

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

PRESS BRIEFING
BY
LARRY SPEAKES

April 6, 1982

The Briefing Room

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12:01 P.M. EST

MR. SPEAKES: A reminder for those who are going to Jamaica and Barbados, you should bring your passports with you in case you get somewhere --

Q What if we gave our passports to Kim?

MR. SPEAKES: You are covered.

The President's schedule today is light. He is having lunch with the Vice President in the Oval Office and I think he will spend the afternoon getting ready for the trip to Barbados and Jamaica.

Q Howell is going to spend the afternoon getting ready for the trip also. He is having his hair done.

Q He is going to sleep, of course.

Q Can we have a photo opportunity at the lunch?

Q You are jealous because I quoted Sam and not you.

Go ahead, Mr. Speakes.

MR. SPEAKES: There will be no daily press briefings here tomorrow or Thursday but we will have a briefing in Barbados at 11:00 a.m. on Friday.

Q Do you have the full schedule today of the --

MR. SPEAKES: We will have the schedule. Mr. Weinberg has just been dispatched to the State Department to get it hot off the press and we will have it here in a little while.

I judge we will put on a lid after this briefing until about 3:00 p.m. and if nothing is going on, we will put on one at 3:05 p.m. and go home.

Q How long will Haig be on the trip? Will he go all the way or --

MR. SPEAKES: I haven't checked on that, Helen. I would judge that he will not.

Q The Barbados lunch and --

MR. SPEAKES: For the lunch on Thursday -- through the events of Thursday, but I don't know whether he will stay in Barbados or not. I don't know what his plans are after the official business ends.

Q What is the subject of his Saturday broadcast?

MR. SPEAKES: The Saturday broadcast at noon is the Caribbean Initiative program.

Q Larry, do you know anything about something I heard from London -- a possible Reagan peace plan for the Falklands under which the Argentines would retain sovereignty but lease the administration of the islands to Britain?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't --

Q I heard it on Nightline.

MR. SPEAKES: I have heard that mentioned too in press reports but I would not characterize that as a U.S. initiative.

Q Whose is it?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know.

Q Is it news to you from --

MR. SPEAKES: It is not news to me. I think that it is a matter that has been raised in Parliament.

Q What would we do if the Argentine government tries to invoke the Treaty of Rio?

Q What was the question?

Q The Treaty of Rio -- what would we do?

MR. SPEAKES: What would we do? I don't really have anything beyond what the President said yesterday on the situation --

Q He didn't say anything.

MR. SPEAKES: -- but as far as the Treaty of Rio, I think that it is just something that we will just wait and see what happens. We are seeking a diplomatic solution to the problem and we will continue to work for that and I think that the President is willing to do anything necessary and anything that both governments would like for him to do to be of assistance.

Q Well, doesn't the Treaty of Rio call on all the signators, of which we are one, to come to the aid of any other member state signatory which is attacked from outside?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, but I don't think it provides for -- as the State Department words it, hemispheric collective security measures in specific circumstances.

Q Well, what specific circumstances?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't think that I need to dissect the treaty here for you today. I don't look for anything except us to pursue over the next several days a diplomatic solution.

Q Like what? What are you doing?

MR. SPEAKES: We are talking to both sides and --

Q How?

MR. SPEAKES: How do you mean? How are we talking to them?

Q Who is talking? Where?

MR. SPEAKES: Our embassies, their embassies are talking and we are certainly willing to do whatever is necessary.

Q Well, Larry, I understand that Secretary of State Haig is meeting this afternoon with the British Ambassador and tonight with the Argentinian Ambassador. Is this a U.S. attempt at mediation?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know that these meetings have been formally scheduled yet but nevertheless, as I say, we will continue to do whatever is possible, whatever will lead in our opinion to some resolution of the matter. It is a difficult situation and if we can be helpful we will be and that really comes from the top.

Q That is a very detached view of what could be a very dangerous situation.

MR. SPEAKES: I don't disagree with you that it's a delicate situation, and that's why we're being very delicate in our public statements.

Q Would you characterize this as an active U.S. effort to determine if we can mediate?

MR. SPEAKES: I would let you do the characterizing on that.

Q Well, there is active diplomacy underway now, which was initiated by the President?

MR. SPEAKES: Well, as I described it earlier, we prefer to work in the area of quiet diplomacy, and I don't think it would serve any useful purpose in us announcing any meetings that may or may not be taking place.

Q Well, are the British disappointed with our lack of real support?

MR. SPEAKES: You would have to ask the British. We haven't received any indication that they are, nor the Argentines either.

Q Has the President just turned this over to Haig as his responsibility, and say: See if you can get these parties together? That's the point; there's no task force here at the White House. It's strictly Haig and the regular channels of diplomacy?

MR. SPEAKES: Well, I think the President is personally involved, as he has been in many of the other foreign policy situations.

Q Which is to say hardly at all or what; how would you characterize it?

MR. SPEAKES: Well, you know you've seen what's happened here from the night of the phone call, and the President's own, personal statements on it in the Rose Garden and then yesterday in the Oval Office. And I think you can characterize him as deeply concerned and definitely involved from a personal standpoint and in conversations with his Secretary of State on the matter.

Q Well, is it serious enough, do you think, for him to cancel the vacation part of his Caribbean trip?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't see that that would help either way. It hasn't come in to play. Although, I'd assumed it would in this room here today.

Q Why not? I mean you characterize him as seriously concerned, and you talk about the situation as if it is very serious, and yet he's going ahead with his vacation?

MR. SPEAKES: Sam, I think you have been around the White House long enough to know that wherever the President of the United States is, he's perfectly capable of performing any and every function he can perform sitting here in the White House.

Q -- with Argentina about the treatment of the people on the Falkland Islands?

Q What?

Q The house arrests and so forth.

Q What was your question?

MR. SPEAKES: Have we been in touch with the government of Argentina about the treatment of people on the Falkland Islands. We've been in constant communication, but I don't want to go into specifics on the diplomatic exchanges. This morning, Helen, you asked me about the number of Americans. I think there were five or six on the west Falkland or east Falkland Islands. There're about 30 or 40, all totalled, in the entire chain of Islands.

Q Are they still there?

MR. SPEAKES: As far as I know, they are; and we haven't received any reports to indicate that they've experienced any difficulties.

Q What do they generally do, Larry; why are they down there?

Q There's 30 or 40 Americans on the Islands --

MR. SPEAKES: I guess they do what everybody else does down there, Sarah. (Laughter.)

Q I'm trying to get at what --

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know.

Q Are they oil geologists, or --

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know.

Q -- an advanced landing, or what?

Q They drill sheep.

MR. SPEAKES: I've no idea.

Q Larry. (Laughter.)

Q I mean herd sheep, sorry.

Q The fact that the British armada --

Q Don't let me do this.

Q -- operation; is that fact engage, in any way, any NATO mutual defense or NATO treaties should the British forces become involved with the Argentinian forces?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know. So many of these questions are of a speculative nature that it just doesn't serve any useful purpose for me to try to speculate what if, what if.

Q Is any effort being made to --

Q Well, the troops are -- forces are being moved; they are part of the NATO defenses. Is NATO involved in the planning of this operation? Is NATO involved in any way?

MR. SPEAKES: Of course not.

Q No obligations are triggered in so far as --

Q Is Al Haig still commanding NATO?

MR. SPEAKES: I'm not an expert on the NATO agreements, but I would be absolutely certain it was not from my --

Q Is there any effort to make up the hole if the British fleet leaves the NATO --

MR. SPEAKES: The what?

Q The sailing of the British fleet to the Falkland Islands leaves a hole in the NATO marine strength, I assume.

MR. SPEAKES: I don't judge that it does anything, seriously. (Laughter.)

Q What an indictment of the Royal Navy. (Laughter.)

Q The President has no view of whether Mrs. Thatcher should resign, I take it.

MR. SPEAKES: No, I think Mrs. Thatcher spoke to that this morning in her session with her Parliamentary colleagues.

Q She was almost booed out of, you know, the House.

MR. SPEAKES: It's one of those days, isn't it?

Q Does the President still plan to speak at Parliament when he goes in June?

MR. SPEAKES: He sure does.

Q Is he going to San Francisco at the end of the month?

MR. SPEAKES: No plans to go to San Francisco. What's going on there?

Q The publishers' meeting.

Q Well, let's go back to the defense budget.

MR. SPEAKES: Back to the defense budget?

Q Well, Tip O'Neill says he thinks the President is flexible, now, on his defense spending request.

Q Well, of course, Sam. There're going to cut it.

Q Well, but you see, yesterday, the President is still yelling and screaming about every penny and Tarawa, which he pronounced Tarawa or something. And I don't quite understand whether he is flexible, or whether he is not.

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