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THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

PRESS BRIEFING
BY
LARRY SPEAKES

February 25, 1985

The Briefing Room

1:23 P.M. EST

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PRESS BRIEFING
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LARRY SPEAKES

February 25, 1985

The Briefing Room

1:23 P.M. EST

MR. SPEAKES: The President this afternoon is meeting with members of the Grace Commission in Room 450. He'll report to them on the progress the administration is making on their -- how many is it -- recommendations.

Q -- 2478. (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: Good. (Laughter.)

Q How many?

MR. SPEAKES: We've done two --

Q What do you think we ought to give David for that?

Q How many are true, Larry?

MR. SPEAKES: We've done 2479 of them.

Q -- where you freeze the COLA on Social Security?

MR. SPEAKES: (Laughter.) Yes.

Q Is that one of them?

MR. SPEAKES: Room 450 EOB, writing pool and open photo coverage. Press will have to start that way -- press coverage, I'm sorry, will start at 1:50 p.m. when the Chief of Staff Don Regan makes remarks.

In the afternoon, there'll be a number of Congressmen coming in for photos with the President. We can tell you who's here if you're interested.

Q Yes.

Q Who's here?

MR. SPEAKES: This -- you want them all?

Q Yes.

Q Regan's on camera?

Q How many are there?

Q How many are there --

Q And Reagan?

MR. SPEAKES: Lot of them.

Q Two thousand, four --

MORE

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Q Is Regan on camera, are you saying?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q Yes.

Q Thank you.

Q Thank you, Lesley.

Q Regan's on camera where?

Q At the Grace Commission.

MR. SPEAKES: You really want these, Sam?

Q No, if there are not -- if there are many -- if there are four or five of them.

MR. SPEAKES: It's that many.

Q I'll get them later, thank you.

MR. SPEAKES: All right.

Good gracious, there are many.

Q How many? Like twenty?

MR. SPEAKES: I haven't counted them yet. Ten or so.

Ed Meese was sworn in this morning at 9:55 a.m. in the Oval Office. Dan Marks, who's a Deputy Executive Clerk in the White House, presided in the swearing-in. Present were Meese and his wife, Ursula, and the Meese staff of Cribb, Chapman, Fuller and Svahn.

Q Was the President there?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, he was there.

Do you need more on Nicaragua -- The Washington Times story?

Q Yes.

Q Yes.

MR. SPEAKES: The situation on that is that we've stated our objectives toward Nicaragua. The President and Secretary Shultz have made those clear in speeches within the last three or four days -- or last week or so. We support the Nicaraguan democratic forces who are struggling for these objectives. We also have indicated that we seek Congressional approval for all requests for funds in support of programs which will contribute to realizing these objectives.

We have expressed our objections to the Sandinista regime, although we do continue to maintain diplomatic relations with them. Secretary Shultz in his speech on Friday outlined the fact that Sandinistas are moving quickly to consolidate their totalitarian power. It is a goal that they have not achieved, and we think this is largely attributed to the growing internal and external opposition to their repressive measures.

As far as the specifics in The Washington Times story, we'd like to note that this story cites Congressional sources. We will and -- we have been and we will continue to consult with Congress to explain our approach and program for Central America and to solicit their views and suggestions. We, in some cases, have different ideas from members of Congress about how it will be achieved. We will listen with care and study these ideas as they're

presented to us. But our basic approach is to seek Congressional approval for funds and seek to implement the recommendations of the Bipartisan Commission on Central America.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Now, if I might go ON BACKGROUND, I'll tell you what the story is. (Laughter.)

Q Yes, I was going to say that does not answer a thing.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Any problem here?

Once again, Congressional sources: We've heard this proposal before as outlined by The Times, and while we'll continue to listen and take care -- and adopt any idea that seems feasible, this one does not appear to have merit as far as people in our administration are concerned.

Q Why not?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: It just didn't seem like an approach, Sam, that was the best way to go to recognize these people

in some fashion of that type. We thought it was -- We still think our best approach is the funding that we're seeking that we've outlined over the week or so.

David.

Q Does that go to the question of overt aid generally, or just to this specific approach? In your statement previously, you talked about being open to all approaches.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Yes.

Q And I've detected that, I think, that the administration has not been as vigorous in knocking down the idea of some kind of open aid in recent weeks. Now, is that correct or you still have the legal problems with open aid generally?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Still have the legal problems.

We explored a lot of ideas, this one included, and the fact that there might be a government in exile and so forth. And we just decided that the only way -- and what we figure is the best way -- is the approach that we're taking, overt -- covert.

Q Which is covert.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Gerald.

Q How high up within the administration has this been knocked down? I mean, has it been presented to the President and he's knocked it down?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I think the overall conclusions of the group that is working on Central American policy decided that it wasn't the proper approach, the Interagency Group. They briefed the President on all of their considerations and told him what their recommendations are. And he's clearly bought the recommendations the way we're proceeding.

Now, we will be continuing meetings with Congress over the next several weeks as we get toward legislative approach on this thing.

Frank.

Q You're continuing to recognize the Sandinista government. Is there any chance of another bilateral meeting like those you had a series of in Mexico that have been broken off?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Yes. Frank, we're really waiting on some movement on their part to indicate that they would be all -- at all receptive to the Contadora Process, and that last meeting was cancelled, due to a side issue.

Q -- is the problem that they're refusing to have any kind of guarantee that they'll pull out the Soviets and the Cubans on a certain fixed date --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I don't know that we've even gotten that far to even talk about that -- a guarantee or a way to check on it.

Q -- they say, "We've all for the Contadora Process." Well, what they're after is getting our people out of El Salvador, apparently.

Q What is -- what seems to be the major problem with that kind of limited recognition? What is the reason that the administration --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, as far as the government -- and the government in exile, I don't think it met the three or four criteria of being a -- it just wasn't legally feasible to do it.

Q Yes, but didn't they, say, set up something like a trade union or something --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Yes, that kind of stuff.

Q Solidarity.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I don't know whether that was a legal problem or just kind of disgarded because -- I don't know, to tell you the truth.

Q Is there a formal government in exile? Not yet --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: No. That was one of the problems. I mean, there's a structure of sorts, but not one that meets the --

Q The proposals for a unification of the different Contra groups, would that be a step towards meeting the criteria for a government in exile?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I guess you could. But I don't think it's quite enough for the -- I don't think it'd advance it very far toward what would be legally feasible.

Q What would be those criteria then?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: What are the criteria for a government? I had that once. I just don't know. There are about four legal criteria -- (laughter) -- for a government in exile.

Q So, but you're saying that the major problem is they don't meet those as opposed to we don't like the idea?

Q Why are you giving him this look like he shouldn't have asked you? (Laughter.)

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: There are about three or four. I can get them for you. I don't recall.

Owen, you -- Bob.

Q If you do recognize the government in exile does that become kind of tantamount to a declaration of war or something like that?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: You mean if --

Q In other words, if you -- you would have to, presumably, break diplomatic relations with Nicaragua?

Q I think we would, yes.

Q Recognizing a government in exile, I mean, does that suggest that a state of war exists? Or what -- does it say anything along those lines?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I don't think so. I was trying to think of some parallel where we -- maybe giving aid to a country that is fighting another country. I'm sure it exists.

Q Like Cambodia?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I don't know.

Joe.

Q Can we get back on the record? Are we back on the record?

Q The Sandinistas --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: No, we're still backgrounding here.

What?

Q The Sandinistas still do about 20 percent of their trade with the U.S. Are economic sanctions imminent?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I don't think I would want to go into -- I wouldn't use the word "imminent;" but I would not want to go into all the options that we have out there.

Want to go back ON THE RECORD?

Q Okay. I just wanted to get back to your answer to David's question, you all have ruled out overt aid because of the legal problems involved, is that correct? (Laughter.)

Q We back on the record?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Back ON BACKGROUND. No. Back on --

Q -- said you wanted to go on the record.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: No, I thought you were stating something that I wanted to talk about on the record.

We have ruled out the ability to give money to a government in exile or to characterize the Contras as a government in exile for the moment.

We have selected the method that we're -- the road we're headed down is what we think's best, and that's the full funding, including the overt -- covert.

Q Do you have a --

Q Are we on or off? Is that background?

Q Can we go on the record?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: We're still on background, yes.

Q Can we go on the record and let me ask you what your sense --

Q Background.

Q -- of your chances are in Congress, on the record?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Got a couple of backgrounders back here.

Q Yes, just to clarify your answer to Candy's question, does that mean that there may conceivably at least be another method of giving overt aid? And that has not necessarily been ruled out, but that -- the idea of overt aid to a government in exile --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, we haven't ruled

out anything really, but we've selected this process. Not to say that it couldn't change somewhere. I don't look for it to change, though.

Q But when you say at the moment you've ruled out overt aid to a government in exile, that's just one point -- there may be other possibilities of overt aid and you do not, at the moment, rule -- do not --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: -- some people have talked third country business.

Q Are you ruling those out, too, or is there still a possibility somewhere --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I guess there would still be a possibility; but for the moment -- and subject to a complete roadblock in Congress, I think we would head this way. The overt -- covert.

Owen.

Q Can we go on the record?

Q No.

Q -- just one last backgrounder. Is this something that you're looking at constantly -- prepare some kind of contingency plan -- if Congress doesn't approve the aid request as you're now seeking -- I mean, is this an ongoing thing or is this something that --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, I guess the ongoing review would be just sizing up the Congressional sentiment and, at the same time, casting an eye toward public sentiment on it.

Q Do you have a contingency plan --

Q I'll give you popcorn, you let me see your news summary.

Q -- if you don't -- Do you have a contingency plan that you're -- been drawn up or are drawing up if you don't get the aid?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I don't think so. Not at the moment.

Q How do you react to this question of continuing with the covert aid, given the fact that last Friday both the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee said that covert aid has no chance?

Q Can we go on the record for this answer?

Q Yes, on the record.

Q We are on the record, aren't we?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: No, we've got -- back on background.

Q Can we go on the record for --

MR. SPEAKES: Go on background, how are we going to proceed in the face of Congressional opposition from important Chairmen, right?

Q What are we --

Q Are we on background or -- I don't even know.

MR. SPEAKES: We're ON THE RECORD.

Q On the record, okay.

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, we're on the record.

And how will we proceed? Well, we will begin what -- we will begin a public dialogue on the seriousness of the situation in Central America. You've seen the President address it in his radio address, and Secretary Shultz addressed it in a Commonwealth Club address.

We will be in the coming weeks presenting our case to the Congress, presenting our case to the people. We are hopeful that once the public realizes the seriousness of the situation that there will be support both in the country and in Congress for our legislative approach to Central America, and particularly to problems with Nicaragua.

Q How do you read the public support now?

MR. SPEAKES: How do we read the public support?

Q I mean, do you have any kind of polls?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. Basically, it is not something that the public is devoting a lot of attention to at the moment. It's not one of the major issues on the public mind. However, once we are -- that the public does understand the seriousness of the situation and the fact that we do face a Marxist-type government in Central America, then they do support our approach to it.

Q Are you ready with that white paper that --

MR. SPEAKES: No.

Q -- you told about a week or two ago was in the works?

MR. SPEAKES: We haven't confirmed that, nor are we ready with it.

Q Well, let me ask, then, how you are going to make this case to the public? I know how you're going to make it to Congress. How are you going to make it to the public? Is there going to be a Presidential speech or a trip?

MR. SPEAKES: There has been one and there could be other as the need arises. We're some distance, some distance and time away from the vote and the major Congressional consideration, so we'll just sort of develop our strategy.

What's the timing on the vote, Bob?

MR. SIMS: There's no set timing on it. We're still consulting Congress as to the best timing --

MR. SPEAKES: Probably -- yes.

MR. SIMS: -- other things on the agenda.

MR. SPEAKES: At the moment, it looks like after Easter recess, right?

Q Why do you think --

MR. SIMS: I would think it would probably be, although it doesn't have to be that late.

Q Larry --

MR. SPEAKES: Candy, then Gerald.

Q We basically went through this whole thing last year and, you know, there was a fire in the backyard and the peat people and -- (laughter) -- I mean, we went to all kinds of different places and did this argument and the result was Congress cut off covert aid. So have you got a different argument? Have you got something you're going to spring on the American public, or --

Q -- invasion.

Q -- is this the same thing -- same song, second verse? I don't know why you think you're going to convince them anymore this year than last.

MR. SPEAKES: I think that we can point out to the American people that time is critical in Nicaragua, that there is a rapid movement toward the consolidation of the power of the Sandinista government toward a totalitarian state. We can point out to them the rapid increase since last fall of armaments being shipped in by Soviet and Soviet bloc-Cuban countries.

Q More arms in since last year?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. I gave some figures which I don't have with me, but we can provide you the number of tanks and helicopters, et cetera.

Q Still is this not exactly what he said last year -- that it was a crisis, that it was, you know, was just as far from here to -- you know, that whole geographic thing? It just seems like the exact same argument which went nowhere. I'm just wondering what you're going to do --

MR. SPEAKES: Once again, I think it's the case of getting the people to understand what's at stake there, and once they do, I think there will be a change.

Q But are you also saying that you will --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Also, if I could drop ON

BACKGROUND for a second, I'd be glad to add that covert aid part. As I said in Santa Barbara, there are certain members of Congress that balk at the word "covert." That's what's troubling them, not the fact that we want to aid the freedom fighters, but just the word "covert" is a stumbling block for them. And I think it will involve some education process that we've explored many alternatives and that seems to be the one -- best.

Q No one's balking at the covert aid, that I know of, to Afghanistan so-called freedom fighters.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: That's true, and --

Q So it's not the word. It must be the policy.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: No, no. I don't think so, Sam. I think it's -- it seems to be just a problem with aiding these people. I'm kind of like you. I don't understand the difference.

Q Well, I think I understand it.

Q Can you just finish the sentence --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Explain it to me then.

Q Well, I think a lot of Americans think there's a difference between what's happening in Afghanistan and what's happening in Central America. And I don't think they support --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: But, on the other hand, a lot of Americans would support -- when you get a communist government in this hemisphere, I think past practice and public opinion has shown that they will support administration efforts to try to prevent that from happening.

Q Are we still on background?

Q Larry, can I --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: On background for the moment.

Q Can I just -- I just wanted to follow up because you were just finishing a sentence when Sam said something.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: As usual.

Q Are you saying that the answer to trying to solve the Congressional distress about covert is to say it's an education process, just to show that we've looked at other alternatives and they don't work and this is the only one that will work?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: That's part of it, yes. I think they -- I think we will just continue to try to educate them on the seriousness of the situation and how critical time is, how much the arms have increased, and --

Q I mean, my only reaction is, you've got the Chairman and the Vice Chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee who certainly are aware of everything you've tried to do, and they're not persuaded. So what makes you think that an education campaign on covert aid is going to make them think, "Oh, yeah, now I understand why you need covert."?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: That's two out of a hundred.

Q Pretty important two.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: That's true.

Q -- that's to imply that they don't understand how serious the situation is?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Oh, I think they probably have an understanding of it, but I think that our understanding of it is that it's a lot more critical than many realize.

Obviously that's subject to interpretation and varying opinions, but we happen to think that ours is right, and our job is to convince them that we are right.

Frank?

Q You've said a couple times here that "time" is very vital in here -- somebody's running out of time. What is the problem? Are there more helicopters coming in here from the Soviet block into Nicaragua -- what is --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: No. I think it's a rapid push on the part of the Sandinistas by their heavy-handed totalitarian tactics --

Q Brutal --

Q Brutal -- (Laughter.)

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: -- to consolidate their power. I mean, they have an election without any substantial opposition.

Q Is that on background?

Q How can we -- is this background, or is that -- just background?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: It's on background.

Q That was on background? (Laughter.)

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: What do -- you want to put that on the record? You like that?

Q Sure.

MR. SPEAKES: All right. Put that on the record.

Q It's word for word what Ronald Reagan said.

MR. SPEAKES: Let's go back on the record. They have an election -- they don't allow any substantial opposition. They don't allow any freedom -- press freedom. They don't allow any --

Q Talking about Chile, or --

MR. SPEAKES: -- union organization freedom. They don't allow any religious freedom. All of the above.

Q Are they actually making any progress in fighting the Contras? Is that their problem, too?

MR. SPEAKES: Pardon?

Q Are the government troops making any progress in fighting the Contras. They claimed they wiped out Pastori --

Q Kicking the Contras' you-know-what.

MR. SPEAKES: Well, you'll have to face it that freedom fighters in Nicaragua have had no funding, or at least had a major source of their funding cut off the last 10 months or so.

Q Larry, what do you mean by consolidation of power?
I mean --

MR. SPEAKES: It means locking it in, Pat, getting in there for good.

Q But are we -- we recognize this --

Q They're in there.

Q -- this government, or we have recognized the government. Haven't they been in power? I don't -- this consolidation seems to imply that somehow that they don't yet have power.

MR. SPEAKES: Well, they could get very close to wiping out any semblance of opposition, or any semblance of a party that would -- or people that would think any other way, a la some of their predecessors and role models.

Q New subject?

Q New subject, please.

Q New subject. How about Fedders?

MR. SPEAKES: Fedders. I talked to -- Pete talked to Fielding, and we don't have any comment on -- (Laughter.) It has been our standard practice to accept the recommendation of the head of an agency when dealing with a problem of that type. I think Fred has been involved in it, but other than that, we just won't -- are not in a position to expand comment or go into detail on it. I don't know much about the --

Q When you say the head of an agency -- in other words, the Chairman of the SEC in this case?

MR. SPEAKES: I would guess, and I don't know whether that presumes -- whether that extends to appointed members like Fedders is or not.

Q Is he under investigation -- I mean, is Shad, or whatever his name is, is there an internal SEC investigation, or --

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know.

Q -- is there any internal administration -- you said Fred's involved?

MR. SPEAKES: Well, Fred customarily reviews these type things that come up, and he's doing just that.

Q But is there an investigation that he's plugging into, or --

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know.

Q Did Fred say, and is it the policy of this administration not to permit people involved in spouse abuse in high position?

MR. SPEAKES: Well, I think what we would have to do, Mike, is to wait until all the facts come out and there's some resolution of the matter as to what the facts are. And until that happens, I don't think I'm in a position to pass judgment. I don't know of any -- spousal abuse is something that is -- not very often shows up --

Q Spousal?

MR. SPEAKES: That's the term he used.

Q I missed this story this morning. What is this story?

MR. SPEAKES: Women whipping up on their husbands.

Q It's in The Wall Street Journal.

Q I did read the Journal, and I missed this particular story.

MR. SPEAKES: It's right on the front page. You don't read that front page, you --

Q I went straight to the editorial page because I love to get angry and get the blood boiling in the morning -- (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: So it's not something that is commonly out in the open as the charges have been in this case.

Q Well, what is this -- what are the charges?

Q The President has sought to call attention to this as a problem, publicly, and -- and now he has a public problem on his own hands, and what's he going to do about it?

MR. SPEAKES: Well, I think he'll get the facts in hand first. We need to take the writing pool and photographers to Room 450 at this time. Regan will go at 1:55 p.m. which is about 8 minutes from now.

Q What is the President's --

MR. SPEAKES: Lester's edging up on me -- look at him, he moved about four steps --

Q -- President's position on spousal abuse?

MR. SPEAKES: He doesn't like it. (Laughter.)

Q What about Mexico?

Q Is he aware of it, Larry? Is he aware of this allegation, or this --

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q How did he become aware of it?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know whether Fielding told him or whether he noted it in the newspaper today, Gerald.

Q Got anything to say about the Governors? Any reaction on --

MR. SPEAKES: No. The President stayed with them for,

oh, I'd say for 20 or 30 minutes longer. After you all left to hear their discussions, we --

Q -- keeps saying he was ignorant this morning, he doesn't know what he's talking about on this business about the state surplus? I take he says what he intends to say. He said it twice now in public.

MR. SPEAKES: Well, I think the facts bear the President out. I don't know what these fellows figure, but --

Q Not according to Republican Chairman Mario Cuomo.

Q He says he got up and told the President that it wasn't right and wasn't true.

MR. SPEAKES: Well, aren't there a number of state -- I mean, the record speaks for itself. Look it up, as Yogi Berra said.

Q They know who they are.

Q Larry --

MR. SPEAKES: What are they use it for? Just build up?

Q They say it's --

Q -- because they have balanced budget requirements --

Q A lot of states have --

Q -- payroll --

Q -- an operating surplus that they use up.

MR. SPEAKES: Well, they -- oh -- say that again now.

Q They have balanced budget requirements, and they have a temporary -- it's a cash-flow surplus. That's all it is. It's not a surplus.

MR. SPEAKES: Oh, so they just keep it hand in case they need it later?

Q Because they have to meet their payrolls.

Q Can you -- he apparently --

MR. SPEAKES: I wonder why they can't spend it for a farm program. They can't spend it to help the farm --

Q They don't have -- according to Lamar Alexander who is a Republican, Larry.

Q Larry, he apparently agreed to some kind of a farm conference between Cabinet officials and farm Governors?

MR. SPEAKES: I think they asked that they'd have some point of contact between three or four people from the administration and -- I'm certain we can arrange that. We haven't decided who it might be from the administration.

Q But is there going to be a -- they seemed to think there was going to be an actual sit-down conference between three or four farm representatives of the Governors and three or four Cabinet officials.

MR. SPEAKES: I think there was. It would be a meeting -- I'd rather use the term "meeting" than "conference."

know?

Q All right. But when is that going to be, do you

MR. SPEAKES: No, we --

Q Larry --

MR. SPEAKES: -- we don't have that fleshed out.

Q Larry --

MR. SPEAKES: We got a --

Q -- what is --

Q -- stay on the Governors for a second?

MR. SPEAKES: All right.

Q They say that he took a lot of stuff off the table, that they tried to see whether Social Security, defense, taxes were negotiable and that he basically said they're not negotiable. So, a number of Governors said we have no options left. We can't get a deficit reduction package --

MR. SPEAKES: Well, he wouldn't --

Q -- because he's taken too much off the table.

MR. SPEAKES: -- he wouldn't tell them anything he hasn't told me and you about taxes and defense and Social Security and all that, no.

Q Social Security COLAs which they passed in their resolution yesterday?

MR. SPEAKES: The President's position on that's clear; he's not going to do anything on it.

Q Were you in the room? Can you give us --

MR. SPEAKES: No, but I got a readout from him after he came back over about what they talked --

Q What did he say about the atmosphere?

MR. SPEAKES: He said they asked a lot of questions on a lot of subjects?

Q Was it hostile?

Q Did he have --

MR. SPEAKES: No, I don't think it was hostile. No. In fact, he mentioned that it seemed to be fairly open and, I guess, friendly.

Q Did he have anything to say about his exchange with Cuomo, Larry?

MR. SPEAKES: No, what'd he do to Cuomo? (Laughter.)

Q Well, Cuomo, according to all the -- according to several of the Governors and Cuomo's own account, Cuomo said he pressed him twice on whether there was any give in the President's feelings on Social Security, COLAs or defense and that the President indicated no give at all. And, so, Cuomo concluded there was no business --

MR. SPEAKES: No give at all. (Laughter.)

Q Yes, that there was no business that the Governors could do at the White House. Some of the Governors described it as pointed and as a pointed exchange and so forth.

MR. SPEAKES: He didn't mention that, but I don't know why it should surprise Cuomo or any other Governor that the President --

Q Excuse me. Governor Cuomo has also said that Stockman had given a briefing --

Q What was --

Q -- I don't know why it should -- I don't know why it should surprise Cuomo or any other Governor what?

MR. SPEAKES: Any other Governor that the President's -- what the President's position is on defense, taxes and Social Security.

Q Larry, a follow-up on that --

MR. SPEAKES: If he's said it one, we've said it a hundred.

Q Governor Cuomo had said that David Stockman, prior to the President coming in, had said that there might be some give on such things as Social Security if the Democratic Governors and Democratic Senators were willing to indicate some willingness. That's why Cuomo phrased the question to begin with. He thought Stockman had raised that possibility.

MR. SPEAKES: I'd have to talk to Stockman, see exactly what he said. But, once again, you know what the President has got to say about all of those.

Q But, Larry, is the President still open to perhaps entertaining a freeze on Social Security brought to him by a bipartisan agreement?

MR. SPEAKES: His statement in the press conference in January is where he stands on it.

Q Larry, what is the White House -- a two-part question -- what's the White House reaction to the Black Muslims' convention broadcast of Qaddafi who urged that -- what he said is 400,000 blacks in our armed forces, he urged them to desert and help set up a separate country?

MR. SPEAKES: We think it's an outrageous statement, that it's a blatant use of racism to encourage sedition. Period.

Q Oh, now, do you or -- (laughter) --

Q Do you or the President believe that Dr. George Keyworth should be fired or that he should be admonished or that he should be commended for telling the truth?

MR. SPEAKES: We addressed that on Friday, pointed out that his comments about the press were about 90 seconds of a 2-hour, 20 or 30 page interview.

Q Right, and it got very big coverage in the press. Now, what do you think? Should he be admonished, fired, or commended for daring to tell the truth?

MR. SPEAKES: As I pointed out, the reporter from United Press International in here on Friday, by focusing on the 90 minutes, seemed to convict himself in the --

Q 90 seconds.

Q Well, specifically, do you --

Q What does that have to do with it? What does how long he took to say it --

Q Yeah.

Q -- have to do with it?

Q Nothing.

Q Why don't you comment on what he said?

MR. SPEAKES: I think what the man was saying, that the press tends to focus on smaller issues rather than the big picture, as far as the scientific community is concerned. He's --

Q He said more than that.

Q We have some -- he said, "it's drawn from a relatively narrow fringe element on the far left that is trying to tear down America," and, "there's an arrogance that has to do with the power of the press that is not responsible enough to do their job carefully." End of quote.

Q I agree.

Q What is your reaction, Larry? Do you think he's telling the truth, do you think he's not telling the truth, or do you have no comment? (Laughter.)

Q Or do you think he's nuts?

Q What about this? He's the White House advisor, Larry.

MR. SPEAKES: Neither the President, nor I, would use those type words.

Q In other words, you have no objection to what he said?

MR. SPEAKES: I said, neither the President or I would use those -- approach it in that sense.

Q Well, my question, Larry, is do you have any objection to what he said?

MR. SPEAKES: Okay, Lester.

Q You don't, do you, Larry?

Q Are we -- have we made any diplomatic protest or any other protest to Mexico over what Mullen charged over the weekend, and that is that several key suspects in Camarena's kidnapping had been allowed to escape with the help of some Mexican police forces?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know of any diplomatic protest, as such. The President did have a discussion with President de la Madrid by telephone on Friday afternoon and had a wide range of issues, but I won't be specific on what it was.

Q Well, you won't be specific --

Q Was he aware --

Q -- but did he touch on these issues?

MR. SPEAKES: Once again, I'm not going to be specific. It clearly touched on the drug issue --

Q Well, I'm talking about the allegation --

MR. SPEAKES: -- and the desire to arrive at some solution --

Q Larry, was --

Q -- about all the subjects, but he didn't know specifically whether Quintera had been discussed.

MR. SPEAKES: Once again, I'm not going to go into that --

Q Are we considering a travel advisory?

MR. SPEAKES: A tourist travel advisory?

Q Yes.

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know of any. That is a possibility, but I don't think so. The State Department is the one responsible for those and I'd check with them to see.

Q When you say that's a possibility, do you mean --

MR. SPEAKES: No, it's --

Q It's always --

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, it's always a possibility.

Q As I understand your timing, the President spoke to President de la Madrid on Friday and Caro Quintero left for Europe, apparently with some sort of safe passage, with a mark or whatever it is these days, to Europe on Saturday --

Q I thought he went the previous weekend.

Q No.

MR. SPEAKES: Is that the correct time? I don't think so.

Q Previous weekend.

MR. SPEAKES: Previous -- oh, you're one week off. It was a week earlier.

Q Larry, do you know whether the President knew of that incident by the time he spoke to de la Madrid? Was it part of what he knew when he --

MR. SPEAKES: You can assume that the President had been fully briefed on the entire drug-kidnapping situation.

David?

Q Do you have anything on the Mid East and on Mubarak's comments?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, I do. Did State address this, Bob?

MR. SIMS: They did.

MR. SPEAKES: They did? I'll -- do you want me to run over it quickly or run over it slowly?

Q Quickly.

MR. SPEAKES: On Mubarak -- call for an Arab-Israeli talks hosted by the United States or inspired by the United States -- we are ready to re-engage in the search for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East whenever the parties are ready. We would support direct talks between Egypt -- between Israel and its Arab neighbors in any way that seems appropriate at that time. Look forward to discussing these issues with President Mubarak. And I think that's it.

It boils down to when the time's appropriate, we'll be glad to step in. But it's something for the parties to --

Q Larry, do you have anything more on Farrakhan?

MR. SPEAKES: No, that's about the best I can do for him.

Q Your statement about sedition applied to Farrakhan since he entertained all of this and broadcast it and saluted Qaddafi --

MR. SPEAKES: I just think it's -- I think it's directed to those words.

Q Isn't he involved in your sedition?

MR. SPEAKES: I think it's directed to those words.

Q Do you have anything on the military attache expelled from Poland?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, I do. Did State get into this, Bob?

MR. SIMS: Yes, they did.

MR. SPEAKES: I'll give it to you quickly.

Q What's the subject?

MR. SPEAKES: The military attache being expelled in Poland. I'm not prepared to go into detail; clearly represents a most serious

violation of the Vienna convention on diplomatic relations, to which we and Poland are signatoores. The matter in which the involved two U.S. citizens were handled by Polish security officers was particularly outrageous. We've registered a strong protest, both here and in Warsaw, calling the behavior of security officials entirely unacceptable. Expect responsible individuals to be disciplined, and expect such behavior will not recur. That's pretty strong.

Q Was the -- expulsion -- are you talking about the expulsion, or the way they were expelled?

MR. SPEAKES: A little of both.

Q Oh, of both.

MR. SPEAKES: Bob?

Q Can I just drop back to Nicaragua, please? We know the President's always ready to take his case to the people. When you talk about, you know, through the educational process to the public, is there any sort of concrete, specific plan now by which the President is going to --

MR. SPEAKES: Not specifically, Bob. We'll be working with Congress, and as it unfolds there we will do what we think's necessary.

Other Bob?

Q Clarification. This remark about sedition -- is that in response to Qaddafi's, or --

MR. SPEAKES: Qaddafi's statements.

Q On that same subject, do you have any other words about the other part of Qaddafi's message which was that he was going to send arms to arm blacks in this country?

MR. SPEAKES: Sedition. (Laughter.)

Q He's encouraging sedition, but he's not a United States citizen. How can a foreigner commit sedition against the United States? Or is he encouraging, and therefore Qaddafi -- I mean, therefore, Farrakhan is, too, isn't he? Well, he entertained this, Larry, he didn't dissent with it, did he, Larry? You're just smiling because you'd really like to get away from this one, wouldn't you?

Q Growth begets growth. Hope begets hope. Is that Luke?

Q I just can't stand it.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

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