

Ronald Reagan Presidential Library Digital Library Collections

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

Collection: Sims, Robert B.: Files, 1983-1985
(Press Secretary, Office of the)

SERIES: IV: SUBJECT FILE

Folder Title: TWA Hijacking/Hostages, June 1985
(7 of 9)

Box: OA 11623

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/>

Draft
Hyack
fill

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

PRESS BRIEFING
BY

LARRY SPEAKES

June 30, 1985

The Briefing Room

2:05 P.M. EDT

MR. SPEAKES: We are pleased to announce that the President has received confirmation that the American citizens who have been held in Beirut since June 14th have now left Lebanon. They crossed the border into Syria shortly before 1:30 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time today. This has been confirmed by the United States Embassy in Damascus in a message to the White House and the State Department.

The President was informed by Foreign Policy Advisor McFarlane shortly afterward. The President said, "That's very welcome news. Let me know when their wheel's up." The U.S. Embassy has been in touch with Syria -- the Syrian government to effect a speedy departure. A U.S. military aircraft is in Damascus to take them to the Rhein-Main Military Airfield near Frankfurt, Germany.

At that time, the President will have a statement to the nation from the Oval Office. Flying time to Rhein-Main is expected to take five and a half to six hours. The Vice President will be on hand there to greet the American citizens when they arrive.

Q Now you're saying the President's statement is --

Q When's the statement from the Oval Office?

Q Just a second --

MR. SPEAKES: That's the --

Q Now you're saying the President's statement isn't until after the hostages arrive at Rhine Mein?

Q -- question --

MR. SPEAKES: That's correct. No. I'm sorry.

Q That was my question.

Q -- is that correct, this is important, Larry.

Q Well, I'd started it first, Bill.

MR. SPEAKES: The President will have a statement from the Oval Office when the aircraft leaves -- shortly after the aircraft leaves Syria.

Q What's your best guess, Larry?

Q That's what I thought you'd said.

Q Larry, what's your best guess as to when that's going to be?

MORE

#1476-06/30

MR. SPEAKES: Take your time. I would -- my estimate would -- depending on how long they stay in Syria, five -- six o'clock p.m. -- in that area.

Q Would he take questions from a pool of reporters?

MR. SPEAKES: Let's continue -- discontinue our live coverage now and I'll answer some specific questions on what the remainder of the day's briefings are.

Q Is the President --

Q Can you tell us --

Q Is this -- TV coverage is finished now?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q Would you consider having the President respond to questions from a pool of reporters in the Oval Office?

MR. SPEAKES: I'm waiting until we discontinue our television coverage.

Q What do you want? The lights out?

MR. SPEAKES: Sure we can. Yes.

Q Then say the lights should go out.

MR. SPEAKES: If you'll cut your lights out, then we'll continue.

Q This statement, Larry --

MR. SPEAKES: Let me finish the remainder of the schedule. What we see when we get to -- when we -- for the afternoon, here, I'll go to that.

The President will be in the Oval Office once they're clear of Middle East air space. It will be a pool and now -- a pool, remarks from the Oval Office.

After 15 minutes for filing time, Secretary Shultz will be in this briefing room for camera to answer questions. At that time, we will have a fact sheet that will be a chronology of events from June 14th until the present hour -- literally -- that gives a great deal of detailed information about when meetings were held and how they correlate with statements made in the White House and events in the Middle East.

We also, for those who are on our photo distribution list, will receive a packet of photos that show the activities of the past week.

One other item, the President will be attending a private dinner tonight that has been scheduled for a couple of weeks at Secretary Shultz's house. He's scheduled to leave at 6:15 p.m. and return at 9:50 p.m. There's a travel pool that will accompany him.

When the group arrives at Rhein-Main, there, of course, are press facilities there arranged by the Defense Department. TWA is flying some family members from the United States to Frankfurt. The numbers the Defense Department now has is 24 from New York and 12 from Chicago. There may be others.

Once they arrive at Rhein-Main, they will be given an opportunity for a medical checkup at Wiesbaden Air Force Hospital, which is in the same area. And at the hospital, the United States European command will have a press facility there. They do plan a technical briefing shortly after the President's statements in Wiesbaden that will outline the procedures there. After the medical checkup there is a possibility that the medical people will have a briefing on the condition of those American citizens.

That pretty well gives you the schedule.

Q How about when they come back to the U.S.?

Q What about coming back?

MR. SPEAKES: We do not have a time frame when they come back to the U.S., depending on how long that -- how many avail themselves to the facilities there at Wiesbaden and how many -- how long that takes, and then how many do wish to return to the United States immediately or whether they take time with their families somewhere else.

Q All right. They --

Q Are you suggesting they may not come as a group. In other words, once they're at Frankfurt and go through this procedure, they then may go their separate ways?

MR. SPEAKES: Of course, because different from previous situations, these people are not government employees or military except for a very few. And they will be free to do what they want to do.

Q Larry, will you --

MR. SPEAKES: In fact, if -- I believe I'm correct that those who are -- they will have a choice whether to avail themselves

to whatever debriefings and other medical treatment there or medical examination there.

Q Will you please clear up, did you answer Andrea's question about a pool in the Oval Office?

MR. SPEAKES: I did not answer it, but, no, we plan to do the regular customary Oval Office statement.

Q And --

MR. SPEAKES: As we do on the nighttime speeches.

Q All right. And you're saying that Shultz will begin 15 minutes after the President concludes?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q You expect the President about -- somewhere around 5:00 p.m. or 6:00 p.m.?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. We don't have the specifics about how long they will remain in Damascus. But if you're plotting it out, sometime in the 5:00 p.m. area is our judgment. And then 30 minutes or so after they leave there, then the President will come into the Oval Office and make his speech.

Q How long -- two questions. First of all, how long is the President's speech going to be?

MR. SPEAKES: I would say seven or eight minutes, I would guess. Bob, it's about five pages now, I believe. And I don't know how that translates --

Q Seven or eight minutes?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes -- five to seven minutes.

Q And the second question is, when would you -- would you guess that there will be some kind of welcoming ceremony here at the White House at some point, and what day would you predict?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't look for it at the White House. It depends on how long they stay there, whether they would be back here Tuesday or Wednesday. The President would look for the opportunity to personally welcome them back to the United States, but when and where that takes place just has not been determined.

Q Well, why do you say not at the White House?

MR. SPEAKES: We don't plan a White House ceremony. He will go to wherever they come in.

Q Well, say they --

Q -- they'll come as a group, though?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q I don't understand how that will work.

MR. SPEAKES: If they don't come as a group, then there won't be an opportunity for him to greet them unless he --

Q Well, Larry, when the Granada --

MR. SPEAKES: -- wants to run all over the country.

Q Well, he won't do that, will he?

Q Well, Larry, after the Granada students came back, you may recall, that although they were private citizens from all over the country, they scattered, went home, and then reconvened in the White House ceremony on the South Lawn. Would the President desire something like that?

MR. SPEAKES: David, we really haven't done much thinking about what happens because we've been concentrating on the current situation. So right now, our tentative thinking is if they came back in -- a large number of them came back in some group, the President would greet them at whatever airport they came back to. If that doesn't happen, then we'd have to cross that bridge --

Q Larry, you all are sending a --

Q This includes -- this is the 39, is it? Are there any of the other seven there?

MR. SPEAKES: I do not have numbers, Herb, and we won't until we get into Damascus where we can be accurate on it. I won't make a statement.

Q Do you know whether any of the other seven --

MR. SPEAKES: I just would rather not make a statement on it now. Let's -- we've got plenty of time.

Helen.

Q Could you give us a feeling of the chronology of the President's day up until now? What -- I mean, has he been in the Residence all the time?

MR. SPEAKES: Bud's talked to him three times today. He has been in the Residence all of the time.

Bud has kept him abreast as -- each time he's had something new to report.

Q Talk to him in person, Larry?

MR. SPEAKES: By telephone.

Q Larry, is the --

Q And he's been in the House --

Q Will the air force send a plane for them to Frankfurt? Has anything of that sort been laid on?

MR. SPEAKES: It has not. There's a possibility they may come back by TWA and I think that's probably a likely -- the strongest likelihood that TWA will fly them back.

Q Frequent flyers that they are --

Q Two questions; one, what happens to the TWA plane out of Beirut and, two, much more importantly, what does the President do now? Is he going to resume his vacation schedule if all this works itself out?

MR. SPEAKES: The President has not developed any planning other than the fact that he did cancel his trip to the West Coast and he's -- there are no plans at the moment to go to the West Coast. As far as TWA plane in Lebanon, I don't know.

Sarah?

Q What's your understanding of what they will do in Damascus. What is the routine for the --

MR. SPEAKES: What they will do? It's up to the Syrian government. We've heard various reports and you've heard the same. I don't know whether they'll go to the hotel or whether they'll go directly to the airport or whether they'll do press, or what. We've heard all of those.

Andrea?

Q Well, they're -- we've also heard reports from over there that there had been an elaborate dinner and other kinds of receptions went on.

MR. SPEAKES: We've heard those reports too.

Q But your indications, when you referred in your initial statement to the speediness of their departure, your indications from the Syrian government, I assume, are that it will be fairly abbreviated so that the President will be able to speak at this hour?

MR. SPEAKES: We're -- no. The President will speak when they leave and they'll leave when they leave and the Syrian government is handling the arrangements and we're working with them. Other than that, I can't be specific.

Q Does the President intend to -- after the Americans have left Syria, does he intend to call any leader in the Middle East and express some sentiment?

MR. SPEAKES: Sam, I don't know of any plans to do so, but if he does, we'll let you know.

David?

Q You said in the 4:00 a.m. news conference, categorically we have made no concessions. In light of the statement that the State Department issued last night, is that still your position -- is no concessions were made for this release?

MR. SPEAKES: No concessions -- we made no deals.

Barry?

Q Was the President in touch with the Israelis today or last night at all?

MR. SPEAKES: Not to my knowledge, no.

Q What about McFarlane and Shultz?

MR. SPEAKES: Not to my knowledge in either case. Secretary Shultz will be here and you can ask him, but I'm not aware of any. We've had ongoing contacts with them, but -- and I guess I really shouldn't rule out as to whether there were perhaps the Ambassador there talking and so forth, but I'm not aware of any specific contacts.

Q You say, "No concessions, no deals." What about guarantees?

MR. SPEAKES: No guarantees. No concessions, no deals, no guarantees.

Q Understandings?

Q Larry?

Q No understandings?

Q Take the oath Bush took.

MR. SPEAKES: Candy?

Q I just wanted to check on something you said yesterday. Do you still consider the freedom line for these people to be beyond Syrian air space?

MR. SPEAKES: Well, they have been under Syrian control and Red Cross since they left Beirut.

Q I understand, but I -- because yesterday you were asked when will they be free -- and you said, "Once they're on that plane and out of Syria."

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q I wonder if that's still the case.

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Nelson?

Q Larry -- did you give a hard estimate as to when they will get to Damascus? I assume what you said is they're past the border --

MR. SPEAKES: Past the border nearly an hour ago now, so it could be very shortly.

Q They're there.

MR. SPEAKES: There now.

Q Larry --

Q They're in my ear. They're there.

MR. SPEAKES: Okay.

Q Given past statements --

MR. SPEAKES: I'm going to the back.

Q -- we've made about Syria, has this episode changed our view of Assad and his behavior in the region?

MR. SPEAKES: I think I'll reserve those kind of questions to Shultz, if you don't mind, because you're going to have him and it will be -- it'll be very authoritative.

Q Larry, is there any -- do you have status of the seven kidnapped Americans --

MR. SPEAKES: Pardon?

Q The status of the seven kidnapped Americans that they have?

MR. SPEAKES: Once again, I'm not dealing in numbers. Frank.

Q Do you have anything on reports that we saw that the motorcade, the convoy was target of some sniper fire as it left Beirut and was --

MR. SPEAKES: I don't have anything on that.

Q Was the United States involved in any way in discussions regarding the security surrounding the convoy as it traveled?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know of anything, but let's ask Secretary Shultz that.

Q Larry.

MR. SPEAKES: George.

Q I don't know if this duplicates a question up front that I couldn't hear. What role do you think the statement from the State Department played in today? Would they be free -- would they have left Lebanon had you not issued the statement last night?

MR. SPEAKES: We've got Secretary Shultz. He's been closely involved in this. I would really rather you save those type questions for Secretary Shultz.

Bob.

Q McFarlane going to be available to anybody besides the network?

MR. SPEAKES: Secretary Shultz will be here. And McFarlane does plan to do network interviews by their request. I'm not sure that there'll be time for anything else today.

Q How about a pool of print reporters?

MR. SPEAKES: We can see about that.

Q We'd appreciate that.

MR. SPEAKES: And do a transcript, as we've done before.

Leo.

Q Could you tell us, Larry, if the President approved the issuance of that State Department statement?

MR. SPEAKES: He did approve it. But let's wait and go on those things to Shultz.

Q How soon will you have the chronology?

MR. SPEAKES: Chronology will come about five o'clock, wouldn't you say?

MR. SIMS: Right after the President speaks.

MR. SPEAKES: Right after the President finishes.

Q Right after -- immediately after the President speaks.

MR. SPEAKES: Bob.

Q Do you anticipate an advance text of the President's remarks?

MR. SPEAKES: No.

Q Were you going to make transcripts of the television interviews with Bud? You have any plans to do that?

MR. SPEAKES: I think we would probably run past most deadlines if we did that, and it wouldn't be that much value.

Q The pictures that you were talking about --

Q Wait a minute.

Q -- releasing, are you going to be releasing those pictures before the evening newscasts --

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. We'll get them out here I think in just a little bit.

Q And are they pictures of Presidential activity? Is that what we're going to be seeing?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, various meetings and so forth. Oval Office briefings, those kind of things.

Q Bathrobe?

MR. SPEAKES: In bathrobes. (Laughter.)

Q Could we get the chronology about five?

MR. SPEAKES: Sweatpants --

Q Will we get the --

MR. SPEAKES: Andrea, sweatpants. (Laughter.)

Q -- we get the chronology around five?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. Chronology around five, or after the President.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

2:19 P.M. EDT

#1476-06/30

10:30 AM Revision

June 30, 1985

FACT SHEET

Pelletreau to check if others joined

TWA Flight 847 Hijacking: Summary of Events

(NOTE: All times EDT: Beirut and Damascus and Athens are plus 7 hours; Algiers plus 5 hours)

Friday, June 14

- Boeing 727 jet departs Athens en route to Rome with 153 people on board, including 129 American passengers, 14 foreign passengers, six American crew members, two foreign crew members and two Lebanese hijackers.
- At about 3:10 a.m., flight is diverted to Beirut, where it lands just before 5:00 a.m. over the protests of Lebanese controllers. Nineteen passengers, 17 women and two children, are released and the aircraft is refueled.
- The President's national security advisers begin a series of secure telephone conference calls which will continue throughout the hijacking situation. Schedule initial interagency meeting.
- Shortly before leaving Beirut for Algiers, 1,800 miles away, at 6:30 a.m., the hijackers list their initial demands, which include release of Lebanese prisoners held in Israeli prisons.
- ~~At 0700, ATAS~~
- At 10:00 a.m., initial interagency meeting held at White House. Task Force organized at State Department.
- ~~US requests Algiers to allow plane to land and not depart.~~
- Plane arrives at 10:30 a.m. and spends several hours in Algiers, where 21 additional passengers are released. The plane is again refueled. Hijackers threaten to execute hostages *if aircraft not permitted to depart.*
- U.S. urges governments of Lebanon and Syria not to allow aircraft to return to Beirut, and *urges governments of Syria and Cyprus to accept the aircraft if diverted from Beirut.*
- At 3:25 p.m., aircraft departs again for Beirut, arriving at 7:20 p.m. Navy Petty Officer Second Class Robert Stethem is shot in the head and murdered. His body is thrown onto tarmac.
- About a dozen heavily-armed men, apparently Hizballah and Amal militia, board the plane and take control from the original hijackers. *over Lebanese objections. When requested AMAL intermediary does not arrive.*
- Certain passengers are then singled out, and 13 are taken off the plane. *WAS to check*
- Plane departs Beirut at 10:40 p.m. U.S. requests Algiers to allow aircraft to land and not take off again.
- In high level diplomatic communication, U.S. urges Syria to contact Iranian/Shia leaders to influence hijackers to release prisoners to Algerian authorities.

Saturday, June 15

- TWA plane arrives in Algiers at 2:50 a.m.

-more-

PRESERVATION COPY

(Hynd file)

Q: WHY DID YOU ISSUE THE STATEMENT LAST NIGHT? WAS IT
IT PART OF A DEAL?

A: --THE STATEMENT WAS PURELY A RESTATEMENT OF OUR
TRADITIONAL POLICY ON LEBANON AND WAS ISSUED
TO MAKE OUR POLICY CLEAR TO ALL PARTIES CONCERNED.

Q: WHY DIDN'T THE CONVOY TAKE PLACE YESTERDAY?

A: --OUR UNDERSTANDING IS THAT THE AMAL ORGANIZERS WERE
UNABLE TO GATHER ALL 39 TWA HOSTAGES AT THE STAGING
LOCATION.

DRAFTED:DMACK

6/30/85

CLEARED:TF:PGRIFFIN

NEA:

PA:Lab/Ajarian
S. Shultz

hijack file

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

June 30, 1985

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

The Hijacking of TWA Flight 847

All times EDT: Beirut and Damascus and Athens are plus 7 hours; Algiers plus 5 hours:

Friday, June 14

- Boeing 727 jet departs Athens en route to Rome with 153 people on board, including 129 American passengers, 14 foreign passengers, six American crew members, two foreign crew members and two Lebanese hijackers.
- At about 3:10 a.m., flight is diverted to Beirut, where it lands just before 5:00 a.m. over the protests of Lebanese controllers. Nineteen passengers, 17 women and two children, are released and the aircraft is refueled.
- The President's national security advisers begin a series of secure telephone conference calls which will continue throughout the hijacking situation. Initial interagency meeting scheduled. Task Force organized at State Department.
- Shortly before leaving Beirut for Algiers, 1,800 miles away, at 6:30 a.m., the hijackers list their initial demands, which include release of Lebanese held in Israeli prisons.
- At 10:00 a.m., initial interagency meeting held at White House.
- U.S. requests Algeria to allow plane to land and not depart.
- Plane arrives at 10:30 a.m. and spends several hours in Algiers, where 21 additional passengers are released. The plane is again refueled. Hijackers threaten to execute hostages if aircraft is not permitted to depart.
- U.S. urges government of Lebanon not to allow aircraft to return to Beirut and urges governments of Syria and Cyprus to accept the aircraft if diverted from Beirut.
- At 3:25 p.m., aircraft departs again for Beirut, landing at 7:20 p.m. over Lebanese objections. When requested Amal intermediary does not arrive, Navy Petty Officer Second Class Robert Stethem is shot in the head and murdered. His body is thrown onto tarmac.
- About a dozen heavily armed men, apparently Hizballah and Amal militia, board the plane and take control from the original hijackers.
- Certain passengers are then singled out, and 13 are taken off the plane.

-more-

Friday, June 14 (continued)

- Plane departs Beirut at 10:40 p.m. U.S. requests Algiers to allow aircraft to land and not take off again.
- In high level diplomatic communication, U.S. urges Syria to contact Iranian/Shia leaders to influence hijackers to release prisoners to Algerian authorities.

Saturday, June 15

- TWA plane arrives in Algiers at 2:50 a.m.
- In Algiers, 61 passengers and all five flight attendants are released in stages. International Committee of the Red Cross and Algerian officials are permitted to board the aircraft to check the health of the hostages and hear the demands of the hijackers.
- U.S. requests Algeria to keep aircraft in Algiers.

Sunday, June 16

- After 25 hours, the plane leaves Algiers for Beirut, landing for third time at about 7:45 a.m.
- Secure telephone consultations among the President's national security advisers are followed by the President's early return to White House from Camp David. His scheduled afternoon events are cancelled.
- Upon arrival at the White House from Camp David, President takes questions from the press and says "... we're doing everything we can do, but I'm not going to talk about details, I don't think that would be proper." Asked if he is ruling out military response, he replies: "I'm not going to comment on anything of that kind." Is he still opposed to negotiating with terrorists? "This has always been a position of ours, yes." Asked if he has talked to any government that morning, the President replies: "We've been in contact with the governments of Lebanon and Syria and Israel, but again, I can't go any further in any details."
- At 1:02 p.m., the President enters White House Situation Room to begin a meeting with his national security advisors. In the the meeting the President reaffirms basic policy not to negotiate; focuses attention on Amal, which now has claimed responsibility for the safety of the hostages. Meeting ends at 2:15 p.m.
- Remaining 29 passengers removed from plane. Three flight crewmen remain onboard with unknown number of hijackers.
- Amal leader Berri enters discussions for first time. Berri frees hostage Robert Peel, Sr.

Monday, June 17

- In early morning hours, National Security Advisor Robert McFarlane makes 30-minute phone call to Amal leader Berri; tells him U.S. will not make concessions or ask anyone else to do so.
- Secretary Shultz makes statement at noon briefing: "We call upon those holding the hostages to treat them properly and to release them immediately ... we will not make deals with terrorists and will not encourage others to do so."

Monday, June 17 (continued)

- At 1:00 p.m. press briefing, Principal Deputy Press Secretary Larry Speakes confirms McFarlane/Berri phone call. Says "we have made it plain what we want Berri to do, and that is to use his influence to resolve this situation. We believe he's capable of doing that. We believe he is the key to the solution there and if he wishes to step forward and take that leadership role and use his influence, then we think it could go a long way toward resolving the problems involved -- the complex problems involved in this situation, perhaps including the releases of the Israeli detainees."

Tuesday, June 18

- Berri frees three more hostages, including Greek singer, leaving 40 hostages, all believed to be Americans.
- U.S. sends demarches to various countries and international organizations, requesting they use their good auspices to influence the situation.
- U.S. decides to issue travel advisory warning to U.S. citizens about travel through Athens Airport.
- U.S. contacts with government of Syria and others focus on the need to release hostages quickly and transfer them out of Lebanon.
- The President, in the opening statement of a regularly scheduled nationally-televised press conference, announces measures to deal with airport security and terrorism. He calls for the immediate safe release of our citizens. Hijacking issue dominates news conference questions.

Wednesday, June 19

- U.S. requests International Committee of the Red Cross to see the hostages and check their welfare.
- ABC News correspondents allowed to approach airliner to interview pilot John Testrake and crew, the first of many media interviews with the hostages arranged by their captors.
- President offers thoughts at a question-and-answer session with members of the Mooresville Chamber of Commerce in Indiana: "To the families of those here from your own state, I think we all are praying -- that's all -- I've been praying ceaselessly for them and for their safety."
- President meets with hostage families in Indianapolis.
- At the Annual Convention of the U.S. Jaycees in Indianapolis, the President says: "We're continuing to do everything that we can to bring all credible influence to bear, to get our people freed and returned home safe and sound ... but let me say, we must not yield to the terrorist demands that invite more terrorism. We cannot reward their grisly deeds. We will not cave in."
- Terrorists in San Salvador kill 15, including four unarmed off-duty U.S. Marines not in uniform and two U.S. businessmen.

Thursday, June 20

- The President meets with his national security advisers in the White House Situation Room, 10:06 a.m. until 11:15 a.m.

Thursday, June 20 (continued)

- The President issues a statement on the killing of Americans in El Salvador, saying he has appointed the Vice President to take the lead within the U.S. government and with our allies "to determine what actions, military and otherwise, we and our similarly threatened friends can take to end this increasingly violent and indiscriminate but purposeful affront to humanity. ... No nation on earth has been more generous to others in need. But we also have our limits -- and our limits have been reached. We cannot allow our people to be placed at risk simply because they are blessed in being citizens of this great Republic."

Friday, June 21

- Diplomatic efforts continue.
- President meets with hostage families in Dallas.
- In the President's address to the Lions Club International Convention in Dallas, he talks about terrorism:
"In the last few days, it has become even more clear that the criminal threat to civilization is no mere domestic problem. Wednesday night in El Salvador, four young Marines in civilian clothes, along with civilians from America and several other countries were gunned down in a sidewalk cafe. This event was preceded by the wanton bombing of an air terminal in Frankfurt, Germany; the hijacking of one of our airlines; and the seizure of a Jordanian aircraft. The killers in El Salvador are no different than those other perpetrators of inhumane acts."

Saturday, June 22

- Diplomatic efforts continue.
- The President says in his weekly radio address to the Nation: "We will carry with us all of the grief and sorrow and rising anger of a nation whose patience has been stretched to its limit."

Sunday, June 23

- Diplomatic efforts continue. By now, numerous countries, including many in the Middle East, have condemned the hijacking.

Monday, June 24

- Israel releases 31 Lebanese detainees from Atlit prison, but says their release resulted from judicial processes and is not linked to hijackers' demands.
- In Beirut, Nabih Berri announces a new demand: that U.S. Navy ships in the area leave before the hostages can be released.
- Meeting with his national security advisors in the White House Situation Room, the President decides to let diplomatic action play out; Syria the focus of diplomatic efforts. Meeting, which began at 2:07 p.m., ends at 3:38 p.m.

Tuesday, June 25

- At 9:15 a.m. press briefing, Larry Speakes discusses options the President may consider, including limiting goods and services to Beirut and limiting use of Beirut International Airport.

Tuesday, June 25 (continued)

- At 1:47 p.m., the President chairs a meeting of national security advisors in the White House Situation Room; reviews plans to extricate the hostages and to press forward with a campaign against terrorism. Meeting ends at 3:00 p.m.
- Interagency meeting refines planning directed by the President.
- In a 4:00 p.m. press briefing, Larry Speakes reports that the President met with national security advisors, receiving a top-to-bottom review of current diplomatic efforts and the full range of future options for bringing full pressure to bear on those holding U.S. citizens. Speakes says that the review covered ongoing efforts and the assessment as to whether they will bear fruit. According to Speakes, the President also reviewed a wide-ranging series of options that could be applied to the situation should the hostages be held for a longer period. Speakes closes the briefing by saying: "The President will let diplomacy run its full course before taking further steps, but he is prepared to take whatever actions are necessary."

Wednesday, June 26

- From 10:03 a.m. until 11:00 a.m., the President chairs another meeting of his national security advisors in the White House Situation Room. Defers other steps pending diplomatic developments.
- News blackout begins.
- Another hostage, Jimmy Palmer, is released because of a worsening heart condition.
- Berri reiterates his demand that U.S. warships pull away from the Lebanese coast. He adds a new demand: that neither the U.S. nor Israel retaliate once the situation is resolved. Berri announces proposal to transfer all hostages to a Western embassy in Beirut or to Damascus, where they would remain until Atlit detainees are released.

Thursday, June 27

- Interagency group develops contingency plans.
- Wide speculation in media about whether hostages will be transferred to the French or another Western embassy. Europeans won't accept conditions.
- Secretary of State Shultz's call for release of 46 U.S. hostages (including seven who were missing in Lebanon prior to the TWA hijacking) is widely reported in media as a "new U.S. demand."

Friday, June 28

- Interagency group meets again, prepares agenda for consideration by the President and his advisors.
- More hostage interviews by television networks.
- President meets with hostage families in Chicago.
- At a luncheon with community leaders of Chicago Heights, Illinois, the President says, in response to a question about one of the hostages' critical comments on the linkage of the seven kidnapped hostages to the 39 hijacking hostages: "I don't think anything that attempts to get people back who have been kidnapped by thugs and murderers and barbarians is wrong to do. And we are going to do everything that we can to get all of the Americans back that are held in that way."

Friday, June 28 (continued)

- In his remarks to the citizens of Chicago Heights, the President says: "When terrorism strikes, civilization itself is under attack. No nation is immune. There's no safety in silence or neutrality. If we permit terrorism to succeed anywhere, it will spread like a cancer, eating away at civilized societies and sowing fear and chaos everywhere. This barbarism is abhorrent. And all of those who support it, encourage it and profit from it are abhorrent. They are barbarians... We cannot accept these repeated and vicious attacks against our nation and its citizens. Terrorists, and those who support them, must, and will, be held to account."
- After returning from Chicago trip, the President chairs another meeting in White House Situation Room, from 5:11 p.m. until 6:10 p.m. -- reviews developments and determines courses of action to be taken in various contingencies.
- More television interviews with hostages.
- At about 7:00 p.m., press reports from the Middle East say hostages will be released. White House, in change from complete news blackout, says: "We have heard the reports. We are in touch with appropriate authorities in both countries (Lebanon and Syria). We have no further comment."

Saturday, June 29

- U.S. C-141 military transport aircraft with reception team departs Washington for Frankfurt. Another C-141 goes to Damascus.
- At about 4:00 a.m., hostages are reported released, en route to Syria. There are conflicting reports on their exact status and location. Syria announces "the hostages were freed today and will be transferred to Damascus where they are expected later today."
- Later reporting, confirmed around 7:00 a.m., indicates hostages still in Beirut, with Berri apparently seeking guarantees concerning U.S. non-retaliation.
- More television interviews with hostages.
- President mentions hostage situation briefly at beginning of his weekly radio address; confers with national security advisors in Oval Office; consults with other advisors by telephone.
- At about 10:00 p.m., the following statement, approved by the President as a restatement of longstanding policy regarding Lebanon, is issued by the Department of State: "The United States reaffirms its longstanding support for the preservation of Lebanon, its government, its stability and security, and for the mitigation of the suffering of its people."

Sunday, June 30

- At 3:30 a.m., Syrian officials in Damascus tell the U.S. Embassy "Syria has solved" the problem that delayed release of 39 TWA hijacking hostages.
- Press reports from Beirut and Damascus indicate preparations are being made for hostage release.
- At 6:00 a.m., arriving at the White House, National Security Advisor McFarlane tells reporters he talked to the President several times the previous evening and says "we just hope for the best."

Sunday, June 30 (continued)

- Hostages are reported by media to be en route Damascus. Other reports conflict with this.
- U.S. officials in Syria advise Washington that shortly before 1:30 p.m., hostages crossed the border into Syria from Lebanon. The exact number of hostages released, believed to be all 39, is not yet confirmed.
- Advised of the hostage release by McFarlane, the President says, "That's very welcome news. Let me know when they are wheels up."
- President addresses the Nation by television from the Oval Office: "The 39 Americans held hostage ...are free, safe, and at this moment, on their way to Frankfurt, Germany. They will be home again soon... We will not rest until justice is done. We will not rest until the world community meets its responsibility: We call upon those who helped secure the release of these TWA passengers to show even greater energy and commitment to secure the release of all others held captive in Lebanon. And, we call upon the world community to strengthen its cooperation to stamp out this ugly, vicious evil of terrorism."

#

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

June 30, 1985

INTERVIEW OF
NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR ROBERT C. MCFARLANE
BY
INN

The Roosevelt Room

Q Mr. McFarlane, the President had some very joyful and -- cautious words for us. Personally, as Robert McFarlane, how relieved are you?

MR. MCFARLANE: Well, throughout you're concerned for the welfare of the human beings here and, to the extent they are safe today, it brings on a feeling of relief. There are other elements of satisfaction that are hedged by the anguish of the murder of Robert Stethem.

I do think that there has emerged from this past two weeks a better awareness among the American people of how serious this problem of international terrorism is -- how urgent it is that we apply more in the way of resources and imagination to deal with it, and that's why I think the President's mood was one of sobriety and seriousness.

Q Obviously, nothing's this simple in the Middle East or in any hostage situation either but if you were to name one single event or single statement or cable or phone call that you think could make -- could have made the difference in this, what would it be?

MR. MCFARLANE: Well, I suppose I think that it was the moment last week, really, when we convinced Nabih Berri that his strategy couldn't work; that is, his expectation that the United States would concede or require or request Israel to make a concession. And that occurred about four days into the crisis -- that was at break point, and from then on he began to look for what alternatives he might have. But the ultimate outcome, I think, was in sight.

Q You must have seen some of the television footage -- that convoy to Damascus became almost a victory parade for the Shiites. They certainly got attention to their cause, they will not, of course, due to the release of the hostages, but they will, ultimately, get their comrades in Israel released and they'll -- there will be those who say they won. Did they? They'll certainly say it.

MR. MCFARLANE: No, I think for Lebanese, beyond those on the television cameras today who have experienced two weeks of unrelenting criticism, the outrage of countries from Japan throughout the Middle East, sister Arab countries, the United States, the World Court, the United Nations, and the prospect of this same kind of continued violence in Lebanon for as long as these people are allowed to practice there, is beginning to create a very fundamental change in the body politic of Lebanon which, over time, can restore a measure of stability, perhaps. But, these handful of people who created this are seen by the Lebanese people, I think, as outlaws and they've done themselves some damage in this past two weeks.

Q I want to go back for a moment to those Lebanese prisoners. Accepting even no linkage, and, of course, the U.S. still insisting it made no deal, there will those who say, "Well, if it looks like a duck and walks like a duck -- "

MORE

Hijack file

MR. MCFARLANE: Well, I think that's too simple by half. In point of fact, what was entrain before they seized this aircraft was interrupted and the evidence of Israel's intention to release the prisoners which was already under way was brought to a very prompt halt. It became clear to Nabih Berri and his colleagues that the effect of what they had done had been to stop the flow of prisoners back and that's pretty apparent to those involved.

It was equally clear that President Reagan wasn't about to change his policy and make a concession or urge Israel to. So I think that the strategy of both the United States and Israel is very much intact, if anything, it may have been strengthened a bit.

Q Is it possible now, Mr. McFarlane, to surgically retaliate against whoever was responsible for the hijacking -- Hezbollah, or whatever faction you believe did it? Do you think, beyond that, you must do so in order to maintain credibility?

MR. MCFARLANE: Well, I think that's true. And I think the focus of it -- the purpose of it -- has to be, not to conduct a random act of vengeance, but instead, to focus our power on dealing with the root sources of terrorism -- where people are trained, where they are housed, fed, sustained over time. And there are two or three strategic locations in the Middle East, in particular, where that is the case.

I think, more importantly, what has emerged from this experience in the United States has been a very widespread popular support for more firmness in dealing with terrorism that has been missing, I think. I can also translate to support for additional authority from the Congress -- a new law -- to enable us to better deal with this problem, and that is a benefit of this, as tragic as it has been.

Q From the way in which a senior administration official has outlined the scenario of the past two weeks, one could assume that Syrian involvement made the difference in saving these American lives -- that without Syria's help, these people might not be with us tonight.

MR. MCFARLANE: I think Syria has acted constructively in this crisis and as an example of where that cooperation can prosper -- we welcome it. We don't pretend that we and Syria agree on all issues; it's very apparent that we don't. But, in working together to counter terrorism in the Middle East, this has been a useful experience. We hope we can continue it.

Q Syria will continue to work toward getting the seven Americans still held released, we're told. Do you think they can -- is it within Syria's power to get them out?

MR. MCFARLANE: Well, I think that Syria has resources which are better than virtually anyone else in Lebanon and so if anyone can, Syria can. To be fair, it takes time when you're looking in an urban area for people that are often moved from place to place, but we'll remain determined to find those people and bring them home.

Q What can you say about those seven other Americans -- do you know where they are?

MR. MCFARLANE: As I say, on a given day, no. You can try to find out the people who are responsible and to track them. But even if you do find them, the prospect of being able to react promptly enough before they're moved again is very difficult, and you have to rely on others, such as Syria, that can react in a more timely way to do that.

Q How would you characterize the Amal now -- friend or foe?

MORE

MR. MCFARLANE: Well, we --

Q Both?

MR. MCFARLANE: -- have no animus toward Amal, per se. We recognize that the Shiite as with the Sunni, Druze, Christians, must find a way to get along with each other in Lebanon and at times they have. There have been times of stability and prosperity in Lebanon. As an example of misguided policies of the Shiite community, this is an unfortunate experience.

Q Does this affair leave any lasting impact on the administration -- on the President?

MR. MCFARLANE: Well, I believe that the President ought to be able to emerge from this with his confidence in certain fundamental principles very much vindicated. From the beginning he set the course, established basic principles, no concessions, patience and it worked. He also decided and put down certain rules for the rest of us about the application of various elements of U.S. leverage and influence and how they would be applied, and at timely moments he intervened personally to do that. And the result was a very successful outcome that he can take great pride in, I think.

Q Thank you very much, Robert McFarlane, National Security Advisor to the President.

MR. MCFARLANE: Thank you.

END