

We believe this is an effort on the part of the Nicaraguans to intimidate their Central American neighbors and to undermine the Contadora process and to intimidate their neighbors into settling for less in the Contadora process.

Q Well, I haven't seen the interview, but is there any suggestion that he makes that these arms are sophisticated arms, or just --

MR. SPEAKES: He says we do not know. He was asked in the interview was it a -- were there MiG's and he said we do not know.

Q We don't know whether they're MiG's then?

Q What do we know? That -- that it is material, that it is --

MR. SPEAKES: We know there are six ships and we -- the President makes the assumption that they do have arms on them for -- bound for Nicaragua.

Q What do you mean he makes the assumption? Doesn't he know?

MR. SPEAKES: Well, we see the crates and we assume that they're arms, but we won't know.

Q Larry, --

MR. SPEAKES: The President says that there are six more Russian ships as nearly as we can count that are on their way to Nicaragua now with more arms.

Q Do you think they're --

MR. SPEAKES: As I say, he makes the assumption that they're arms.

Q Well, Larry, is this the --

Q Well you -- excuse me -- the quote that you just read didn't make an assumption. The quote that you just read -- if there're more quotes, could we have the additional ones?

MR. SPEAKES: Sam, you can make your own assumptions about the quote. I'm telling you what the man is thinking. The man is assuming from the appearance of the ships --

Q Well, why doesn't he ever say what he's thinking then? Why does he have to have you come out and explain him.

MR. SPEAKES: I don't want to argue with you. Ben? Go ahead.

Q Larry, is this an -- is this an unusual circumstance. I mean, are these six additional ships --

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q -- from what normally happen, or the normal flow of material?

MR. SPEAKES: This is an unusual circumstance but it is not unusual in the context of the last two or three months which has seen an unprecedented buildup in the region and unprecedented supply of arms to Nicaragua.

Q Well, in terms of the previous context, did we ever find out whether there were any MiG's shipped there?

MR. SPEAKES: No, we -- we -- as far as we were able to determine, there were no MiG's unloaded, but whether there were MiG's that were enroute that were diverted, or whether there were MiG's that were not unloaded, we don't know.

Q But you are just assuming now that this is all weaponry?

MR. SPEAKES: As I say, from -- from what we can learn from our intelligence sources, we make the assumption that it is -- that there are arms on these ships.

Q When you say arms, do you include the possibility of jet fighter trainers?

MR. SPEAKES: We cannot make that assumption.

Q Are you including in this any ships that might have left the Bulgarian port which, when last seen, was in proximity to some Czech planes? Now we've got this proximity question again -- crates seen on the docks and --

MR. SPEAKES: This is a new report?

Q Yes.

Q It's a report of L-39's.

MR. SPEAKES: Charles, I don't know the answer to that.

Q Why did -- what did your response to Andrea's question mean -- "We cannot make that assumption" that what -- the crates are too small? You assume no, or you -- or just can't decide.

MR. SPEAKES: We -- we -- yes, we do not -- without getting into what our intelligence is -- we're just not prepared to make that assumption. We're -- we make the assumption they're arms but we don't make the assumption yet that they're MiG's.

Q Oh, I wasn't asking about --

Q Are you assuming that they aren't, or you're just not deciding at all?

MR. SPEAKES: Not deciding.

Q Larry, I wasn't asking about MiG's. I'm sorry. I was asking about what Charles was asking about -- the trainer planes -- the L-39's.

MR. SPEAKES: We can't make any of that determination yet.

Q But he is only threatening retaliation if there are MiG's, is that it?

MR. SPEAKES: I think you ought to read his -- his interview. He says in the interview that we've made our views known to the Russians that we don't -- I was looking for his words -- that we have let them -- talking about the Soviets -- we'll, let the Nicaraguans and we've let the Soviet Union know this is something we will not sit back and just take because this is so obviously a threat to the area.

Q The six ships, the buildup per se of the introduction of sophisticated aircraft, what is it we can't sit back and take.

MR. SPEAKES: The question included high performance aircraft introduced.

Q Larry, when you say let the Soviets and the Nicaraguans know, is this a renewed communication with them, or is this -- this is one that's been on the record for some time.

MR. SPEAKES: This is one that's been on the record.

Q Your statement condemning Nicaragua and their allies seem to have put the emphasis on Nicaragua. Since a country -- since most countries probably are shopping for arms, isn't it the Soviets who bear most of the condemnation for -- for sending these high performance weapons into an unstable area.

MR. SPEAKES: I think there's enough condemnation to go around.

Q Well, are you condemning them equally or does Nicaragua bear more of the condemnation --

MR. SPEAKES: As I say, we can -- equally will be sufficient.

Q Larry, did I understand you to say that this is not so unusual over the last two, three months?

MR. SPEAKES: That's right.

Q There has been a steady flow of ships?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q Then, why did he single out these six ships? What makes them --

MR. SPEAKES: This is current. There were five or six before that were shipping in there that -- the ones we were concerned about along about election time when we got involved out there in California.

Q -- the number of ships coming in -- the rate has not changed in the last few months --

MR. SPEAKES: Well, I don't know. It's been a steady flow of armaments into the region.

Q What do they say -- what --

MR. SPEAKES: I got a couple more. Bob?

Q Yes, I guess I was just trying to get at what Owen was with over the past two or three months -- does that mean that during this region on a routine basis there have been generally five or six ships moving toward Nicaragua with arms?

MR. SPEAKES: I just don't know the numbers, but it's been a steady flow.

Q But that's an increase over what it was prior to the election, you say, or --

MR. SPEAKES: Not prior to the election but prior to -- since late summer.

Q And just on the question of MiGs or high-performance aircraft again, are you saying -- are you holding onto the possibility that there might be some on there or are you just saying you just simply don't know?

MR. SPEAKES: Don't know --

Q And you're not saying that there's likely --

MR. SPEAKES: That's right.

Q What if they're defensive weapons?

MR. SPEAKES: What?

Q I mean, we are arming a rebel group to attack them and so forth. What if they're defensive weapons?

MR. SPEAKES: Well, they've tanks -- the type of weapons they've -- and helicopters and the numbers they're unloading them are

extraordinary. So --

Don?

Q Are we just going to let this go on or is there any kind of plan to interdict these ships?

MR. SPEAKES: We would not comment specifically on plans or contingencies. We have a number of contingencies based on the situation, so I really wouldn't want to comment. We would hope that the Contadora process can move forward quickly enough that would avoid this type of buildup on out into the future -- indefinitely into the future. The Contadora process would provide for a reduction and withdrawal of foreign interest in the area -- foreign military interest in the area. So --

Bob?

Q You talked about the intimidation factor on Nicaragua's neighbors, thus -- them getting a better deal. Has that manifested itself yet? I mean, have the other Central American nations indicated that they are, in fact, intimidated --

MR. SPEAKES: I can't make that judgment. So far, the Central American neighbors have been steadfast in their desire to have a Contadora treaty that would certainly be fair and would provide for a reduction in arms and a reduction in outside military advisers and a verification process. We would hope that they would remain strong-willed on those points.

Andrea and then Pierre.

Q Where are the ships --

Q Well, you scrapped --

MR. SPEAKES: Pardon?

Q Have those ships arrived? Are they -- do you know where they are?

MR. SPEAKES: Enroute.

Q -- already they've scrapped --

Q Enroute. Are they going through the Canal? Are they --

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know. We're just not going to go much further than that.

Q I mean, how do we know they're going to Nicaragua? That's --

MR. SPEAKES: Well, we just have a good feel for it.

Pierre?

Q You said you made your views known to the Soviets. Did they make their views known to you or was it only one-way communication?

MR. SPEAKES: I judge it's been mainly one way.

There's one more story out there about the compliance report on the Soviets' compliance on arms control agreements. The New York Times has that this morning. The Defense Authorization Conference Report has requested additional information regarding Soviet compliance. We last reported to Congress in January, and the

Committee was asked for an update by December 1st.

The Defense Authorization bill mandates two other compliance reports. One is due February 1st on, "additional findings regarding Soviet compliance with arms control agreements." This report was required as an outgrowth of Congressional deliberations about the MX program.

The second report is due February 15th, and it is to be on additional findings regarding Soviet adherence to the "no undercut policy" with regard to SALT II.

We currently intend to meet the request for additional information in the conference report with a letter -- a report in the form of a letter -- that updates the status of our analysis of the seven areas of Soviet compliance that were addressed last January.

Plus, we'll report on about a dozen areas that we have under analysis. We intend to make a full report in February, as required by Congress, that covers the other subjects they've requested information on. It's also a possibility that we may submit a combined a report to meet both the February 1st, and February 15th request.

The fact that we will submit what is essentially an interim report in December is due to our desire to complete the work in several key areas we're analyzing. It is unrelated to the Shultz-Gromyko meeting except in those that are involved in the preparations for that meeting -- are the same individuals on whom we rely to do the compliance study report.

Q This is expected to be similar to the report about two months ago -- of the advisory group to the President --

Q What?

Q Wasn't there a report about --

MR. SIMS: That was the report of the General Advisory Commission on Arms Control and Disarmament which is the Presidential group, independent, and unrelated to these reports.

Q When is the letter going to be sent?

Q Well, even though it's unrelated, is the analysis similar?

MR. SIMS: These are different groups. One -- government reporting -- the other the Advisory --

Q But they're looking at the same alleged violations.

MR. SIMS: In some cases they may be, but the conclusions might be different.

Q December 1st is the letter?

MR. SPEAKES: The conclusions might be different. They're different areas in the two reports.

Q So, what was that again -- the report by December the 1st?

MR. SPEAKES: Pardon?

Q Any report by December the 1st?

MR. SPEAKES: There will be a letter that would be characterized, I would presume, as an interim report. Then the full report in February.

Q On December 1st?

MR. SPEAKES: On or about December 1st.

Q A letter to the Congress?

MR. SPEAKES: A letter to the appropriate committee chairmen -- which would be Tower and -- can't think of the House guy.

The Unity dinner is not a fundraiser. It's an official function. The dinner's sponsored by Senator Baker in honor of Republican Senators. Although it does not qualify to be an annual dinner, it has been held in '80, '82, and now in '84.

Q The House guys's name is Fascell -- Dante Fascell.

MR. SPEAKES: No, it's not Fascell.

Q It's not?

Q -- say what that cost, that dinner?

Q Where -- he goes for Foreign Affairs?

MR. SPEAKES: You'll have ask Howard Baker, I don't know

--

Q For Defense -- sorry.

Q Social Security's off limits. Is defense off limits?

Q Mel Price?

MR. SPEAKES: Defense --

Q Mel Price.

Q For cuts?

MR. SPEAKES: The President has not made a ruling on defense -- he's not said.

Q Well, is it being suggested to him, as The Post reports, that he slow the rate of increase in defense and try to save, maybe \$10 billion now, and \$30 billion by --

MR. SPEAKES: The meeting hasn't been held, and I'm not going to comment on any of the budget stories.

Ben?

Q Will we get a readout from that meeting, or --

MR. SPEAKES: No.

Q As I understand it, you're included in this core group that's been meeting? Well, without sounding too uppity, I wonder why, since we haven't known you to be, you know, an economist or a budget cruncher, can you tell us what your role is? (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: Ira, why don't you go back to the V.P? My role is to sit there and listen so I'll know what the heck's going on, Ira. (Laughter.)

Q Is Weinberger going to be there?

MR. SPEAKES: I would presume Weinberger will be there today.

Q -- apoplectic --

MR. SIMS: I don't think so --

MR. SPEAKES: Oh, he's maybe not then. Owen, I may be wrong.

Q What's his role there? (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: Owen, I may be wrong.

Q Didn't the President rule out defense in the campaign?

MR. SPEAKES: Pam?

Q Is it possible to get a photo op at the beginning of the meeting?

MR. SPEAKES: No.

Q Military spending --

Q Is it -- this morning is just the budget core group of the --

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q -- with the President?

MR. SPEAKES: Pardon?

Q With the President?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q Not a Cabinet?

Q But not necessarily Weinberger?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know that. I was assuming he'd be there, but --

Q He is not a member of the President's core group -- right?

MR. SPEAKES: No.

Peter?

Q Larry, you said early this week, this would be the meeting where he'd set the markers. If Weinberger's not going to be there, is it a reasonable assumption that the markers on defense are not going to be set?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, I guess you're right.

Enough?

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

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