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THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

PRESS BRIEFING
BY
LARRY SPEAKES

January 29, 1986

The Briefing Room

INDEX

12:07 P.M. EST

SUBJECT

PAGE

ANNOUNCEMENTS

President's Schedule.....	1-3
Memorial Service in Houston	
Rearranged Schedule.....	10-11
Tuesday/State of the Union	
Wednesday/Budget to Congress/Visit	
Departments	
Thursday/Prayer Breakfast/Executive Forum/	
CEA	
Friday/Visit to High School	
Personnel Announcements.....	1

DOMESTIC

Shuttle/Memorial Ceremony.....	1-3, 5, 11
Shuttle/NASA Problems.....	3
Shuttle/Message to McAullife School.....	3-4
Shuttle/OMB/Funding.....	4-5
Shuttle/Military-Civilian.....	5
Shuttle/Phone Calls to Families.....	8
Shuttle/Message from Gorbachev.....	12
Republican Conference.....	6
Linda Chavez.....	6-7
Budget.....	7, 9
Affirmative Action/Meese-Brock.....	7
CPAC Speech.....	10

FOREIGN

Qaddafi/Terrorism.....	6
Savimbi.....	7, 12
Foreign Aid/Supplemental.....	7-8
Arms Control/Gorbachev.....	8
Economic Summit.....	8-9
SDI.....	10

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Q They consulted the families quickly, didn't they, between your briefing and the announcement at 11:30 a.m.?

MR. SPEAKES: Oh, definitely. We've been talking to John Young who's been working.

Q -- when to have the memorial service, where and all that?

MR. SPEAKES: The President today is announcing the appointment of James Albert Michener to be a Member of the Board of International Broadcasting; George Will and Frederick G. Hale, Sr. to be Members of the Board of Visitors to the Naval Academy; Carlos Salman to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation --

Q -- the President?

MR. SPEAKES: There'll be time for comment after this, Chris, if you want to hold it.

Frances Buchholzer to be a Member of the National Advisory Commission on Education; and Donald T. Regan, Malcolm Baldrige and George P. Shultz to be Members of the President's Commission on Executive Exchange. You see, you would have missed that -- that means they all switch places next year.

Q Larry, what is that?

Q Darman wasn't mentioned, I'm worried.

MR. SPEAKES: Instead, Jack Smith gets to come work in the White House for awhile.

Q Baker aid.

Q Baker aid.

MR. SPEAKES: The situation regarding the Challenger and NASA is basically as I left it this morning. You've heard the press conference which I believe is still ongoing at the Space Center in Florida and they've pretty well answered all of the questions. They announced at 11:30, as you know, that the President would be going to a ceremony at the Space Center in Houston on Friday. It will be an early departure -- probably in the 8:00 to 9:00 a.m. range. The ceremony will be mid-day. The President and Mrs. Reagan will return after that. There is a sign-up sheet that is due by 5:00 p.m. if you're planning on flying with us.

Q Is that ceremony at the Center or at another location?

MR. SPEAKES: At the Johnson Space Center, I would assume.

MORE

Q Any other details on either the ceremony or whether he'll meet before or after privately with the families?

MR. SPEAKES: No, none of that has been worked out. We've just sent our people down there. In fact, they probably haven't even left yet.

We have been in contact this morning with John Young, an astronaut who is the Head of the Astronauts Office who is serving as NASA's liaison with the families, and it was John who advised us that the ceremony in Houston would be the most appropriate as far as the families are concerned. That means that five families live there and would not have to travel if the ceremony had been held elsewhere -- Washington, for instance. And also they would -- one family lives in Cleveland -- the Reznick family and the others, of course, in Concord, New Hampshire.

The phone calls -- none have taken place yet. John Young advised us that it would be probably most appropriate to wait until

afternoon before the President call the families and he will begin doing so some time this afternoon.

Q Have the families -- have they gone home to Houston yet?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q They have?

MR. SPEAKES: I think those -- the five of them are in Houston and --

Bernie.

Q How much concern is there that NASA has been an agency in disarray? The head of it has been indicted and there have been all kinds of problems within the agency.

MR. SPEAKES: There's what kind of problems?

Q Well, there have been all kinds of problems within the agency before this whole thing happened.

MR. SPEAKES: There's no concern.

Q There's no concern.

Q Are all seven families going to be at this thing in Houston?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know. It's --

Q You say five are there now. Do the other two --

MR. SPEAKES: Five live in Houston.

Q Right.

MR. SPEAKES: One lives in Cleveland. One lives in Concord, New Hampshire. Whether they will all attend, depends on their own wishes.

Q Has there been any thought at all of the President doing anything with regard to the high school children in Concord?

MR. SPEAKES: There has been a thought. Our best advice, after talking to the school this morning, is that the most appropriate thing would be for the President to send a message to the students, which I anticipate him doing.

Q You mean a written message?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q Today?

Q Would he send a videotape message? I mean, would he talk to them by videotape?

MR. SPEAKES: What'd he just ask?

Q I don't know. What did he just ask?

MR. SPEAKES: He said would it be a written message, and I said yes.

Q And did you say today?

Q Today?

Q Larry --

Q Speak up, Chris.

MR. SPEAKES: What network person --

Q -- he gives the answer, Sam.

MR. SPEAKES: -- is listening to what the other feller says? Well, it's his turn today --

Q -- too busy talking.

MR. SPEAKES: -- because you did it on national television yesterday.

Q That's because you didn't an answer -- didn't give an answer the first time.

MR. SPEAKES: We were all -- I did answer. We were all embarrassed.

Q Oh, my God.

MR. SPEAKES: Right? (Laughter.) Weren't you embarrassed --

Q I'm glad you're concerned --

Q I don't know that you can divide, you know, "network fellows," and I guess women, also --

Q Fellows?

Q -- from print fellows and women today.

MR. SPEAKES: I have never heard Bernie Weinraub and David Hoffman ask the same question in the same briefing. I have not, no. I can state that categorically.

Q Well, then you better clean out your ears.
(Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: I have researched the record and they don't.

Q Larry, will the statement be today?

Q Will the message be sent today?

MR. SPEAKES: Statement be today? No, the students are not in -- school is not in session today.

Peter and then Frank.

Q Has OMB begun to consider the question of whether you'll ask for supplementary money for another space shuttle?

MR. SPEAKES: I'm sure they have done some thinking on it. Whether we will or not -- that was a fifth -- there were five shuttles and the fifth one had just been --

Q Purchased.

MR. SPEAKES: -- purchased last year, right? And so what those decisions -- be made, I'm sure will take a period of time to make those type decisions. It's what NASA wants, needs, what they decide that the other -- the military aspects and other agencies of government that are involved in the shuttle program would need. So

I'm sure it'll be a long range-type thing. .

Q One other question. Is there any thought being given to separating the military space program out from the -- from civilian uses?

MR. SPEAKES: You're really -- as Dale mentioned -- asking tomorrow's questions today. We just don't have those type answers, Peter.

Frank.

Q Is there any likelihood that the President will do anything else by way of memorial services? Anything around town, over to Air and Space to see that memorial exhibit?

MR. SPEAKES: Don't know of any plans to. Nothing's been discussed.

Where are we? Andrea.

Q Budgets?

MR. SPEAKES: New subject?

Q Wait. I'm on --

MR. SPEAKES: Old subject?

Q This morning there was some question as to whether NASA or the President might choose or announce this permanent board. Has that been resolved yet?

MR. SPEAKES: Has not, no, as to how it will be done. Really hasn't been worked out. Other thing, too, obviously,

we will not be going to the Republican Conference on Friday, since we'll be out of town.

Q Camp David when he comes back?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. Joe?

Q That was my question -- when are you going to reschedule that?

MR. SPEAKES: Don't know. Could be the following week. We just are still talking to them up there.

Q New subject?

MR. SPEAKES: No, Andrea has a new subject. Bernie, are you old subject or new subject? Andrea is new subject.

Q New subject.

MR. SPEAKES: Andrea.

Q Libya?

Q Yes.

MR. SPEAKES: Of course. I'm glad you asked.
(Laughter.)

Q Any comment on --

MR. SPEAKES: What about Libya?

Q Well, what about Qaddafi's alleged offer as relayed through proxy to halt all terrorism if there is a guarantee of no attack from the United States?

MR. SPEAKES: Let me see what I might say about him. Where is it? I've got it here somewhere.

No, no. Wait, I've got my own.

This seems to be another of Colonel Qaddafi's public relations ploys. By publicly acknowledging his role in terrorist acts, he is giving credence to being his own smoking gun. We are interested in deeds, not words, from Qaddafi, and we'll be watching his actions very carefully.

The smoking gun quote is originally from the Secretary of State, who I have to give credit. It's not --

Q Well, I thought Qaddafi said that he would ask that people committing these acts refrain from doing so. Are you saying that in fact by saying that, he acknowledges that he participates in directing these acts?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, it would seem to be that way. It would, yes.

Q What do you know about -- two questions. What do you know about Linda Chavez's planned resignation to run for office?

MR. SPEAKES: What do I know about it? What do you want to know about it? (Laughter.)

Q Well, has she informed anybody at the senior level that she'll be leaving soon?

MR. SPEAKES: I think we'll let Linda Chavez and the President in due course announce her --

Q Is it true that there is a quota -- that there has to be a woman replace her?

MR. SPEAKES: Not a quota, no.

Q Oh?

Q Just goals.

Q Well, will there be --

MR. SPEAKES: Just goals. Just goals. (Laughter.)

Q Is it likely that any replacement would be of the same gender?

MR. SPEAKES: I just don't know what the plans are. We pick the best person for the job -- man or woman. Right?

Q Does the President still plan to meet Jonas Savimbi tomorrow?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q You indicated yesterday that the budget now will be put off at least until next Wednesday. Is now affirmed?

MR. SPEAKES: Next Wednesday is not a put-off. Wasn't it always Wednesday?

Q It was Tuesday.

MR. SPEAKES: Okay, it will be put off until Wednesday -- a 24-hour postponement.

Q And that's the official --

MR. SPEAKES: That's official.

Q Is Regan meeting with Meese and Brock today?

MR. SPEAKES: The President is having ongoing -- the parties involved, not the President -- are having ongoing discussions.

Q The Hill has announced --

Q Excuse me. Wait, that wasn't the question. Is he meeting with them today?

MR. SPEAKES: It's the same answer I gave this morning. Not going to be specific. Discussions are ongoing. Changed it.

Q Shultz announced that the budget -- that the new budget has a doubling of military assistance to the Philippines to restore the cuts that Congress voted last year.

MR. SPEAKES: The budget is next Wednesday. We'll let you read it there. I don't know, to tell you the truth.

Q Is the administration seeking some supplemental on foreign aid? I think there is a closed meeting today up on the Hill -- Lugar's committee -- where a billion dollars is being talked about.

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know. There are -- there has been for a long time expected a supplemental involving security abroad that would involve the embassies, personnel, and so forth.

Q How much is it?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know what the numbers are on it, but there is that something that's been in the mill -- in the works for a long time.

Q Is \$1 billion -- does that sound at all in the ballpark?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know.

Yes, sir?

Q Can we get an update on the calls to the families and possibly some kind of characterization of the --

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. I doubt if we'll have much of a characterization, but we will -- I'll tell you what, why don't we do a 5:00 p.m. posting here as to what the President's done on the phone calls if he's been able to complete them all. Okay?

Robin?

Q Larry, do you have anything on arms control -- whether or not the President has responded in writing to Gorbachev?

MR. SPEAKES: No, I've not checked in the last day or so, but we're in the process of preparing a response specifically to the letter, and the situation in Geneva is that we're waiting for further presentation on the part of the Soviets -- and more detail, more questions, we'd have to ask and of course we'll respond there in the course of the talks.

Q Has the President decided, or the White House decided whether or not he will meet -- made a final decision on whether he'll meet with the fasting vet in Washington state?

Q Gil Casanova.

MR. SPEAKES: Casanova. It's not on the schedule and we've had some correspondence with Mr. Casanova saying that we did not see it as possible in the immediate future.

Q Well, which --

Q You say it's not possible in the near future or he does?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q Which will he meet with first -- Casanova or the Congressional Black Caucus? (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: Okay. Where were we? All the way to the back.

Q Back on arms control for a second -- I think it was last week you said that the President was -- or the negotiators in Geneva were waiting for details from the Soviets. Are you saying that they still have not given any details?

MR. SPEAKES: No, I'm saying that's an ongoing process and they are -- they would be providing details, but there will be more there and more questions to ask.

Q Did the President have any send-off remarks for his economic summit to Sherpas you were telling us about?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't have any.

Q Good luck.

. Q Well, bless you. (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: What?

Q You didn't -- (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: You'll have to say it louder.

Q Helen, don't do anything I wouldn't. Now, don't get in trouble. (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: Not really. I'm sure he did in private, but I don't have them so I don't have much to offer.

Bill?

Q This morning, while the President was still going -- budget briefings on Wednesday?

MR. SPEAKES: That's right. In all probability not. There was a compression of the activities that day and right at the moment, it looks like on the day of the budget, he will be sending up also his -- no, he will be visiting the departments and agencies that day as he had planned on the day following the State of the Union. So, he will not do the official budget opening, and he will simply be talking to the departments as a follow-up to the State of the Union.

Q Wasn't that visit also supposed be timed though with the release of the legislative message and now the message won't come until the next day?

MR. SPEAKES: The message will come the next day, but it was timed with the State of the Union more than the legislative message. One other thing I don't want to forget --

Yes, Mike?

Q The President is scheduled to make a speech tomorrow night? Do you know if he's going to include any remarks about the shuttle in his speech?

MR. SPEAKES: I bet he would, but I don't know whether he would.

Q Is that the CPAC thing?

MR. SPEAKES: Andrea?

Q The Pentagon has announced that they've upgraded Star Wars as a top priority in their new defense directive. Was that done with interagency approval? Is that something that the President was involved in --

MR. SPEAKES: I'm sure it was. I don't know. I haven't heard him --

Q -- or was that a unilateral decision?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know.

John?

Q Coverage for the CPAC dinner?

MR. SPEAKES: Topics?

Q Coverage.

MR. SPEAKES: Coverage? Yes, there is coverage. Do we know what that is? Does Dale or Jeanne know?

Q It's usually open.

Q What are the topics?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, I think it is.

Q -- sandwiches for the pool?

MR. SPEAKES: Sandwiches for the pool, steaks for the fat cats.

Q Can you say -- do you know anything about the remarks or is it changing?

MR. SPEAKES: I haven't seen them yet.

MR. BRASHEAR: Open coverage.

MR. SPEAKES: Open coverage at CPAC.

Charles?

Q Larry, I got confused on the budget coverage. The State of the Union Tuesday, the wish list goes up Wednesday or --

Q No.

MR. SPEAKES: Let me go back over it so everybody can be on the same wave length here. My vital information sheet here.

Tuesday, State of the Union. Wednesday, budget and visit departments. Thursday, prayer breakfast, which is as previously scheduled; executive forum, legislative message and CEA -- Thursday. Friday, high school.

That could change, but that's what we're looking at.

Q The State of the Union is 9:00 p.m.?

MR. SPEAKES: What?

Q 9:00 p.m. Tuesday for the State of the Union?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. Ed reminds me -- yes?

Q There's not been a rescheduling of the Friday visit to the Hill then, is that correct?

MR. SPEAKES: That's right, because we're going to Houston. Oh, not been a rescheduling. No, it has not. Still working it out.

Bill?

Q Background briefings that had been scheduled in connection with the State of the Union -- schedule shifts --

MR. SPEAKES: We'll still do it at 7:00 p.m. this Tuesday night. Budget briefing will be 11:00 a.m. over at the -- well, we may be able to move it over at the State Department now because that room was occupied previously and is not occupied. So we may go to the State Department for that.

And then there's open coverage at the Departments. And the briefing on the legislative message, I really haven't worked that out yet but --

Q But that budget briefing will be taking place at the same time as the President is out and about, going to the Departments?

MR. SPEAKES: No.

Q No.

MR. SPEAKES: He'll probably go in the afternoon. The budget briefing will be midday, 11:00 a.m. or so.

Bob?

Q Do you have any idea approximately what time you'll be getting back from Houston?

MR. SPEAKES: From Houston? Oh, depending on -- we really haven't said anything. I would judge the President would be back at Andrews 3:30 p.m. or 4:00 p.m. and the press follows.

Norm?

Q Can I just ask you to check another scheduling thing? The Savimbi meeting tomorrow -- his people apparently are saying that it had been shifted to Friday.

MR. SPEAKES: There was a thought of having it on Friday, but it's now rescheduled for --

Q Okay.

MR. SPEAKES: -- rescheduled back for Thursday.

Q Back for Thursday -- okay. Fine.

MR. SPEAKES: Could very well be in the afternoon tomorrow. No, no, no. I'm sorry. That'll be tomorrow morning.

Okay -- the questions about the message on the shuttle from the Soviets: General Secretary Gorbachev has sent a message to the President that reads as follows: "We share the feeling of sorrow in connection with the tragic death of the crew of the space shuttle Challenger. We express our condolences to the people of the United States and to the families."

Peter?

Q Was that -- the first one we got?

Q -- yesterday --

MR. SPEAKES: No, I don't think it was the first one. Others came in.

Q When did that one -- today?

MR. SPEAKES: Today.

Q -- was that, as a letter, delivered through diplomatic channels to the White House?

MR. SPEAKES: It was, actually, a notification by phone from the Ambassador -- Soviet Ambassador and -- with the message following.

Q Larry, on the subject of the General Secretary, the President in his address yesterday evening made a reference to our space program -- we don't keep secrets and cover things up. That was intended as a reference to the Soviet Union.

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q -- then why was that in there at all?

MR. SPEAKES: That what happens in our space program is always open to the public -- has been since its inception --

Q Except for the military payloads. I mean --

MR. SPEAKES: And --

Q -- secrets.

Q You know, we had a whole blackout on one of those launches.

MR. SPEAKES: But --

Q Was that appropriate for that type of message?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q Say no.

Q Say no just once.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

12:26 P.M. EST
#1675-01/29