

Office of the Press Secretary
(Kingston, Jamaica)

PRESS BRIEFING

BY

LARRY SPEAKES

The New Kingston Hotel
The Independence Ballroom

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5:41 P.M. EST

MR. SPEAKES: Questions have come on the British statement that has run on at least, I know, on one wire service. We have nothing except to indicate that we've seen reports and the Secretary of State is about to embark on a trip to London relating to the situation in the South Atlantic. And I'm sure that the entire range of matters involving the South Atlantic situation will be discussed in London and, other than that, I think it would be inappropriate for us to comment from here.

There has been a question, too, about Secretary Haig being delayed departing Washington. I think it's now in the early morning hours for London. There is no reason of substance that he's delayed, other than the fact that it took time to make the proper arrangements for the plane and so forth to leave Andrews.

Q Is the President going to talk to him before he departs?

MR. SPEAKES: Helen, there are no specific plans to do so, and I can check and let you know if he is.

Q You mean the British gave an ultimatum like this and did not inform us?

MR. SPEAKES: I didn't indicate that.

Q Well, what did you indicate? You said you didn't know anything beyond press reports.

MR. SPEAKES: No, no, no; I said we're aware of press reports.

Q Well, are you independently aware?

MR. SPEAKES: Pardon?

Q Are you independently aware of the press reports?

MR. SPEAKES: Well, without going into the diplomatic exchanges, we've had a constant and full communication with the British government on the entire range of matters on the South Atlantic. And I would not see anything to indicate that this was a surprise to the United States.

Q Are you aware of any action taking place at the U.N. level, Security Council?

MR. SPEAKES: I'm sure that there're consultations, but it would be up to the --

Q No request has been made for any meetings so far?

MR. SPEAKES: That the British government would take whatever action they would like in the U.N. and whatever they would wish to raise. I'm not aware of anything that they're proceeding with at that point.

Q When did the President find out? Was it before or after he decided to dispatch Haig?

MR. SPEAKES: About the British statement? Helen, I can't set a timetable on it. I would judge it was probably afterwards.

Q Then after he arrived in Jamaica?

MR. SPEAKES: Well, I don't want to be that precise on it. But the fact is that Secretary Haig was not sent in response to this statement.

Q What is he assuming on the development in Southern Atlantic?

MR. SPEAKES: The development is what?

Q The development in the Southern Atlantic.

Q Argentina's invasion of the Falklands.

MR. SPEAKES: Well, we've made a number of statements on this. We wish both parties will seek a peaceful solution. We've offered to be helpful in any way that we can on the U.N. resolution, which indicated that we prefer that the Argentines withdraw. But the bottom line is that we prefer that both parties seek a diplomatic solution.

Q Has Haig gone to pose this position of the U.S. in London?

MR. SPEAKES: Pardon? I didn't understand.

Q Has Haig gone to pose the position of the U.S. in London?

MR. SPEAKES: I --

Q What's Haig's purpose in --

Q Has Haig gone to bolster the U.S. position in London?

MR. SPEAKES: Bolster the U.S. position in London? Well, I think both sides understand the U.S. position. Haig is going to be helpful at the President's direction.

Q Would you put it that the United States is being amicus curia in the present situation?

MR. SPEAKES: I wouldn't adopt those terms. The United States is willing to be helpful in any way, but other than that, I don't think we need to pick up any terms out of the statement I --

Q As helpful as you are.

MR. SPEAKES: That's right.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

5:45 P.M. EST