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THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

PRESS BRIEFING
BY
LARRY SPEAKES

November 8, 1985

The Briefing Room

12:06 P.M. EST

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#1610-11/08

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PRESS BRIEFING
BY
LARRY SPEAKES

November 8, 1985

The Briefing Room

12:06 P.M. EST

MR. SPEAKES: Today the President is announcing the appointment of Rockwell Anthony Schnabel to be Ambassador to the Republic of Finland and Elizabeth I. Board to be Special Assistant to the President and Director of the Television Office.

The President is presently having lunch with religious leaders. You have been provided with a list of those individuals.

This afternoon at 1:30 p.m. he meets with Secretary Shultz in the Oval Office. The purpose is to hear their views on the upcoming summit.

Q Are they going to come out here in the Briefing Room at all?

MR. SPEAKES: No, not here. I don't know whether they will come out there or not.

Q Will anybody be -- will anybody give us a readout --

Q How long is the meeting?

MR. SPEAKES: It's lunch.

No.

The weekend schedule. At 11:00 a.m. tomorrow the President will be having a private coffee with Their Royal Highnesses, the Prince and Princess of Wales. Open press coverage for the arrival. It takes place on the lawn at 11:00 a.m.

At 12:00 p.m. the President makes his radio address from USIA. Travel pool should assemble in the Press Briefing Room at 11:40 a.m. We hope to have a text available here at 10:00 a.m., embargoed until 12:00 p.m.

At the conclusion of today's briefing we are making available to you an extensive fact sheet that will provide you with all the facts -- 42 languages, 120 million people, when the President last spoke. It also is a breakdown on the number of estimated listeners available within each language group and each geographic group.

Q Larry, VOA or USIA headquarters?

MR. SPEAKES: VOA headquarters. Has to be from the

MORE

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radio-television operation there.

And then on Saturday evening the President will have a private dinner in honor of the Prince and Princess of Wales. Expanded pool coverage for the arrival at the North Portico and pool coverage of the toasts, which will be piped into the Briefing Room. There is a media advisory that is released from the First Lady's press office.

Also on Monday the President will be visiting Arlington Cemetery for a Veteran's Day ceremony, where he will speak. He speaks -- he leaves at 10:50 a.m. with a travel pool accompanying. There is open press coverage there and he will speak -- he will participate in the ceremony beginning at 11:00 a.m. and speak shortly thereafter.

The President's Blue Ribbon Commission on Defense Management will be holding its first meeting on Wednesday, November 13th. Four members of the House and one Senator will present their views on various aspects of defense management. It will take place in the Rayburn House Office Building, Room 2212, 9:30 a.m. until noon. Those scheduled to speak include Representative William Dickinsin, Charles Bennett, Barbara Boxer, Mel Levine, and Senator Nancy Kassebaum. The open meeting is a part of a two-day series of commission sessions on the 12th and 13th.

Q Are you going to brief at 9:15 on Monday?

MR. SPEAKES: Not going to brief at all on Monday.

Q Why?

MR. SPEAKES: It's a holiday.

Q Larry, what time does the press have to be in position at Arlington?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know, Bob. See what time press has to be in position at Arlington.

The President this morning met with the leadership. The purpose of the meeting, for the main part, was to discuss his upcoming summit meeting. I will give you quotes from the meeting.

He says, "I am going to Geneva with a sense of confidence and optimism --

Q Sorry. Sense of what?

MR. SPEAKES: Confidence --

Q Thank you.

MR. SPEAKES: -- and optimism -- based on the knowledge that over the past five years we have restored America's strength and international standing. I have no illusions about Soviet intentions and fundamental differences separating us. We are bringing" -- everybody catching up?

Q No.

Q No.

Q -- I have no illusions --

MR. SPEAKES: Buy you a tape recorder, huh?

Q I am going to --

Q I have no illusions -- (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: "I have no illusions about Soviet intentions and fundamental differences separating us. We're bringing a broad agenda to Geneva focusing on the full spectrum of U.S.-Soviet relations, not just arms control, but regional conflicts, bilateral relations and human rights. Genuine improvement in the relationship can only result when there is progress in all four areas. At the same time, we are not making any artificial linkage among these areas. We will chart a realistic course for further discussion among our negotiators at Geneva. We face a difficult negotiating task in Geneva. We do not view Geneva as an end in itself but, rather, part of an ongoing process. We need to show the Soviets that the American people stand together in support of Democratic values and respect for human rights as bases for American policies around the world."

Q Do you have any quotes of what he might have said on the Medvid case. There's some confusion about that.

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, I was there. I don't have the specific quotes. The President's position is the Executive Branch has carried out its responsibilities and we are providing the appropriate courtesies to the Senate staff members who are working on the case.

Q Does he want the man reinterviewed? At least Lago Marsino seemed to feel that the President expressed a desire for --

MR. SPEAKES: As far as the Executive Branch is concerned, we have carried out our responsibilities.

Q Then why --

MR. SPEAKES: As far as the Senate is concerned, that is for the Senate.

Q Well, let me just ask whether the administration coordinated the fact that the Customs Department proceeded as it did or was that --

MR. SPEAKES: The Customs Department has not proceeded anywhere.

Q Well, is the President still --

Q Well, the Customs Department has said --

Q -- of the opinion the case is --

MR. SPEAKES: -- two questions going here. Can you --

Q Well, I'm sorry.

MR. SPEAKES: Can you resolve it amongst yourselves before you --

Q No.

Q Because the Customs Department has said that they would not permit the ship to leave --

MR. SPEAKES: No, I think you --

Q -- until the subpoena is served.

MR. SPEAKES: -- you read the newspaper account and didn't listen to what Customs said. Customs said that is an option. Customs is required to grant a Certificate of Departure before the ship leaves. They can grant it or they cannot grant it. It's an option.

Q Well, does the President still consider --

Q Have they done that?

MR. SPEAKES: No, they have not, but that does not come until the ship is loaded and gets ready to depart.

Q Can you tell us what the administration's position on whether Customs should grant that certificate is?

MR. SPEAKES: Customs will make that judgment at the appropriate time. There are 24 criteria that the Customs Department uses to do that. Many things, including liens against ships, violation of immigration laws --

Q Is this one of those?

MR. SPEAKES: -- etc., etc.

Q Is this one of them?

MR. SPEAKES: That would be a legal interpretation to be made --

Q Larry --

MR. SPEAKES: Take it easy. I'm going to be here. That will be a legal interpretation to be made and a judgment to be made by Customs. That judgment has not been made.

Q But Customs will not be acting under the Executive Order -- an Executive Order in this case, but simply following

whatever, as you say --

MR. SPEAKES: You mean a Presidential directive --

Q Yes.

MR. SPEAKES: -- a verbal or whatever?

Q Yes.

MR. SPEAKES: No, they will make their own decisions. But I'm sure they will do it in conjunction with the President's wishes.

Q So the case is still --

Q So, now, we were told that the --

MR. SPEAKES: Let's wait now.

Q Well, we were told that the --

MR. SPEAKES: Let's take it easy until we finish her now.

Q Well, that's fine. I mean, I raised the subject and deferred --

MR. SPEAKES: I know. I'm with you.

Q -- to my colleague for eight questions.

MR. SPEAKES: But your colleague chimed in and interrupted you and I'm chastising him for doing that.

Q I think she has every right to. But I'm now interrupting back.

MR. SPEAKES: You should have --

Q That never happens --

Q Let's get on with it.

Q He was chastising me --

Q One of the people out there suggested that the President had ordered Mr. Meese to begin an investigation. But he was not clear as to whether that's an investigation as to what happened or an investigation into the present circumstances.

MR. SPEAKES: It's the original investigation on the initial phase of it -- INS handling of it, which is ongoing at present.

Q So he still considers, does he -- the President, that is -- the case closed?

MR. SPEAKES: We feel like we have carried out our responsibilities in the matter. And this matter has been argued -- presented by private individuals in three district courts and a court of appeals. In each time they have said there was not grounds and -- to hold the snip or to take the man off the ship.

Q Well, now, you have said several days running, from that platform, that you consider the case closed. Do you --

MR. SPEAKES: There's been no change in that.

Q Do you still consider the case closed?

MR. SPEAKES: There's been no change in that.

Drake.

Q Yes?

MR. SPEAKES: What?

Q Yes, you do?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, there's been no change in that.

Drake.

Q There's a quote from one of the Congressmen outside. I forget whether it was Broomfield or Lagomarsino. It was that he -- meaning the President -- was very troubled about the way this thing has been handled from the beginning and he asked Ed Meese for a complete investigation.

MR. SPEAKES: Yes --

Q On the first part, did the President express misgivings about the way this incident has been handled from the outset?

MR. SPEAKES: As Lagomarsino said, the President is disturbed about the initial handling of the matter. Yes, he is disturbed about the initial handling of the matter, asked Justice to look into it and Justice will report to him.

Q Inasmuch as Customs is referring all requests over here to the White House, can you give us at least the pertinent ones, the 24 criteria?

MR. SPEAKES: No, I don't know what they are.

Helen.

Q You did say, though, that Customs would be amenable to the President's wishes in terms of --

MR. SPEAKES: I'm sure they will, but they will make their judgment. They will make their judgment on the basis of their customary criteria and what is legal and appropriate and what their -- the counsel advises them as far as the legal circumstances on the matter.

Q One of the congressmen said, referring to Reagan, he did say that he should be questioned again.

MR. SPEAKES: No, the President did not say that.

Q Can you tell us why -- what he said on the subject that might have been misinterpreted?

MR. SPEAKES: The President indicated that as far as the Executive Branch is concerned, we have carried out our responsibilities. As far as the Senate wanted to question him, that is a matter that the Senate will have to determine.

Q Yes, but the Senate has no ability to enforce its subpoena. I mean, it has to rely on the courts and the Executive Branch to enforce its subpoena, does it not?

MR. SPEAKES: That, too, is a legal question. Once the subpoena is served or not served, then it becomes a question for the Senate as to whether they wish to call on the Executive Branch either to serve the subpoena or to enforce its -- the appearance of the witness.

Q Well, will the President, if called upon, do both or one? That is, will he serve the subpoena if necessary?

MR. SPEAKES: That is a decision that has not been made and that would be a matter that, as I understand it, in the case of serving a subpoena that has not been served, that would be determined by the courts -- that the Senate would go to the court to request.

Q Might this be one of the criteria that Customs would take into consideration?

MR. SPEAKES: What do you mean?

Q That. There is an outstanding subpoena.

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know whether that is one of them or not, where there's pending legal action it's a check-mark there.

Q Larry --

MR. SPEAKES: Let me work to the front and I am coming right back. I'm working -- I go right from front to back. If you want to tomorrow, I'll start from back to front.

Q Tomorrow?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. I won't be here, but --

Q I want to ask a question about the first thing you said. Did anybody respond -- did anybody have anything to say after the President made this arms control statement, or was it just a kind of a declaration he made?

MR. SPEAKES: Well, it was an opening declaration that led into Secretary Shultz making a presentation on his meeting in Moscow followed by Bud making a presentation on that.

Q Was that evaluation as pessimistic of any chances for success --

MR. SPEAKES: No.

Q -- as we've -- as some people were led to believe in Moscow?

MR. SPEAKES: No, no.

Q What -- was it a -- how would you characterize the evaluation?

MR. SPEAKES: I would characterize it that it was an extensive opportunity for the United States to present its views to the Soviet Union on virtually every subject that would be discussed at the summit. At the same time it provided an equal opportunity for the Soviets to present their views on those subjects, or others that they might bring up. Secretary Shultz described it as vigorous and not hostile. That means that it was a rapid give-and-take between the two -- an opportunity for discussion back and forth. He indicated at some time the give-and-take was so rapid that when he finished -- when he made a statement that was being translated, if Gorbachev or Shevardnadze, whichever, wanted to interject something, they did at that point before the translation was completed, and then there was a give-and-take on that, so that kind of a vigorous exchange.

Q Was there any expression by either Shultz or McFarlane as to the likelihood of agreeing on a statement of principles or a joint communique or something on arms control?

MR. SPEAKES: No. No, there was no discussion of that. As we have said, we will not total up success of the summit measured by numbers of pieces of paper that are signed.

Q Well, I understand that. Let me just try one -- I -- the paper aside, I am trying to get a sense of what they thought might come out of the summit on the question of arms control? Is there any --

MR. SPEAKES: No, I don't think they have any -- Can't make that judgment, Lou. I think both sides will make a presentation. For our part, we hope that it would result in a -- in some basis for proceeding at the arms control talks. But that remains to be seen.

Q In your opening statement, Larry, you referred to -- you quoted the President -- you said it was a difficult negotiating task in Geneva -- Geneva is not in and of itself a part of this process. But just to clarify, are you just talking about the summit or about the arms talks?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, he is talking about the summit, but as a part of the overall process. That, of course, would include arms control talks and any future meetings that we would have with the Soviets.

Let me go on back, Ira. You had your chance. Joe.

Q One -- the Medvid case again. When you said that Customs would be mindful of the President's wishes when making a decision on the departure certificate, what are the President's wishes?

MR. SPEAKES: The President has not indicated, depending upon the circumstances that arise. Certainly he would take the advice of the Director of the Customs Service, as well as the counsel and take in all legal recommendations from his own counsel -- State Department, Justice Department, and Customs.

Q As of yet, you have not passed along any guidance to him?

MR. SPEAKES: We have not. They're handling this as they would other cases and they -- the courtesies extended to the Senate are what they would extend to members of Congress.

Q Larry, do you want to say anything about the published report yesterday that the U.S. government was aware of the fact that Medvid was going to be drugged by the Soviets before he was spoken to -- before he was re-interviewed by us?

MR. SPEAKES: Tom, I don't know anything about that. I don't -- I honestly don't know. The State Department is releasing their own medical reports -- medical reports that their doctors and psychologists had today, so maybe that will shed some light. I do not know.

Q This goes to the intercepted radio traffic between the captain and the Soviet Embassy, supposedly.

MR. SPEAKES: Last night?

Q This is what Safir had in his column yesterday.

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know.

Q Coming back to your statement, reading from the President once again, could you expand a little bit where you were talking about expectations and everything in Geneva? "We will chart a realistic course for further discussions among our negotiators in Geneva."

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. We hope that if we can have some discussions that -- at the summit meeting that would provide some understanding by either side of our positions on arms control that that would lead to

ability to make progress at Geneva in the arms control talks.

Q Do you anticipate numbers? And how specific do you expect --

MR. SPEAKES: No, I don't expect the President to talk in detailed numbers. I think he will be talking on a much broader frame. But certainly he -- prepared to talk numbers. But I don't think that's the -- two days of meetings do not provide an opportunity to deal with the complexities of arms control that have been discussed a long time.

Owen.

Q On Medvid, at the meeting this morning, did the President give an opinion on the action by Helms' Committee on issuing this subpoena?

MR. SPEAKES: No, he did not.

Q Did he address that? Does he have an opinion?

MR. SPEAKES: No, that's a matter for the Senate and the Committee.

Q So he is staying clear of that as of now, even though --

MR. SPEAKES: As far as the Executive Branch is concerned, we have exercised our responsibilities. The Legislative Branch, we're assisting them with the courtesies.

Q But this could create a legal situation where the Executive Branch is the enforcer of the subpoena, depending on how it's interpreted. Has he been given a legal understanding or interpretation of what he might be required to do under the law? And has he been presented with some options on whether he is free to --

MR. SPEAKES: He's been presented with a number of legal opinions on it, a legal discussion about what the options are there. But that's the extent --

Q Can you tell us what those options are?

MR. SPEAKES: As I said earlier, they are: If the subpoena is not served, then, if they request assistance by the Executive Branch, then, we make a decision on that. If the subpoena is served and they ask for a decision on enforcing it, then we make a decision on that.

So, let me go on back. Bob.

Q According to Senator Lugar, Secretary Shultz reported that he had "a very successful meeting" in Moscow, talked about discussing a raft of issues and talked about narrowing of differences. All of this seems to be somewhat at variance with what was coming out of the briefers immediately after that. Do you know if, in fact, Senator Lugar was accurately reflecting what Secretary Shultz said?

MR. SPEAKES: I think the tone, yes. The quote -- there was no quote that I recall called it "narrowing of differences."

Q You do recall a quote saying "a very successful meeting"?

MR. SPEAKES: On, yes. I think from the standpoint of the objectives Secretary Shultz set out to achieve -- that is, to air our position in some detail -- in great detail to Shevardnadze and in some detail to Gorbachev -- that it was successful. We presented it

in much more detail than has ever been presented to the Soviets -- arms control, regional issues, human rights, etc. So we -- it was successful from that standpoint.

Q I mean, do you notice a certain tension between what was said in the immediate aftermath and what was said today, a certain conflict? Or can you resolve that?

MR. SPEAKES: I think Secretary Shultz feels like -- and as I told you the day after, that the pessimism was in the eye of the beholder and not in the eye of the participant. As I said, that when a man walks out of a meeting and says, "We still have differences," that's obvious. I mean, that's a sort of a standard post-meeting statement.

Q -- Secretary Shultz didn't feel pessimism. He was merely --

MR. SPEAKES: Interpretation, yes.

Robin.

Q Larry, one of the Congressmen said, "The President thought Medvid should be questioned again." Then he later said -- or another Congressman said the President will have to make sure this man has his rights respected, paraphrasing. But it does appear that the President is very concerned about this case. Is it possible that, although technically it's closed, he personally would like to see this man interviewed again?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't think he's expressed an opinion on what is the Senate's business. Dole said the President did not insist on Medvid being questioned again. He wants to make sure the man's rights are protected.

Q Will he defer to the fellow who said he did near --

MR. SPEAKES: Dole was closest to the President.

Q Well, did he say it, Larry?

Q -- Larry --

Q Did he say it? Or didn't he say it? I mean, did he say that he wanted the President to be questioned -- I mean, Medvid --

MR. SPEAKES: No, he did not.

Q -- to be questioned again?

MR. SPEAKES: No, he did not say that.

Q Want him to be?

MR. SPEAKES: Walter.

Q Larry, has there been any discussion of the possibility that the President's radio address after the -- he was refused permission to go on Soviet television and the attempt to subpoena --

MR. SPEAKES: No. I need to take The Times to task and advise The Times when they're going to use a White House story to use their White House reporters. That clears me in this room.

I have questioned the participants in the meeting with Gorbachev. There was no discussion about U.S. -- President Reagan on television and no reply -- no one-word reply from the Soviets. The decision -- contrary to The New York Times story, and definitely

their lead -- I don't know where he got that. You got any explanation?

Q McFarlane's backgrounder.

MR. SPEAKES: That there was no -- Well, I asked McFarlane this morning. He said that never came up. Matlock said it never came up.

Q Did he say --

MR. SPEAKES: No.

The decision to do the VOA broadcast was something that I would say was taken four weeks ago in our planning for this. And the only pending request -- the only request we have made with the Soviet Union for television is the Charlie Wick letter. And there has been no reply either way.

Q The question is during the radio address, in light of the unsuccessful effort to get on Soviet television and the delay -- or possible delay in the release of the ship, is there any discussion that these may be seen as an affront by the Soviets?

MR. SPEAKES: No, I don't think so.

Q But has there been any discussion of that?

MR. SPEAKES: Not that I'm aware of. I have not participated in any.

Pat.

Q -- believe it would be taken that way?

MR. SPEAKES: An affront? VOA customarily broadcasts to the Soviet Union, as does Radio Moscow to the United States and other countries worldwide. So it's quite common that both countries are broadcasting through their respective services into each country.

Gene.

Q Larry, once more on the Medvid thing, Congressman Bob Lagomarsino said the President "did support letting him have another chance to describe his attitude about whether he wants to stay here." Did Lagomarsino misinterpret what the President said?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q That's not an accurate reflection of the President's view?

MR. SPEAKES: No.

Pat.

Q Do you have any comment on this letter apparently from four of the six hostages in Lebanon?

MR. SPEAKES: Anybody want to stay more on this?

Q Yes, I want --

MR. SPEAKES: Let me come back up front. Pat, you got the

first option.

Ben?

Q Larry, I know you went over this, but if you would clarify if the subpoena is simply served, is the ship free to leave American waters?

MR. SPEAKES: There would have to be a decision made then if the subpoena is served and the guy doesn't comply.

Q Well, the subpoena asks for him to appear on Tuesday.

MR. SPEAKES: That's right. Tuesday at 9:30.

Q They appear -- if they serve the subpoena today, is the ship free to leave?

MR. SPEAKES: I think there would -- the thing that would prevent them from leaving would be the -- or the thing required for them to leave is their certificate from the Customs. Customs would then make a judgment as to whether the subpoena was something to keep them or not keep them.

Q It's a question of whether it's served or whether it's honored?

MR. SPEAKES: Well, both. I think served is one thing, and if the ship says we're going tomorrow, which they're scheduled to do, then they would have to get their certificate. If Customs says go, then they go. If Customs says stay, then there's a question.

Q So Customs hasn't decided whether the subpoena has to be honored before the ship can leave U.S. water?

MR. SPEAKES: Or -- served or honored, they haven't decided.

Q But they will be guided by the President's wishes in that particular aspect of the matter?

MR. SPEAKES: Well, I think it would be a better reflection -- maybe -- they know how the President feels about the matter, that the Executive Branch has exercised its authority. They know how the courts stand -- four courts have ruled. Their decision will be what they make though, as far as the 24 criteria for giving a certificate of departure to a ship.

Q -- ask about that. They --

Q Have you got some guidance on what that means --

Q They know how the -- where the President stands? Do you mean they know that the President considers that the case is closed as far as the Executive Branch is concerned or do you mean they know that the President was quite disturbed about the initial questioning of this man and is concerned?

MR. SPEAKES: They know -- all of the above.

Q Well, then, how is that guidance because there are conflicting signals?

MR. SPEAKES: Well, no, they're not conflicting signals. They know that we feel like that the initial part of it is a matter for inquiry, and that is going on. They know that the President feels that the Executive Branch, through further questioning of Medvid -- exhaustive questioning of Medvid in circumstances that we believe were appropriate -- believes the Executive Branch has

exercised its authority. So, they will make their judgment on the basis of their normal criteria.

Q So -- one more -- so, in fact -- the last thing you said -- in fact, when they make their judgment, this sentence about knowing how the President feels really pushes them in the direction of not believing that the Executive Branch wants further questioning of this man?

MR. SPEAKES: I think what they will do -- there is a considerable body of legal opinion on the authorities. And I think they will have all those facts in hand when they make their judgment.

Q Will the President back them up if they make a judgment to let that ship go and a lot of people complain about it?

MR. SPEAKES: The President will certainly back them up, yes.

Where were we? Andrea?

Q I'm not clear on why Customs got into it in the first place and what you said earlier about not believing what we read in the paper. Are you saying that the position of Customs expressed in the newspaper today is inaccurate or that --

MR. SPEAKES: Well, yes, because the spokesman at Customs, who I've talked to twice this morning, was indicating that there are certain legal options that Customs has. One is to grant

the certificate of departure; the other is not to grant the certificate of departure. The emphasis in the story is on not to grant the certificate of departure -- in other words, blocking the ship's departure.

Q And did that spokesman indicate to you that they have, literally, not made up their minds as to which way it should be?

MR. SPEAKES: That is -- they have not -- I know they have not.

Q And can you go into -- can you explain what they base their decision on, other than --

MR. SPEAKES: What they will base their decision on?

Q What they will base their decision on.

MR. SPEAKES: They will base their decision on the criteria that are normally required to grant a certificate of departure. And there are 24 of them. I've only been given examples because the lawyer didn't have it with him when we talked.

Q And why did the Customs feel that, as a courtesy to the Senate, they had to be involved at all?

MR. SPEAKES: As it --

Q -- the Executive Branch was saying that the case was closed.

MR. SPEAKES: The courtesy extended was simply driving them from the airport to the dock at which time they walked up to the gangplank and talked with the captain.

Q Don't put in for --

MR. SPEAKES: So, that was the courtesy. When you -- when Senate staff people travel, they do get courtesies of local federal agencies -- Executive Branch agencies.

Q Can you say bureaucratically who's in charge of this? Is it Secretary Baker, is it Shultz, is it, I mean --

MR. SPEAKES: There are various agencies that play roles --

Q But, who's coordinating --

MR. SPEAKES: -- ranging from the State Department, the White House, the Justice Department, the INS, the Customs Service, the Coast Guard -- all -- been involved.

Q Who's making sure that everybody's on the same track?

MR. SPEAKES: John Poindexter has been chairing the interagency meetings last night and again this morning on that subject?

Q -- what subject was that?

MR. SPEAKES: On the subject of Medvid.

Q And was Baker --

MR. SPEAKES: The legal ramifications.

Q Was Baker here or who was --

MR. SPEAKES: Baker is not involved, but the Customs Service is involved, which is under Baker.

Q Why is Baker not involved?

Q Darman involved?

MR. SPEAKES: He's allowing his Customs Service, which is an agency of Treasury, to be involved.

Q Is --

MR. SPEAKES: Same thing as -- the Secretary of Defense wasn't in there, but the Coast Guard was in there.

Q Don't you get the picture by now --

Q Well, that's not his department --

MR. SPEAKES: The President wasn't in there, but Poindexter was.

Q Was there any --

Q Coast Guard's under Dole, Larry.

Q -- Transportation, Larry.

MR. SPEAKES: Pardon?

Q -- Secretary Dole --

Q -- Coast Guard's under Dole.

MR. SPEAKES: Oh, under Transportation. Secretary Dole wasn't in there.

Okay, Lou?

Q I'm not clear about something you said about the Times story. You're saying that the -- television -- to the Soviet Union is still a live option? I mean, the Wick letter's been sent for some time, I mean, and there's been no reply. Don't -- haven't we concluded that he isn't going to speak. Even if that story, you know, wasn't right in the particular, isn't that the conclusion that the administration's reached, or --

MR. SPEAKES: A prudent man who hadn't received a reply since January might conclude that, but on the other hand, the wheels of decision sometimes turn slowly in the Soviet Union and answers come at surprising times.

Q Then you still might get your invitation to tomorrow night's dinner?

MR. SPEAKES: That's true. (Laughter.)

Q Can we --

MR. SPEAKES: Ira?

Q -- the President's opening statement on Geneva -- he said there'd be no artificial linkages between the four areas. That sounds a little at variance with what we were backgrounded on at the U.N.

MR. SPEAKES: No.

Q Is he changing his --

MR. SPEAKES: No, no, no. We don't say you have to get out of Afghanistan before we can reach an agreement on doing away with all nuclear weapons.

Q But it would sure help.

MR. SPEAKES: That's the shorthand --

Q Is artificial -- I mean, nuance-wise here, what's artificial?

MR. SPEAKES: What we mean is, Ira, they've had arms control talks -- example: LBJ. It was -- those talks were scuttled, not over substance totally, but over Czechoslovakia. Arms control talks in '79; those talks ended without agreement, not so much for substance -- not entirely on substance, but over Afghanistan to a certain extent. So, the President believes if regional issues are resolved,

then it will naturally reduce tensions, from that will flow a desire to reduce arms.

Q Can we --

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, let's go. We --

Q Hostages --

Q Hostages --

Q Have we had any indications from the Soviets that they won't jam the President's --

MR. SPEAKES: No, we have not.

Owen?

Q You haven't received anything at all?

MR. SPEAKES: Now, what did I just say?

Q Well, you -- I said, "Have you had any indications that you have --

MR. SPEAKES: No.

Q You said, "No, we have not."

MR. SPEAKES: No, nor have we -- we haven't received nothing from the Soviets regarding the broadcast.

Q How about the hostages?

Q -- you said this morning about --

Q Let's go to the hostages.

Q -- Medvid's rights -- that he received all his rights --

MR. SPEAKES: With a legislative branch subpoena pending, he wants to be sure that it is properly handled, as far as --

Q What about -- subpoena and not --

MR. SPEAKES: Current, because it is our view that we have exercised our responsibility from the executive branch.

Bill?

Q Letter from the hostages?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, please.

Q Yes.

Q Is it real?

MR. SPEAKES: There's a few more that want to milk this cow one more time.

Q I think that everyone should milk it as long as they want.

MR. SPEAKES: Do you think so?

Q Ask away.

MR. SPEAKES: It's not bothering you?

Q Well, we're prepared to stay here, you know.

MR. SPEAKES: Are you?

Q As long as it takes.

MR. SPEAKES: Bob?

Q Two questions.

MR. SPEAKES: Two?

Q Two, yes. Number one --

Q I'm prepared to stay here.

Q -- you say this case is closed, but you've got Poindexter sharing interagency meetings -- last night and today, and what does "the case closed" mean?

MR. SPEAKES: Case -- the executive branch has carried out its responsibilities. As you know, the Senate Agriculture Committee has issued a subpoena. If the subpoena is not served, it presents certain legal questions as far as the executive branch is concerned. If it is served, it presents other legal questions as far as the executive branch is concerned. We would have to make decisions on those and we're reviewing the legalities of it, so when and if we are faced with a decision, we make it.

Q Okay, the second question. On the Customs spokesman last night, are you saying that he was misquoted in the various newspapers, or that in fact you -- over the course of this morning that the White House has suggested perhaps that they'd better --

MR. SPEAKES: No. He was not quoted fully, explained to reporters, including The Times reporter who he claims got that wrong. It's a bad day.

Q Did -- the White House call him back today?

MR. SPEAKES: -- Post do anything wrong today?

Q I'm just going to --

MR. SPEAKES: This is this guy. I wouldn't throw off on The Times.

Q He buried the hostage story, and while we're on hostages, what have you got to say?

Q It's --

MR. SPEAKES: No, now you've got to let your colleagues go ahead.

Q -- what Bob was saying, it's not that the White House pulled Customs back today and vetoed it.

MR. SPEAKES: No, the guy said --

Q Okay.

MR. SPEAKES: -- he was telling all of the options and those were two of them.

Yes, sir?

Q An aide to Jesse Helms said this morning that there is some doubt that the guy that was interviewed was actually the same

guy who jumped the ship -- (laughter) -- is the President confident that the man who was interviewed was Medvid?

MR. SPEAKES: All of the people that were involved in it, all of the agencies -- we have heard that report too -- all of the agencies involved --

Q Some woman in Canada

MR. SPEAKES: -- are certain that this -- the individual that was apprehended by the New Orleans police after he went to the jewelry store --

Q -- interesting ABC story last night, wasn't it?

MR. SPEAKES: -- and the one who was interviewed by State Department officials are one in the same, based on photographs, based on the birthmark, other identifying characteristics that were seen both times.

Q -- Jennings.

Q Did you see your broadcast last night?

Q -- hostages?

MR. SPEAKES: Okay, hostages -- what hostages. Our embassy in Beirut has informed us that the Associated Press Beirut bureau has received a packet of letters allegedly from 4 of the 6 Americans -- Father Jenco, Dr. Jacobsen, Doctor Sutherland and Mr. Anderson. It came in early this -- the information came to the embassy early this afternoon Beirut time, and we've seen reports that the AP believes the letters are genuine. We have not seen them and cannot confirm this. Until we see the letters, we cannot verify either that they are genuine or when they were written.

We remind the kidnapers that we hold them fully responsible --

Q Slow down a little, please.

MR. SPEAKES: Okay -- responsible for the well-being -- that we hold them fully responsible for the well-being of their captives, including Mr. Buckley and Mr. Killburn. And again, we call upon the kidnapers to release the Americans and all other hostages in Lebanon forthwith.

Q Would you consider negotiations now that this ultimatum is judged to be genuine?

MR. SPEAKES: The United States policy on negotiation with terrorists has not changed.

Q Even under this appeal it means nothing to the President?

MR. SPEAKES: It has not changed. The policy has not changed for reasons that we have stated many times that those who question that policy should fully understand.

Q But they say that you do negotiate with terrorists, you just call it something else, and that --

MR. SPEAKES: We do not negotiate with terrorists.

Q -- and that you ought to at least establish direct channel as compared to the indirect channels.

MR. SPEAKES: Well, we have no objections in discussions

with people who are holding hostages -- and direct discussions. But we do not negotiate.

Q How do you think that this is going to sound to them? To the hostages?

MR. SPEAKES: I cannot make that judgment.

Q -- who have written a letter of appeal -- urgent appeal?

MR. SPEAKES: I cannot make that judgment.

Q When you said that you didn't know if the letters were legitimate, do you know physically where the letters are now and whether U.S. officials at the embassy have studied them?

MR. SPEAKES: I do not know. My information is about one hour old, and I do not have that information as to whether the bureaus --

Q -- Beirut and the embassies.

Q Getting older --

MR. SPEAKES: Does the embassy yet have the --

MR. DJEREJIAN: No, not yet.

MR. SPEAKES: Okay. The latest we have, they do not have it. They hope to get them and look at them.

Q Do you consider what we've been doing basically the status quo and will continue doing what we are doing and there is no further steps in the way of sending an emissary there, see if anything more can be worked out?

MR. SPEAKES: Send an emissary where?

Q To Beirut.

MR. SPEAKES: To Beirut? We have a full embassy staff there that is actively involved there and in a number of other countries.

Q And they are going to operate under the same orders that they've always operated under?

MR. SPEAKES: Well, the orders have been and are continuing that we keep up all contacts possible and do everything possible to secure the release of the American hostages and we rate it a high priority in this administration.

Pat?

Q Have we sent any kind of warning to the kidnapers about what we might do if they do indeed carry out their threats about -- the hostages?

MR. SPEAKES: I do not know of any specific warning, but there are the warning -- including the one that I just issued.

Lou?

Q Is this viewed as an opportunity for some extraordinary action on our part to get their release whether -- accepting your -- your premise that you're not going to negotiate, is this some particular moment of opportunity to win the release of the hostages, or --

MR. SPEAKES: Lou, I don't think we can make that judgment yet, because we haven't seen the letters and don't know.

Q What do you say to the captors' statement that we have negotiated in the past -- in the question of TWA, Duarte in El Salvador, Mubarek in Egypt and Israel at times?

MR. SPEAKES: Well, you've thrown out a lot of apples and oranges. I could --

Q No you're not.

MR. SPEAKES: I could clearly take them one by one, but the policy remains the same.

Q Go ahead.

MR. SPEAKES: TWA, we did not negotiate the release of the TWA hostages with those terrorists who were holding them. We did have indirect discussions with them.

Duarte, we were not involved in that. What was the other -- Israeli what?

Q Israel let 1,154 Palestinians go in order to secure the release --

MR. SPEAKES: We covered that -- negotiate that and tell the Israelis what to do.

Q -- released three Israeli soldiers.

MR. SPEAKES: Pat?

Q The hostage families after their meeting with the President were encouraged because the President said that he apparently is willing to have talks, not negotiations, but at least have communication with the --

MR. SPEAKES: That's just what I said here.

Q And has there been any -- what is the level of communication, if any, that has been going on?

MR. SPEAKES: We'll not discuss the details of the communication that we've been involved. As we said, we've been in touch with a number of parties in the region, but we will not identify them nor -- our discussions.

Let me work the back a little bit. Paul?

Q A quick domestic question.

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, insert it.

Q -- on Gramm-Rudman and on tax reform?

Q Could I stay on this once more?

MR. SPEAKES: I grant him permission to insert a question. Go ahead.

Q The President's response on Gramm-Rudman and on tax reform? What'd he tell the leaders this morning?

MR. SPEAKES: He told the leaders exactly what I've been telling you -- pass it.

Q The Senate version?

MR. SPEAKES: The Senate -- yes. So --

Dale?

Q Won't accept a clean bill?

MR. SPEAKES: Won't accept a clean debt ceiling bill? We want them to pass it.

Dale?

Q Has the President been briefed on this letter? And assuming that the letter is genuine, is he rejecting the appeal for negotiations?

MR. SPEAKES: He has been briefed on the news reports of the letter and the Embassy information from AP. The President's policy has not changed as far as negotiation with terrorists and will not change.

Q Would it be correct for us to say that he's

rejecting that demand?

Q Yes.

MR. SPEAKES: Well, once again, we have not seen the letter to be able to specifically do it. If the letter did happen to be not authentic, then you would rejecting the demand of a letter that was not authentic.

Q Well, if it is authentic --

Q But if it is authentic --

Q -- it still sounds like he's rejecting.

MR. SPEAKES: If it is authentic, the President's policy has not and will not change on negotiations with terrorists.

Q And what do --

Q -- he's rejecting it?

Q And what conclusion do you draw from the fact that Killburn and Buckley were not included?

MR. SPEAKES: I cannot draw any conclusion on that.

Q Buckley's dead.

Q Larry --

MR. SPEAKES: Okay Helen.

Q -- can you announce the week --

MR. SPEAKES: Oh, next week. Yes, everybody'll be worrying about that.

Okay, you got the weekend, and you got Monday. Tuesday: bipartisan Congressional leadership; Geneva luncheon -- I'm not sure what group's coming in then. That's it. Wednesday: Cabinet meeting scheduled at 11:00 a.m. -- could be a Cabinet Council. Thursday --

Q Affirmative action?

MR. SPEAKES: No. Thursday, the President will spend some time in the afternoon on Geneva preparation. And on Friday, he meets with Secretary Shultz. And, that's about all I have.

Q Are there any more interviews left, Larry.

Q -- radio address --

MR. SPEAKES: Don't have anything on the speech.

Q What about --

MR. SPEAKES: Anymore interviews? Yes. The President next week on Tuesday will be interviewing with television representatives of five European countries?

Q What about address on arms control?

MR. SPEAKES: Television address?

Q Yes.

MR. SPEAKES: I don't have anything for you on that yet. Probably the first of the week I'll be able to --

Q -- tape the Saturday radio address?

MR. SPEAKES: I think so now. I thought at one time there was a decision not to, but I see it on the schedule -- I'm not sure.

Q You mean you'll tell us at the beginning of the week about the --

Q You mean a week -- you mean a week from Saturday? Will the T.V. -- European T.V. be immediately available, or do you know what the release time on that --

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. I think some of them will be broadcasted live and your satellites always intercept it so, what difference does it make?

Q Star Wars --

Q And when -- the interview's Tuesday afternoon?

Q Can you describe the conversation the President had with Senator Evans yesterday on the textile bill? Did he --

MR. SPEAKES: Think Senator --

Q -- assure him that he would veto him?

MR. SPEAKES: I would be almost certain that he did.

MR. BRASHEAR: Evans said that.

MR. SPEAKES: Pardon?

MR. BRASHEAR: Evans did say --

MR. SPEAKES: Evans said that. Our position on legislation of the type that's pending up there has not changed and that is that we would oppose it. Now, I don't know whether the President said --

Q I understand that --

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know what he said.

Q -- there's supposed to be a letter from the President to the Senator to go out today. Has that letter gone out?

MR. BRASHEAR: That's not gone out yet and I'm not sure if it will.

Q What about the Treasury appropriations bill? Passed -- sign or veto?

MR. SPEAKES: Don't know yet. Haven't analyzed it.

Dave?

Q Larry, how does the President respond to states like California that say that this action today is a violation of state rights on unitary tax?

MR. SPEAKES: It's something that we've considered for a long time. We discovered -- discussed all aspects of it and our response to that is contained in our statement and the statements that Treasury -- they have a background briefing this afternoon, by the way.

Q What have you heard from the Soviets about the TV appearance?

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

12:51 P.M. EST