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THE WHITE HOUSE  
Office of the Press Secretary

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PRESS BRIEFING  
BY  
ROBERT SIMS

January 25, 1985  
The Briefing Room

9:20 A.M. EST

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#1307-01/25

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Office of the Press Secretary

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PRESS BRIEFING  
BY  
BOB SIMS

January 25, 1985  
The Briefing Room

9:20 A.M. EST

MR. SIMS: If you like, I will run through the schedule for today and then the week ahead.

The President's going to the Executive Forum at Constitution Hall. There is now open access. Entrance on C Street, near 18th Street, and that door will remain open through the President's remarks.

The program begins at 10:00 a.m. And, of course, the speakers are the Vice President, Secretary of State, Secretary of Treasury, White House Chief of Staff Jim Baker, Counsellor Ed Meese. They'll speak beginning at this 10:30 a.m. time and the President's remarks are at 11:30 a.m.

Q They begin at 10:30 a.m.?

MR. SIMS: They begin at 10:00 a.m. The President's remarks are at 11:30 a.m.

Q You will want to get over there a little early --

Q Is James Watt going to be there?

Q We will.

Q Well, I am going to go over there and listen to those boys --

MR. SIMS: This event's open to press coverage and travel pool to accompany the President. We expect to have the text -- the advance text of his remarks at the conclusion of this briefing.

As you know, this is the fourth annual Executive Forum for Political Appointees, the third at Constitution Hall. The President traditionally has reviewed accomplishments and talked about setting goals for the coming term -- for the coming year.

Okay, ready for the week ahead?

Q How many people are going to be there, Bob?

Q Yes.

MR. SIMS: I don't have a number. Do you have any idea?

MR. GRAY: Probably 3,000 to 4,000.

MR. SIMS: 3,000 to 4,000.

Okay. Tomorrow, the President will be in town doing his radio talk at 12:06 p.m.

Q Do you know what network or where we can hear it?

MR. SIMS: I don't know what the local station is.

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Q Well, ABC's carrying it, but I'm sure everybody else is also.

Q Bob, could you try and check that for the noon briefing?

MR. SIMS: All right.

Q And the overall question, are all the radio networks going to carry the weekly broadcast?

MR. SIMS: You want a run-down of who's going to carry it? Okay, I'll try to get that for you by noon.

Tomorrow night, the President will attend the Alfalfa Club Dinner at the Capital Hilton Hotel. This is a -- this is closed press coverage at the request of the organization. The pool should form at -- by 6:40 p.m. here in the press room and the expected return time is 10:30 p.m.

On Monday, there will be a meeting with Savings and Loan leaders regarding deficit reduction in the morning. Some --

Q What time, Bob?

MR. SIMS: About 11:30 a.m.

Some Congressional meetings later that day. In fact, some Congressional meetings throughout the week that are tentatively scheduled and we'll be able to tell you on a daily basis who they are.

Q Bipartisan or just Republican?

MR. SIMS: Some will be bipartisan.

Q The subject? All on the same subject?

MR. SIMS: Various subjects, depending on the interests of the members of the committees that will be in.

Q How about the one Monday, which is a bipartisan --

MR. SIMS: I'd just rather not get into the specifics of who's coming in until we're a little closer to it.

Q Well, is this --

Q Can you tell us what --

Q Is this a lead-up to the State of the Union? I mean, is there a heavy concentration this week because of the coming week?

MR. SIMS: I think there's an interest in being sure that we begin to address the issues with Congress that the President will talk about in his State of the Union Address.

He is going to have, on Tuesday night, a dinner with freshmen members of Congress and their spouses. That's an event in the Residence.

Q Also bipartisan?

MR. SIMS: Yes.

Q Is that open for coverage at all?

MR. SIMS: I doubt it. I will -- let's wait until we get

to Tuesday and we'll let you know.

Also, on Tuesday in the morning, he's going to call the meeting of the National Association of Homebuilders. And he will have -- he has a tentative Cabinet time that day.

Q So, he's going to telephone them --

MR. SIMS: Yes. Telephone.

Q Are they meeting here?

Q Yes, where are they meeting?

MR. SIMS: I don't know where they're --

Q In the Ellipse. (Laughter.)

Q And where is -- and who's -- the dinner again, on Tuesday night?

MR. SIMS: Freshmen Congressional members and their spouses.

On Wednesday, he has a meeting in the morning with Israeli Defense Minister Rabin. And, as Larry said yesterday, a meeting with Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick.

Thursday --

Q Has she cancelled yet?

MR. SIMS: On Thursday --

Q Do you have a time on Kirkpatrick, Bob?

MR. SIMS: Late morning, around 11:30 a.m.

On Thursday, he goes to the Washington Hilton for the National Prayer Breakfast. And later in that day, there's a tentative Cabinet time.

Friday, he has a meeting which we've already announced with the President-elect of Brazil. And we'd look for him to be at Camp David over that coming weekend.

Today, also, because of the Executive Forum, if you want a briefing, we'll do it at 12:30 p.m.

Q We do.

MR. SIMS: And I have a couple of other things: Deaver -- health report -- as of last evening, he was feeling better. I'll try to find out more before noon as to how he is this morning.

The New York Times says we're planning a trip -- the President to sell his economic program and so forth -- visit high tech places. We have said the President will go all out to promote the spending reductions he will propose to reduce the deficit and the proposals that he'll make on tax reform. He'll certainly take his case to the American people, but how and when he'll do that is not decided.

Q You got anything on Chernenko's health?

MR. SIMS: Nothing.

Q Because we reported this morning that, according to diplomatic sources, he was seriously ill.

Q -- report that, huh?

Q -- well, so did we.

Q Well, I don't know. I didn't get --

Q -- everybody report that, Bill?

Q -- how and will he will take the case?

Q Well, I haven't got that far yet --

Q -- how and will he will take the case?

Q -- the American people --

MR. SIMS: How and when he'll do that hasn't been decided.

Q Cannon had it with Stalin.

MR. SIMS: Okay.

Q -- for this question, I get this kind of -- Come on.

Q Well, why is he taking his case to the American people on his own?

Q If not you, who? If not now, when?

Q Doesn't he think Congress is going to approve it or -- I mean, what is the purpose?

MR. SIMS: I think the President every year has taken his case to the American people, and this is not going to be any exception, particularly at the beginning of a new term. He's got some important programs to talk about, and he'll want to do that. This won't be any --

Q -- work with Congress also?

MR. SIMS: He'll work very closely with Congress beginning with the meetings he'll have this week.

Q -- you're right. It's not surprising that he's going to make some sort of case because The Times story --

MR. SIMS: What's surprising is that it's the lead story in The New York Times. (Laughter.)

Q Well, now, wait a moment. No, I'm not criticizing this Times.

Q That's what I found out at midnight.

Q I'm saying that The Times story suggests a -- that's right -- a whistlestop --

MR. SIMS: Sorry, Jerry. (Laughter.) Well, it wasn't your story. (Laughter.) Maybe that's the problem.

Q -- a whistlestop, Harry Truman-like blitz, I mean --

Q Yes, that -- is that --

Q -- going from city to city, talking to forums, taking it on the road. That's a little different. I mean, can you confirm it -- that's the plan?

MR. SIMS: No.

Q Even though dates and the times and the places haven't been --

MR. SIMS: No, I can't confirm it.

Q Are we going to repeat the campaign over again?

MR. SIMS: Don't you wish? (Laughter.)

Q Oh, no, no, I don't wish.

Q No, no.

MR. SIMS: No, I can't -- I'm not confirming any campaign swings or anything.

Q Well, supposedly this indicates that he has a very negative view toward getting anything through Congress.

MR. SIMS: No, I don't think so. I think it indicates he has a very positive view of the American people and he likes to talk to them.

Q He thinks he can still fool most of the people most of the time, huh?

MR. SIMS: Not in this room.

Q Can you confirm that he will -- that part of this plan to take his case involves out-of-town travel?

MR. SIMS: I'm sure there will be some, but I am not suggesting --

Q Santa Barbara?

MR. SIMS: -- anything by saying that.

Q -- Santa Barbara? (Laughter.)

Q Is part of this plan to give backgrounders to naive reporters in hopes that they might write this story?

Q You bet.

Q Ooooooooo.

Q -- the empty chair.

Q Can you tell us whether the President will be spending some time in Santa Barbara on vacation in February?

MR. SIMS: No, I can't tell you.

Q It's the 13th through the 17th.

Q The 13th through the 18th.

Q Is he going to be stopping off in other places?

MR. SIMS: I'm just not going to get into his travel schedule --

Q Bob, is the travel schedule now awaiting Don Regan's arrival and Mike Deaver's return and this kind of thing? Do you have --

MR. SIMS: No.

Q No, it's not awaiting their arrival here? So, is it already drawn up and it's awaiting --

MR. SIMS: There is a schedule for the President that covers several months, and it is a moving feast. (Laughter.)

Q A movable feast. (Laughter.)

MR. SIMS: Nice try anyway.

Q Okay. Tell us about his interview tomorrow on live radio.

MR. SIMS: All right. I'll tell you more about that, not about any interviews because we never discuss those, of course, but

I do have information on his radio broadcast -- Mutual, ABC, CBS, and NBC have all agreed to carry the radio broadcast. I don't know what local stations, but I assume --

Q For all -- every week?

Q Or is that just for --

MR. SIMS: This is certainly the first one, and I don't know whether this would continue or not.

Q Can somebody find out for us a local station and listen to --

Q I tried --

MR. SIMS: Try WTOP or -- who else, I don't know, one of these others --

Q WTOP's got --

Q You certainly can discuss something that's going on live radio at 12:30 p.m. tomorrow with the President.

MR. SIMS: I would -- what would you want me to discuss?

Q Is it on live radio?

MR. SIMS: I'd just rather not -- I don't want to get into the --

Q At what point would that interview be put on the record? I mean, when people dial around and happen to run across it, or what?

MR. SIMS: I think if there is a live radio interview tomorrow at 12:30 p.m. that the transcript would be available to you shortly thereafter --

Q You mean you wouldn't provide a mult?

Q If it's on live --

MR. SIMS: -- and it would be live and you could hear it right here.

Q Is that going to be through the mult?

MR. SIMS: You can hear it right here.

Q But this is extraordinary!

Q Bob, we have to notify thousands of radio stations that we're going to be doing it, so it's no use --

Q Yeah, and why not tell the press corps?

Q Who's doing it?

MR. SIMS: All right. Joe Ewalt says that there will be -- let the record show -- Joe says there will be an interview with the President tomorrow at 12:30 p.m. by --

Q Is this live, Joe?

MR. SIMS: -- radio --

Q It's live.

Q Live?

MR. SIMS: -- it's live. You can tune in to numerous stations and --

Q What stations?

Q Hear it here?

MR. SIMS: -- and you can hear it right here, yes.

Q Who's doing it?

Q The independent radio networks -- AP, UPI, Sheridan,  
RKO --

Q Can you give us more --

Q Who -- can you tell us who's involved in it?

MR. SIMS: In the radio interviews? The President and several correspondents who are colleagues of yours here.

Q What, I mean, what organizations?

MR. SIMS: I don't have a full list. Joe has owned up to being one of them, and I'm sure that there are others here --

Q Would everyone please stand -- (Laughter.)

Q Can you tell us, Joe?

Q He said AP, UPI, Sheridan, RKO --

Q Know anybody who'll listen to it?

Q Just that?

Q The networks are not anticipating it.

MR. SIMS: Essentially it's the independent radio, non-network, and VOA --

Q Why are the network radio -- networks not participating?

MR. SIMS: We'd like to give everybody opportunities as the months proceed, and certainly hope to do that.

Q What is the administration's view of South African President's Botha's apparent concessions to the black majority, and do you view them as concessions?

MR. SIMS: Ira, I'm not familiar with that story, so I'll have to wait until I can find out more about it to make a --

Q Can you try and give us a position at 12:30 p.m.?

MR. SIMS: I will try.

Q And a follow up on a totally unrelated subject --  
(Laughter.)

Q Very good --

MR. SIMS: The executive forum is rapidly approaching here -- (laughter.)

Q Can you confirm that the President of South Korea is planning a visit here that might be fouled up by the treatment of Kim

Dae Jung?

MR. SIMS: We haven't announced a visit here, but I'm sure the President would welcome a visit if one is -- comes about. I just don't have anything to announce on it.

Q Would it depend on the Korean government's treatment of Jung, or Jong, or Kim --

Q It's all the same --

MR. SIMS: No, I don't think so. We have expressed interest in that case, and expressed our view that his return home should be trouble-free. But I wouldn't connect it to any Presidential visit.

Q Just like Aquino's, huh?

Q What's the President's reaction to Barry Goldwater --

Q Can we stay on this for one more --

Q Yes.

Q -- one more question?

Q Certainly, certainly. We should, of course! How dare me -- (Laughter.)

Q One more question on that -- has the invitation been extended?

MR. SIMS: Well, you know we never talk about extending invitations and so forth. When we have a meeting to announce, we announce it, and I'd rather stick with doing it that way.

Q What if they lock him up? What will you do?

MR. SIMS: All I can say is we -- I have indicated we are following that case with interest, and we hope his return will be trouble-free.

Q Have we heard from Moscow yet on the Geneva --

MR. SIMS: No.

Q -- time and place? How about Kirkpatrick? Is there anything to say about what job is --

MR. SIMS: No.

Q What's the President's reaction to Barry Goldwater's declaration that we're just going to have to raise taxes to avoid national bankruptcy?

MR. SIMS: No change in the President's position on that.

Q Bob, can you give us any evidence, on the record or on background, to support the President's claim that Iran is backing Nicaragua?

MR. SIMS: Yes. I think, obviously, he said that Iran had joined others, the PLO and Libya and so forth, who have supported

Nicaragua, in addition to the Cubans and Soviets who are their major supporters. But I suppose the new element is the political support that's evidenced by the Prime Minister of Iran's visit to Nicaragua, a man who is believed to have some unusual portfolios in the Iranian Cabinet.

There is --

Q Can you tell us what they are?

MR. SIMS: No.

There is --

Q Well, are you implying that he is the Minister of Terrorism?

MR. SIMS: No. He's the Prime Minister. And I'm saying that -- in answer to this question -- that his visit there --

Q -- portfolios.

MR. SIMS: His visit there is evidence of political support. There is also reason to believe that Iran is providing -- or in the process of arranging support in the form of oil supplies and funding for armaments, which would add to the Nicaraguan arsenal. And, obviously, we would be concerned about any additional involvement from countries outside the hemisphere as to where it might lead -- The potential for some expansion of terrorism in this hemisphere is always a concern to us as well.

Q Where is --

Q The PLO and Libya -- yes, the PLO and Libya, some evidence you can give us --

MR. SIMS: Well, I could; but, you know, the President has gone into that so much before, and we've -- you know -- people forget; but we have released so much information here. I would just refer you to his speeches of May 8, 1984, May 9, 1984, December 4, 1984, welcoming address to President Lusinchi, his March 30, 1984 Radio Address to the Nation and there were others in 1983. So, in these various ones, he has talked about these connections.

And, for example, on the PLO and Libya, in his May 9th Speech to the Nation, he said that the PLO -- said a number of Sandinistas were trained in camps supported by Cuba, the Soviet Bloc and the PLO. He also said about Libya that Nicaragua was receiving support "Also from other parts of the terror network, the PLO have sent men and so has Libya's dictator, Qaddafi."

And you'll remember that in April 1983, Libya tried to ship weapons to the Sandinistas via Brazil. These were intercepted. The weapons were listed -- manifested as medical supplies. So there's a long history of these other involvements. I think what was new that he mentioned yesterday was the Iranian connection.

Q How long ago did you start to become concerned about Iran's involvement?

MR. SIMS: We've been concerned for some time.

Q Does the President make a differentiation between support for Nicaragua by Libya and other nations from the French support for Nicaragua? For the French assistance, for instance.

MR. SIMS: I think he's said -- he's mentioned the countries that he's concerned about, Soviets, Cubans, Libya, Iran, the PLO.

Q Well, is it because of the different type of assistance? Or is it because he thinks they're bad and the French are good or what?

MR. SIMS: I just wouldn't want to discuss the French in any way, Sam.

Q Well, that's a double standard, then, is it not?

MR. SIMS: I wouldn't think so.

Q Why?

Q Bob, why would Iran have to supply funds for --

Q There. So take that.

Q Isn't Nicaragua getting enough weapons from the Soviet Union, Cuba and elsewhere? What --

MR. SIMS: Apparently not.

Q Where would she be getting --

MR. SIMS: They're getting plenty from them. The record is pretty clear on that. As to what they have provided, they have expanded their military forces since the autumn of 1979 from 10,000 to about 119,000 in the armed forces; 62,000 of those are on active duty.

In recent months and weeks, there's been an increased pace which, since June of 1984, has included expansion in active forces by 12,000, 50 additional tanks, for a total of about 150. Plus an additional 75 armored vehicles, for a total of about 200. And the addition of 13 combat helicopters, including at least 5 Soviet MI-24 attack helicopters like the ones used in Afghanistan. For a total of about 30 helicopters. So --

Q MIGs.

MR. SIMS: -- there is -- there's no question about the expansion and their seeking armaments. That's one of the major concerns that we have with Nicaragua.

Q Well, do you think they're afraid that they're going to be invaded by the U.S. or that we're supporting a rebel group trying to overthrow them?

MR. SIMS: The expansion of their military began well before there was any talk of opposition -- democratic resistance by the Nicaraguan people to the Sandinistas.

Q Where is Iran getting the arms? She manufactures relatively none. Where is Iran getting the arms that they are then transshipping to Nicaragua?

MR. SIMS: Well, I said "funding for them." I wouldn't want to go into where the arms are or whose they are.

Q In other words, you think that they're concluding some money deal or some credit deal that Nicaragua would use to buy from another country.

MR. SIMS: Well, Sam, I've tried to go just as far as I can to the limit of

what we know without getting into how we know it, and so forth.

Q Well, I raise the question because, once again, Barry Goldwater -- not on the floor, but in press interviews yesterday -- when asked about this, speculated that Israel was still supplying Iran with arms and that they might be trans-shipped to Nicaragua. Do we have any evidence that that's the case?

MR. SIMS: No, we don't. We don't believe that from what we've been told is the case.

Q You say you don't believe --

Q Bob, Iran is virtually bankrupt. Where is it getting the money to loan to the Sandinistas?

MR. SIMS: You'd have to ask them. I really -- (laughter) -- really don't know.

Q Hello, Jung. Sam. (Laughter.) Oh, sorry, Jesse, wrong --

Q No, you have made the observation -- a lot of money to the Sandinistas. Where are they getting the money?

MR. SIMS: I don't think I have to go into where they get their funds to support what the President has said. And the fact is that they're in the process of providing assistance and supporting Nicaraguan Sandinistas.

It is difficult to understand why anyone would do that unless they have some motivation that would be troublesome to us.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

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