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News Summary

OFFICE OF THE PRESS SECRETARY

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29, 1986 -- 6 a.m. EST EDITION

TODAY'S HEADLINES

NATIONAL NEWS

Nation Mourns Shuttle Tragedy -- From President Reagan to school children to workers who made parts for the shuttle Challenger, Americans mourned the six astronauts and teacher Christa McAuliffe. President Reagan ordered flags flown at half-staff on all federal buildings, military installations, naval ships and embassies for one week "as a mark of respect to the memory" of the seven astronauts.

(Christian Science Monitor, New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, Washington Times, AP, Reuter, UPI)

Speaker Calls President Insensitive -- House Speaker Tip O'Neill angrily accused President Reagan face to face yesterday of "insensitivity" to the plight of the jobless and of spreading a "a bunch of baloney" about the reasons for unemployment, according to participants in an acrimonious White House meeting of congressional leaders. (Washington Post)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Administration Signals Support For Angolan Rebels -- The Administration, welcoming Angolan guerrilla leader Jonas Savimbi to Washington, signaled its willingness to support the rebel commander in his fight against Angola's Marxist government. (Washington Times, UPI)

NETWORK NEWS (Tuesday Evening)

CHALLENGER EXPLOSION -- It was a cruel, shocking end to what everyone expected to be another triumph for the space shuttle.

REAGAN REACTION -- President Reagan learned of the explosion while preparing for his State of the Union speech, which was postponed to next Tuesday.

STATE DEPARTMENT WARNING -- The State Department is warning Americans not to travel to the second largest city in Haiti.

INTO THE FUTURE

" ... The Challenger crew was pulling us into the future, and we'll continue to follow them ... "

President Ronald Reagan
The Oval Office
January 28, 1986

NATIONAL NEWS

SPACE SHUTTLE EXPLODES, KILLING CREW

The space shuttle Challenger, carrying six astronauts and schoolteacher Christa McAuliffe, exploded in a burst of fire 74 seconds after liftoff yesterday, killing all seven aboard and stunning a world made witness to the event by television.

It was the worst accident in the history of space exploration and the first time anyone has been killed during an American space flight. Five hours after yesterday's tragedy, Jesse Moore, director of the Johnson Space Center in Houston, announced from Cape Canaveral that the shuttle program had been suspended for an exhaustive investigation.

But President Reagan, who postponed his State of the Union speech from last night to next Tuesday, vowed in a nationally televised statement from the Oval Office that exploration of space would continue.

(Boyce Rensberger, Washington Post, A1)

PRESIDENT POSTPONES SPEECH TO CONGRESS

President Reagan postponed his State of the Union message yesterday, calling the nation to a day of mourning and remembrance but promising that the nation's exploration of space would continue. "Today is a day for mourning and remembering," Mr. Reagan told a stunned nation late yesterday afternoon. "This is truly a national loss. Nothing ends here. Our hopes and our journeys continue."

(Jeremiah O'Leary and Mary Belcher, Washington Times, A1)

THE WORST DISASTER IN U.S. SPACE HISTORY

The space agency offered no immediate explanations for the accident, and said it was suspending all shuttle flights indefinitely while it conducted an inquiry.

There were no clues to the cause of the explosion. The space agency discounted speculation that cold weather at Cape Canaveral or an accident several days ago that slightly damaged insulation on one of the external fuel tanks might have contributed to the disaster.

(William Broad, New York Times, A1)

EXPLOSION MAY FORCE A RETHINKING OF NEED FOR MANNED MISSIONS

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. -- Yesterday's explosion of the space shuttle Challenger could force a major reevaluation of the role of human crews in the scientific and commercial exploration of space.

One major project jeopardized by the disaster is the government's plan to place a manned space station in Earth orbit by the mid-1990s, with parts carried aloft by the once-proud shuttle fleet.

(Arlen Large and Laurie McGinley, Wall Street Journal, A1)

NATION STUNNED BY TRAGEDY IN SPACE

At the White House, President Reagan wordlessly viewed video replays of the Challenger explosion. Watching the launch in the family quarters, first lady Nancy Reagan exclaimed, "Oh my God, no!"

Secretary Bennett issued a statement in Washington urging American schoolchildren to "be proud of Christa McAuliffe, one of your teachers, and of the other brave Americans who were willing to take great risks for the future of our country."

NEA President Mary Hatwood Futrell expressed shock and sorrow, but also voiced the hope that NASA would send another teacher into space soon.
(Tamara Jones, AP)

NATION MOURNS SHUTTLE TRAGEDY

From President Reagan to school children to workers who made parts for the shuttle Challenger, Americans mourned the six astronauts and teacher Christa McAuliffe. President Reagan ordered flags flown at half-staff on all federal buildings, military installations, naval ships and embassies for one week "as a mark of respect to the memory" of the seven astronauts.
(Judi Hasson, UPI)

SPACE PROGRAM WILL GO ON, REAGAN VOWS

A somber President Reagan paid homage yesterday to the "seven heroes" who died aboard the Challenger and vowed that the United States space program would go forward despite the tragedy.

"The future doesn't belong to the faint-hearted. It belongs to the brave," Reagan said in a nationally televised speech from the Oval Office. "The Challenger crew was pulling us into the future, and we'll continue to follow them."
(Lou Cannon, Washington Post, A4)

SHUTTLE TRAGEDY STUNS U.S., HIGHLIGHTS DANGERS

Sen. Jake Garn (R) of Utah, said that the cause of the tragedy must be determined, but the spaceflight program has to go ahead. And former astronaut Sen. John Glenn (D) of Ohio declared, "After the investigations, we should proceed with the (shuttle) program and that would include the civilian-in-space program as well." It is in that spirit that officials of NASA are preparing their investigation.

(Robert Cowen, Christian Science Monitor, A1)

SHUTTLE/FUTURE

SPACE CENTER, Houston -- NASA suspended its ambitious 1986 shuttle scheduled Tuesday until it can determine why Challenger exploded on its way into space, killing all seven members of its crew.

"We're obviously not going to pick any flight activity until we fully understand what the circumstances were relative to launch," Jesse Moore, associate administrator for spaceflight, said at a Cape Canaveral news conference.
(Sharon Herbaugh, AP)

TRAGEDY RAISES QUESTIONS ABOUT SHUTTLE FUTURE

NEW YORK -- The loss of the space shuttle Challenger yesterday was a severe setback for the overall U.S. space program, with military projects and the President Reagan's planned "Star Wars" missile defense system among the major potential victims.

Challenger's fiery destruction -- just when the program was moving into full stride with all four space shuttles operational -- set the program back years and has provided an unexpected boost to its main rival, the European Ariane. (Walter Bagley, Reuter)

TRAGEDY PALLS NASA BLUEPRINT

PASADENA, Calif. -- The fireball that took seven lives and tragically ended the 25th mission of the space shuttle today cast a doubt over the future of the U.S. space program that cannot be measured. No one in authority today would venture to guess as to how far the space shuttle program will be set back. It could take months to determine the cause of the accident, and more time after that to fix the problems and allow further flights. (Thomas O'Toole, Washington Post, A14)

PENTAGON MAY AVOID SERIOUS SETBACK

Administration and congressional sources expressed hope yesterday that the Pentagon's portion of the space program will not be set back seriously by the explosion of the space shuttle Challenger unless the accident investigation determines that fundamental changes are required in the remaining three shuttles.

(Walter Pincus and Michael Weisskopf, Washington Post, A14)

"THE SHUTTLE'S BLOWN UP!"

President Reagan was being briefed in the Oval Office for an interview with the television anchormen about his State of the Union address when communications director Patrick Buchanan burst in. "Mr. President," Buchanan said, "the shuttle's blown up!"

So began a day of tragedy that carried special poignancy for Reagan, who had spearheaded the idea of sending a schoolteacher, Christa McAuliffe, into space. Reagan had frequently celebrated space exploration as a symbol of America's superior technology and had planned to offer a soaring and confident vision of the nation's future last night in his State of the Union address to Congress. (David Hoffman, Washington Post, A4)

REPORTERS SAY THAT, DESPITE TRAGEDY, THEY WOULD FLY SHUTTLE

NEW YORK -- Some of the hundreds of reporters who have applied to fly on a shuttle flight say they would still ride the spaceship despite the Challenger tragedy. (Reuter)

ASTRONOMER CRITICIZES MANNED SPACE PROGRAM

SYRACUSE, N.Y. -- A Cornell University astronomy professor said the manned space program is a public relations effort which exposes astronauts to unnecessary risks and called the shuttle program "crazy." Professor Thomas Gold also said the government had spent money on the manned space programs at the expense of more sophisticated equipment to explore the solar system. Gold was interviewed from a television studio in Syracuse. (UPI)

LEADERS WANT SAFETY ASSURANCES BEFORE SHUTTLE FLIES AGAIN

President Reagan and NASA's staunchest allies in Congress agree the space shuttle should fly again, but only after investigators learn what caused the Challenger to blow up. The President, who was called away from a high-level meeting by an agitated Vice President Bush and NSC Adviser Poindexter to watch television tape of the explosion, said, "I'm confident that there will be no flights until they are absolutely as certain as a human being can be that it is safe."

Members of Congress took similar positions. Rep. Don Fuqua, D-Fla., chairman of the House Science and Technology Committee, said his panel will conduct "a comprehensive investigation into the cause of the shuttle accident" after NASA completes its probe. Sen. Ernest Hollings, ranking Democrat on the Senate committee with jurisdiction over NASA, called for suspension of shuttle flights until the accident is "thoroughly investigated" by NASA and congressional committees.

(Arnold Sawislak, UPI)

WALTER CRONKITE: DON'T FORGET ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN SPACE

NEW YORK -- The setback suffered in the space shuttle program should not diminish the accomplishments of more than a quarter century of safe spaceflight, former anchorman Walter Cronkite said. "To diminish what we have done in the past would be to dishonor those who have lost their lives in that program on Challenger today," Cronkite said in a report from Santiago, Chile, where he was vacationing. (AP)

SHUTTLE BUILDERS EXPRESS SHOCK; SAY THEY'LL HELP FIND CAUSE

LOS ANGELES -- The builders of the shuttle Challenger expressed shock at the explosion that destroyed it and said they would cooperate to find the cause. "We at Rockwell are shocked by the catastrophe that occurred this morning," Robert Anderson, company spokesman, said in a statement from Pittsburgh. (Roger Gilliott, AP)

SPEAKER CALLS PRESIDENT INSENSITIVE

House Speaker Tip O'Neill angrily accused President Reagan face to face yesterday of "insensitivity" to the plight of the jobless and of spreading a "a bunch of baloney" about the reasons for unemployment, according to participants in an acrimonious White House meeting of congressional leaders.

While accounts of what happened differed in detail, both Democratic and Republican participants agreed that O'Neill became irritated by Reagan's assertion that a number of the unemployed do not want to work.

(Lou Cannon, Washington Post, A17)

LYNG EXPECTED TO FILL TOP AGRICULTURE POST

Richard Lyng is expected to be formally nominated today as agriculture secretary to replace John Block, whose resignation becomes effective Feb. 14, government sources said yesterday. He is a longtime Reagan family associate and once worked as California agriculture director when Mr. Reagan was governor.

(Washington Times, A3)

ANTITRUST SUIT THREATENED IN CONRAIL FIGHT

Senate critics of Reagan Administration plans to sell Conrail acted to clear the way for an antitrust lawsuit if Norfolk Southern Corp. wins its billion-dollar battle for the government freight line. "This would create a monopoly on a scale that would warm the hearts of the old rail barons," LeRoy Zimmerman, attorney general of Pennsylvania, told a news conference called by Senate supporters of rival bidders. He and other attorneys joined Sens. Alan Dixon, D-Ill., Paul Simon, D-Ill., and Arlen Specter, R-Pa., in unveiling an amendment to enable shippers, port authorities and others to file suit to block the Norfolk Southern plan.

(Mike Robinson, AP)

PENTAGON RIGGED TESTS OF WEAPONS, CRITIC SAYS

The Pentagon rigged tests of the \$11.3 billion Bradley Fighting Vehicle and other multi-billion-dollar weapons systems for which it is seeking funding, raising grave questions about their safety, a congressional investigation charges.

(UPI story, Washington Post, A4)

BENNETT: SOME SCHOOLS "RIP-OFFS"

Secretary William Bennett charged yesterday that many vocational and professional schools are "ripping off the American public" by turning out graduates who fail to meet minimum standards in their fields. Mr. Bennett told a Senate education subcommittee that vocational and proprietary institutions are the worst offenders, but said the problem extends to some colleges and universities.

(UPI story, Washington Times, A4)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

OIL COMPANIES CAUTIONED ON BUSINESS WITH ANGOLA

A top State Department official yesterday called upon American oil companies operating in Angola to "think about U.S. national interests" in continuing to do business with the Soviet and Cuban-backed government there.

Chester Crocker said the companies should realize they are caught up not only in the Angolan civil war but "rather hot political debate" in the United States about possible U.S. aid to noncommunist guerrillas fighting the Marxist Angolan government. "They should be thinking about U.S. national interests as well as their own corporate interests as they make their decisions," he said. (David Ottaway, Washington Post, A2)

DOLE CONSIDERS OPEN ECONOMIC AID FOR UNITA

Congressional conservatives stepped up their campaign to give Jonas Savimbi "something more than moral support" as the Angolan guerrilla leader arrived here yesterday on a quest for U.S. aid. Their effort received a considerable boost from Sen. Robert Dole, whose office announced yesterday that he was considering a legislative proposal to give open economic assistance to Mr. Savimbi's National Union for the Total Independence of Angola. (James Morrison, Washington Times, A5)

Administration Signals Support For Angolan Rebels

The Administration, welcoming Angolan guerrilla leader Jonas Savimbi to Washington, signaled its willingness to support the rebel commander in his fight against Angola's Marxist government.

"He has many friends here, and we welcome him," Chester Crocker told a news conference Tuesday. "Obviously (Savimbi) hopes to generate support for this cause, no doubt about that." (Matthew Quinn, UPI)

AIRMAN IS ACCUSED OF SPYING ATTEMPT

An Air Force enlisted man who worked in a squadron that flies highly sensitive "Blackbird" spy planes has been arrested and charged with attempting to pass intelligence information to the Soviet Union, Pentagon and law enforcement officials said yesterday. Airman 1st Class Bruce Ott was arrested Jan. 22 by Air Force and FBI officials in Davis Calif., according to a spokesman. (Michael Weisskopf, Washington Post, A3)

Airman Accused of Spying

Officials said Airman Ott allegedly offered to provide to the Soviet Union secret and top-secret information dealing with the base's main mission of strategic reconnaissance flights in exchange for several thousand dollars. U.S. agents learned of the alleged activities when Airman Ott approached Soviet officials, who are routinely kept under surveillance. (Reuter story, Washington Times, A5)

WHITE HOUSE AGAIN DENIES STORY ABOUT SOVIET DEFECTOR

The White House yesterday sought for a second day in a row to deny reports that an undisclosed Soviet intelligence officer defected to the United States last year.

"There continues to be considerable speculation in the press concerning a Soviet defector," said a statement issued by national security affairs adviser John Poindexter. "To the best knowledge of the U.S. government, there is no such defector either here or in any other country," the statement added. (Washington Post, A3)

Defector Furor Continues Despite Denials

The mystery of the Soviet spy who may never have been has deepened amid conflicting reports from Congress and extraordinary Administration efforts to brand the story as untrue.

White House officials said a terse, two-sentence denial issued by John Poindexter was intended to remove any lingering doubt left by a senior Administration official in remarks to a group of reporters.

(Norman Sandler, UPI)

CIA CAN STAY NURSEMAID TO DEFECTORS, SAYS FBI

FBI officials are not interested in supplanting the CIA as the primary handler of foreign defectors, even though some White House aides think a shift could remedy some blunders that surfaced in the Vitaly Yurchenko affair. Responding to a White House official's private assessment earlier this month that such a shift would be "a great move," two Justice Department officials explained the FBI's view in separate interviews this week on condition that they not be identified by name.

(AP story, Washington Times, A3)

POW-MIA ACTIVIST LABELS COVER-UP CHARGE 'ABSURD'

The chief of the National League of POW-MIA Families told Congress she scoffed at the idea that the Reagan Administration was covering up evidence of U.S. prisoners of war still being held in Southeast Asia. Until President Reagan took office, the issue of the Vietnam missing had received little attention, noted Ann Mills Griffiths, executive director of the organization. She said she and the group "hold the view that Americans are still held in Indochina," but in testimony to the Veterans Affairs Committee, she labeled as "absurd" charges that the Administration was covering up knowledge about the existence of U.S. prisoners in Indochina.

(Tim Ahern, AP)

CRAXI REPORTS QADDAFI OFFER ON TERRORISM

ROME -- Prime Minister Craxi said Libyan leader Qaddafi has proposed appealing to "all Arabs" to desist from any further terrorist acts in Europe in exchange for a guarantee that Libya would not be attacked by the U.S. Speaking at a press conference here, Craxi said Qaddafi's offer had come to him in a letter from Maltese Prime Minister Bonici, who said he had been in recent contact with the Libyan leader. Craxi said that given the contradictory nature of Qaddafi's statements in recent weeks, the Italian government was studying other information in Bonici's letter but that he would not disclose it yet.

(Loren Jenkins, Washington Post, A26)

REAGAN SEEKS FOREIGN AID HIKES DESPITE BALANCED BUDGET LAW

Despite mandated spending cuts, President Reagan plans to seek a nearly 9 percent increase in foreign aid in his upcoming budget, including a 33 percent jump in military assistance programs and a 25 percent hike for Central American allies, according to an internal document.

The 16-page State Department paper, dated last Friday and obtained by the Associated Press, proposes \$16.2 billion in worldwide foreign aid in fiscal year 1987, compared with \$14.9 billion for the budget year that ends Sept. 30. That is an 8.8 percent increase.

(Robert Parry, AP)

SHULTZ MEETS WITH CONTRAS

Contra leaders met with Secretary Shultz to deliver their latest description of principles for formation of a provisional Nicaraguan government. Shultz, accepting the six-page document at his State Department office, issued a statement saying he was "delighted" to receive it. The paper promised national elections in Nicaragua two years after establishment of a provisional government, but did not say how or when that government is to come about. Its dissemination here is apparently part of the Administration's effort to respond to members of Congress who have asked for firm democratic commitments from the contras as a condition for receiving military aid.

(Joanne Omang, Washington Post, A27)

REAGAN SET TO SELL JET UPDATE TO PEKING

The Reagan Administration will announce within a few weeks a \$500 million arms sale package to the People's Republic of China that will significantly upgrade Peking's F-8 jet fighters, a Defense Department official said yesterday. The six-year project, which will be supervised by the U.S. Air Force, will enhance radar and navigational equipment on 50 F-8s, Edward Ross said.

(Edward Neilan, Washington Times, A6)

ENVOY SAYS JORDAN AND ISRAEL
MADE CLEAR PROGRESS TOWARD PEACE

Jordan and Israel made clear progress during recent talks in Europe and have reached a new level of detail in their search for peace, presidential envoy Richard Murphy said. Murphy was upbeat while briefing a congressional committee yesterday but warned against expecting dramatic breakthroughs. (Carol Giacomo, Reuter)

ISRAEL SAYS ITS PLANES STRIKE AT LEBANON GUERRILLA BASES

Israeli warplanes attacked three bases of Palestinian groups in Lebanon south of the coastal city of Sidon this morning, a military spokeswoman said. It was the first raid this year in Lebanon by the Israel Air Force, which struck at Palestinian guerrilla bases in Lebanon more than a dozen times in 1985. (Reuter)

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NETWORK NEWS SUMMARY

(Tuesday Evening, January 28)

CHALLENGER EXPLOSION

NBC's Tom Brokaw: It was a nightmare, a cruel, shocking end to what everyone expected to be another triumph for the space shuttle program. The space shuttle Challenger, with a school teacher and six regular astronauts on board, was consumed by a giant fireball less than two minutes after it was launched into bright blue Florida skies at 11:38 Eastern time this morning. The path to space was filled with debris and death. All seven people were killed. High technology, which we take so often for granted, turned on us. It was a tremendous blow, a loss so cruel, so unexpected, that we're still trying to deal with it. The victims:

Flight commander Francis 'Dick' Scobee, 46, Navy commander Michael Smith, 40, Mission Specialist Ronald McNair, 36, Lt. Col. Ellison Onizaka, Air Force test pilot, 39, electrical engineer Dr. Judith Resnick, 36, Payload specialist Gregory Jarvis, 41, and of course, the New Hampshire school teacher, Christa McAuliffe, 37. They died today in the worst accident ever to befall space explorers anywhere.

(ALL NETS LEAD)

NBC's Dan Molina reports from Houston that it was a bitter cold, but sparkling clear morning at Cape Canaveral. All of the communications between the shuttle and mission control indicated everything was going fine. There was a sense of relief that the much-delayed flight was finally under way. It happened just over one minute into flight. From mission control -- silence. And then the bland, but chilling report. A search effort couldn't begin for some fifteen minutes after this. Debris, they said, just kept raining from the sky. The head of the space shuttle program has no explanations, just sorrow at the tragedy. NASA has appointed a committee of top engineers and scientists to investigate the catastrophe. Orders have been issued to impound all records concerning the flight, down to the personal notes of all the flight controllers.

Brokaw: And from ground level on Cape Canaveral, today's disaster was witnessed by thousands of people. Among them were space officials, technicians, and the families of the astronauts.

NBC's Steve Delaney: The day began in optimism and high spirits after the frustration of yesterday's scrubbed countdown. As the crew suited up to enter the Challenger, one of the technicians there revived an old schoolboy tradition and brought an apple for the teacher.

Vice President George Bush arrived here late in the day, heading a delegation bearing the nation's condolences to the families.

(Vice President: "You must try to understand that spirit, bravery and commitment are what make not only the space program but all of life worthwhile. We must never -- as people in our daily lives or as a nation -- stop exploring, stop hoping, stop discovering. We must press on.")

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Delaney continues:

There was a search in the Atlantic, but the searchers found so little that late in the afternoon NASA conceded there was no indication of survivors.

NBC's Robert Bazell reports that his personal friend, flight commander Dick Scobee, had a premonition that something like this would happen.

(Bazell: "I remember Dick telling me that one of these days, the space shuttle was going to blow up. He said it was a large, complex piece of machinery with a lot of explosives. He said it's just like if you take enough airplane flights, eventually an airplane is going to crash. He said, 'I certainly hope that when that does happen, it doesn't bring the shuttle program to an end.' ")

Brokaw: Her little girl said that she didn't want her Mommy to go up in space. But Christa McAuliffe was a teacher, and a ride on the space shuttle was the ultimate field trip. She wanted to bring the wonder and excitement of space back to her high school students in Concord, New Hampshire. She had talked with her students in recent months about reaching for the stars, and now those students, members of the faculty, and her friends are reaching deep within themselves, and trying to understand.

Brokaw: President Reagan learned of the explosion in space while preparing for his State of the Union speech, which was scheduled for tonight.

NBC's Chris Wallace: The President was no different from any other American today, watching the tragic news on television. Late this afternoon he addressed the nation about what he called a traumatic experience.

(President: "Nancy and I are pained to the core over the tragedy of the shuttle Challenger. We know we share this pain with all of the people of our country. This is truly a national loss.")

Mr. Reagan talked directly to the school children who watched the launch, saying the future belongs not to the fainthearted, but the brave. And he emphasized today's accident will not stop the space program.

(President: "We'll continue our quest in space. There will be more shuttle flights and more shuttle crews and, yes, more volunteers, more civilians, more teachers in space. Nothing ends here.")

Vice President Bush and the acting head of NASA were sent to Cape Canaveral to talk to the families and launch an investigation.

(TV Coverage: Vice President Bush boarding Air Force II.)

But officials said Mr. Reagan has full confidence in the space agency. The President was to make his State of the Union speech tonight, and planned to go ahead even after the accident, saying, "You can't stop governing the nation." But congressional leaders told the White House there was no interest in politics tonight. So Mr. Reagan cancelled.

Wallace continues:

On Capitol Hill, the House met for a brief prayer and then adjourned. Some members of Congress had ridden the shuttle themselves, like Utah Sen. Garn.

(Sen. Garn: "It's very difficult for me to talk about, because they were my friends.")

(Sen. Glenn: "Sometimes ... there's a tragedy that brings us back to our own human frailties.")

Congressman in charge of shuttle funding said the program will go on, but only after a full investigation.

(Rep. George Brown (D-Calif.) "There may be delays that could go on for as much as a year with regard to future shuttle launches.")

The President was going to mention the shuttle tonight in his State of the Union speech as an example of American progress. Instead, he had to deliver a eulogy to the Challenger crew, calling them "pioneers of the last frontier."

ABC's Sam Donaldson: The flag was lowered at the White House and other government buildings late this afternoon as President Reagan led the nation in mourning, with a short address from the Oval Office.

(President: "Nancy and I are pained to the core by the tragedy of the shuttle Challenger. We know we share this pain with all of the people of our country. This is truly a national loss.")

The day began with the President conferring with congressional leaders about his State of the Union message, scheduled for delivery tonight. When he heard the news of the shuttle disaster, his first thought was to go ahead with it. "You can't stop governing the nation," Mr. Reagan told a group of reporters. But as the President and his advisers kept watching the television replays of the explosion, and the reactions of relatives, schoolchildren and others, Mr. Reagan changed his mind.

(Larry Speakes: "The President thought it was entirely appropriate that his State of the Union be deferred.")

The State of the Union speech was put off until next Thursday. Vice President Bush was dispatched to Cape Canaveral to express the President's concern there, and Mr. Reagan, in his own remarks, tried to explain to the schoolchildren who had watched the explosion, he said, why such things happen.

(President Reagan: "I know it's hard to understand, but sometimes painful things like this happen. It's all part of the process of exploration and discovery. It's all part of taking a chance and expanding man's horizons. The future doesn't belong to the fainthearted; it belongs to the brave.")

This was to have been another night of triumph for the President, who had planned to tell the Congress and the nation how good things are in the country. But the shuttle disaster has changed all that. Officials here are shaken by the loss, and the fact that it happened on Mr. Reagan's watch.

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CBS's Bruce Hall: It was the first launch from the newly refurbished pad in more than 10 years. NASA officials said they saw no indications of any trouble or difficulty prior to the horrifying explosion.

(NASA's James Moore: "It will take all the data, careful review of that data, before we can draw any conclusions on this national tragedy.")

NASA bristles under suggestions that they launched the shuttle under pressure today. NASA officials announced this afternoon they are suspending all shuttle operations until there is some indication of the cause of the explosion.

CBS's Dan Rather: President Reagan first said that he was going to go ahead with tonight's scheduled State of the Union speech, then decided to put it off when the full dimension of the tragedy sank in.

CBS's Lesley Stahl: At the White House the President watched a replay of the tragedy this morning in stunned silence. He said it was a horrible thing, a tremendous shock.

(President Reagan: "Today is a day for mourning and remembering. Nancy and I are pained to the core by the tragedy of the shuttle Challenger. We know we share this pain with all of the people of our country.")

The President postponed his upbeat State of the Union speech tonight for one week, and sent Vice President Bush off to Cape Canaveral this afternoon to convey his feelings personally. But despite his sorrow, the President says he's determined that the space program continue.

(President Reagan: "We don't hide our space program, we don't keep secrets and cover things up. We do it all up front and in public. That's the way freedom is and we wouldn't change it for a minute. We'll continue our quest in space. There will be more shuttle flights and more shuttle crews, and, yes, more volunteers and more civilians, more teachers in space. Nothing ends here.")

It was Mr. Reagan's idea to send a teacher into space. Christa McAuliffe was his first thought when he heard the news this morning. The President called the entire crew "courageous pioneers who gave their lives on the new frontier."

(President Reagan: "We will never forget them, nor the last time we saw them -- this morning, as they prepared for their journey and waved goodbye, and slipped the surly bonds of Earth to touch the face of God.")

PRESIDENT'S TV MESSAGE

ABC's Jennings: When President Reagan went on television earlier this afternoon, he was talking not only to the children, but to all of us, trying to comfort a nation.

(President Reagan: The crew of the space shuttle Challenger honored us by the manner in which they lived their lives. We will never forget them, nor the last time we saw them, this morning, as they prepared for their journey and waved goodbye -- and slipped the surly bonds of Earth to touch the face of God.")

ABC's Brit Hume reports from Capitol Hill that Florida Congressman Bill Nelson (D-Fla.), who returned aboard the shuttle Columbia just last week, had lost none of his enthusiasm.

(Rep. Nelson: "This is part of what you understand is part of the risk that you're taking. Of course I would go again, even if it were tomorrow.")

Unlike another costly and dangerous program, the military, the space program has always been popular here, seeming to represent something Americans like to think is theirs -- the future. This tragedy may shake that feeling, but if today's reactions are a guide, not for long.

ABC's Peter Jennings: It is the worst disaster in the history of the American space program, and President Reagan has declared a week of mourning for the seven astronauts -- five men and two women -- who lost their lives on their way into space this morning. Never before have American lives been lost in flight.

ABC's John Quinones: Initially, lift-off was scheduled for 9:38 this morning. But again, there were problems. A hard freeze overnight left ice on the launch pad, a two-hour delay. And then NASA discovers a faulty fire detector on board the shuttle, another hour's delay while it's replaced. Finally the lift-off was set for 11:38 a.m. A crowd of some 500 spectators, including 18 visiting schoolchildren from McAuliffe's hometown of Concord, New Hampshire, waited anxiously, and then counted down. The lift-off appeared flawless. The spectators, including Christa McAuliffe's parents, Grace and Edward Corrigan, watched proudly though tears of joy. 65 seconds into flight, NASA control orders Commander Scobey to go to full power. Suddenly, an explosion. Within seconds, Challenger disintegrates. The \$1.2 billion spaceship, its seven crew members, and their satellite payload disappear. Within minutes, emergency rescue teams parachuted in, converging on a search area 18 miles east of Cape Canaveral. Late this afternoon, after six hours of searching, NASA reports they found no survivors. Tonight at Cape Canaveral, Vice President Bush, accompanied by Senators Jake Garn and John Glenn, both former astronauts, expressed the nation's condolences to the families of the astronauts. Bush had a special message for American schoolchildren.

(Vice President: "You must try to understand that spirit, bravery and commitment are what make not only the space program, but all of life worthwhile. We must never, as people in our daily lives of as a nation, stop exploring, stop hoping, stop discovering. We must press on.")

WORLD REACTION

ABC's Bill Blakemore: The shock was immediately felt around the world. Within 30 minutes of the explosion, Soviet TV showed it. In the Frankfurt airport travelers stopped in their tracks.

Rather: From around the world today from the Soviet Union, from the nations of the West, from China, there were expressions of concern for America's loss.

CHRISTA McAULIFFE -- TEACHER-ASTRONAUT

ABC's Jennings: This whole concept of a teacher in space has been important to the country, but especially to the children as the Vice President alluded ever since President Reagan in 1984 suggested there be a teacher in space. Though Christa McAuliffe's students and friends have known her in Concord for years, she became known to the nation when she decided to pursue her dreams. Those dreams had been sparked by President Reagan's announcement a year ago for a teacher-astronaut. The search for that history maker brought 11,000 applications, but only one made the final grade. (TV Coverage: ABC file tape of Vice President Bush announcing McAuliffe's selection as the first teacher-astronaut.) A special counselor will be brought to Concord High School tomorrow to help students begin dealing with their loss.

HYPOTHESIS ON THE CAUSE

ABC's Lynn Sherr: What we don't know is why it happened, and that's what we now need to find out.

(Former astronaut Gene Cernan: "We can't answer why; we don't know why ... it might have happened. Remember, that tank that she referred to is carrying thousands and thousands of pounds of oxygen and liquid hydrogen. Hydrogen is a propellant. It burns, it explodes. Liquid oxygen is the oxydizer, like air, which supports the fire which allows it to burn.")

Jennings: Can you tell us why there was no escape mechanism on board today?

(Shernan: "The shuttle was designed earlier with ejection seats so that if something occurred, the crew of its first three or four flights could get out. That was a test program. The evolution of a shuttle into an operational vehicle took those seats out.")

CBS's David Martin: While investigators searched for answers, there's only speculation by informed observers about the apparent leak which touched off the giant fireball, dwarfing the remains of one of the 140-foot solid rocket boosters. Right now, there are many more questions than answers.

CBS's Bob Schieffer: As NASA moved into the shuttle era, the agency argued the flights were becoming safe enough for civilians to go along. Today, former astronaut Frank Borman said that was wrong.

(Borman: "It's a little improper to believe that we can put Congressmen and Senators and school teachers up there without exposing them to dangers that before were simply accepted by test pilots.")

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(Brokaw's Commentary: "As we try, all of us, to rise above our grief, we struggle for words, for thoughts that may get us through this dark day. But everything seems to be so inadequate. What plays again and again in my mind is this: great enterprises require great risks. The men and women who died today knew that. They were the risk takers. They believed in the physical and intellectual challenge of space flight. And in that, they were an extension of all of us; we rode with them. They gave courage to even the most timid among us. Now, we share the grief of them and their friends and families. This shock, will pass, of course, as great as it is. Their spirit will live on; their adventurous ways will be picked up and carried on by others, and the frontiers of space and knowledge will be expanded. And finally, to those families: As we shared your pride, we share your sorrow."

STATE DEPARTMENT WARNING

Rather: The State Department today is warning Americans not to travel to the second largest city in Haiti -- Cap Haitien. Yesterday Haitian security forces shot three people to death in violent anti-government protests there. Several hundred foreign tourists have already fled the city. (CBS-3)

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EDITORIALS/COLUMNISTS

GASOLINE TAX

Rich Man's Tax -- "The advocates of these (gasoline) taxes believe that Congress just can't realistically be expected to make further significant cuts in its \$950 billion budget. And so they think that their call for high, indirect taxes on people who already pay taxes is pragmatic and moderate. But there is no avoiding the fact that the gasoline tax, like these other extraordinarily regressive levies, is a rich man's tax. Only he won't much care when it's passed into law or when he pays for it. For everyone else, each trip to the gas station will be a reminder that Washington has irresponsibly dumped its problems on them. Again."

(Wall Street Journal, 1/28)

ANGOLAN AID

Close the Loophole for Covert Aid In Angola -- "The Reagan Administration doesn't want Congress to appropriate money openly for the rebels who are fighting Angola's Marxist government.... At least it's resisting conservative pressure to have Congress appropriate \$27 million in military aid for UNITA. A similar policy might be welcome in Nicaragua, where the Administration is reportedly contemplating a \$100-million aid request for the contra guerrillas. But by leaving open the possibility that its apparent restraint is merely a cloak for covert aid to UNITA, the Administration risks undermining its own goals."

(Newsday, 1/28)

Mr. Reagan and Angola -- "If Mr. Reagan is undecided about military aid to Angola, then his secretary of state should not suggest that he has made up his mind, no matter how strongly the secretary may favor a negotiated settlement. Angola is one country where the anti-Marxists have a decent chance of winning. Nicaragua is another. Strong presidential support, backed by funds, could make 1986 the year when the exception that was Grenada became the rule."

(Washington Times, 1/28)

PHILIPPINES

Philippine Plague -- "The Reagan Administration knows the impropriety and the folly of trying to influence the outcome of the Feb. 7 election. All it can reasonably do is wait and see who wins, then bring all pressure to bear to make the needed changes in the way the Philippines is governed."

(Dallas Morning News, 1/26)

CONGRESS

The Congressional Crisis -- "Some crises arise suddenly and are instantly recognized. Others develop so slowly that it's hard to say when they began or even to feel certain that there is a crisis. The latter is the way it is with Congress, which increasingly doesn't seem able to perform its most basic functions. It swings from paralysis to chaos. Maybe it's too soon to say that a breakdown in Congress amounts to a constitutional crisis; maybe not.... The bicentennial of a Constitution that placed Congress at the center of a three-branch government is only a year away. It would be a good time for Congress to reclaim its rightful place."

(Des Moines Register, 1/22)

FOREIGN MEDIA REACTION

U.S. and LIBYA

"The Reagan Administration appears determined to keep the 'war of nerves' against Colonel Qaddafi's Libya at a high level...although United States officials say that any military action directly against Libya would be unlikely unless he was found responsible for any future terrorist attacks..."
(Guardian, Britain)

"Officials in Washington have given differing accounts of the background to the decision, some suggesting that the move is designed to intimidate the Libyan leader, others to signal strongly that the United States will not tolerate terrorism..."
(Financial Times, Britain)

"Failure by the Community to back the United States action against Libyan regime, after intensive lobbying by Mr. John Whitehead, the United States Deputy Secretary of State, over the past week is likely to add new irritation to the already sensitive relations between Brussels and Washington."
(Financial Times, Britain)

"We had never seen Qaddafi embark on such a trip. 'This is the line of death where we shall stand and fight with our backs to the wall,' he said. Qaddafi wanted to appear deeply saddened but it was a rather comic show..."
(Europe One Radio, France)

"Militarily, the Sixth Fleet can hope to shoot down some Libyan aircraft or sink a ship. And what then? It would be a lesson of scant political value, rather than gunboat diplomacy.... The present confrontation between the Sixth Fleet and Qaddafi makes no sense."
(Corriere Della Sera, Italy)

"Ronald Reagan is looking for his own Cuba.... It's difficult to understand what Washington hopes to gain from the possible 'scenarios' attached to the Sixth Fleet maneuvers, which leave even the majority of U.S. observers suspended between astonishment and concern..."
(La Repubblica, Italy)

"The most effective instrument would be economic sanctions joined to the whole West.... If the allies do not join these sanctions, as the Department of State indicates, they can de facto push America toward adoption of unilateral measures, and military ones, too."
(Il Giornale, Italy)

"It remains to be seen who will profit from this ado.... One thing is certain: terrorism will not be extinguished by the United States this way, nor will the United States and Libya in this way bring the Middle East conflict closer to a solution...."
(Koelner Stadt-Anzeiger, West Germany)

U.S. and Libya (continued)

"The behavior of 'the revolutionary from the desert' is as stupid as the American play of muscles off the Libyan coast is incomprehensible..."
(Die Press, Austria)

"Serious concerns felt over the possibility of an outbreak of a conflict are not baseless.... We can only hope that the muscle-flexing of Reagan and Qaddafi, both of whom are now posing as Rambo, may not result in such a catastrophe..."
(Milliyet, Turkey)

"It affirms that the maneuvers were planned to increase Libyan tension until it responds to these acts, giving the United States an excuse for a military operation against Libya. It is not strange for Washington to link these operations to the failure of Whitehead's mission..."
(Ittihad, United Arab Emirates)

"Following John Whitehead's failure to convince the European countries to impose economic sanctions on Libya, the U.S. Navy started its provocative maneuvers. U.S. threats are, in themselves, a sort of terrorism..."
(Ar-Ray, Bahrain)

"Our people will not tolerate anyone who tries to touch the Arabic Libyan people..."
(Realities, Tunisia)

"Instead of embarking on provocative measures against Libya, the United States should be working against the state terrorism of Israel..."
(Jang, Pakistan)

"War exercises are not going to scare Qaddafi out of his wits. They will only help him in gaining sympathy from his Arab neighbors. The more Reagan tries to corner the Libyan leader, the more the former will find himself in a hopeless straitjacket."
(Hindustan Times, India)

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