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[Press Guidance] - February 12, 1993 [2]

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INTERNATIONAL NEWS SUMMARY **February 12, 1993**

U.S. Faces Delicate Task in Bosnian Negotiations

Secretary of State Christopher said that the Administration's decision to play a more active role in settling the civil war in Bosnia does not mean that the U.S. will lead the peace talks. Neither Mr. Christopher nor other Administration officials have said where the Administration's place will be if not at the table. The Administration is already in an uncomfortable position because, by entering the talks, it will have to meet face to face with people the Bush Administration said should be tried as war criminals. Serb leader Radovan Karadjic's abrupt departure from New York as Bosnian Muslims launched an offensive in Sarajevo intensified the difficulties of negotiating a peace settlement. (Washington Post A32, New York Times A10, Los Angeles Times A4)

Bosnians Split on, Europeans Welcome, U.S. Peace Plan

The Government of Bosnia offered cautious approval of the Administration's plan to negotiate an end to the Balkan war, but the people of Sarajevo were disappointed no military aid was in the offing. European leaders applauded the adminstration's initiative, seeing it as proof that Washington had abandoned a hands-off policy; "(t)he provision of United States ground troops is absolutely vital," said one British official. (Los Angeles Times A4, New York Times A10)

U.S.-Iranian Tensions Grow as Revolution Grows Old

As Iran commemorated the anniversary of its 1979 revolution this week, it is clear that disillusionment, discontent, and apathy are widespread. The United States appears no closer to figuring out how to deal with Iran than it was 14 years ago. In recent weeks Iran has sent a flurry of tentative signals about rapprochement with the Clinton Administration but there are growing indications that Iran may become to the Clinton Administration what Iraq was for Bush and Libya for Reagan. (LAT A1, WP A29)

U.S. in No Hurry to Complete GATT Pact

The Clinton Administration, abandoning hope for an early completion of long-stalled global trade talks, said it will ask Congress for an indefinite extension of its authority to negotiate new trade rules. The President and other officials in meetings yesterday sought to reassure EC Commissioner Sir Leon Brittan and Japanese Foreign Minister Michio Watanabe that the U.S. would not pursue protectionist policies. (WP A8, LAT A2)

Panel Urges U.S. to Set Export Targets

The chairmen of some of the nation's largest corporations said that Federal trade officials should establish temporary market-share targets for American exports. These targets were needed, they said in a report, because Japan still imports a smaller percentage of its manufactured industrial goods than any other major industrial nation. (NYT D1)

Aspin Foresees Smaller Defense Cuts

Defense Secretary Aspin said he will propose smaller defense spending cuts than the $10.8 billion he has ordered for the armed forces, raising new questions about how much President Clinton can shift to defense programs. He said the actual reductions would be smaller because he plans to increase spending for other defense programs. Meanwhile a document calling for substantially larger defense cuts than the President has proposed has evoked interest because it was prepared under the supervision of Gordon Adams, who has left the Defense Budget Project for a top-level budget post in the Clinton Administration. (LAT A7, WP A2)

Southern Sudan Called Another Somalia

Television pictures and stories emerging from southern Sudan are eerily similar to those six months ago from Somalia. As with Somalia last fall, people are beginning to call for large-scale foreign intervention. (WP A29)

Russian Leaders Disagree; Armenians Lose Gas Pipeline Again

Russian President Boris Yeltsin and Speaker of the Parliament Ruslan Khasbulatov failed to reach agreement on how to divide power, and Yeltsin's spokesman later said preparations for a referendum, which Yeltsin had suggested be postponed, would continue. Meanwhile, a gas pipeline supplying the only fuel to Armenia exploded again in the same region of Georgia where it exploded on January 23. (WP A30, LAT A2)

Deng Purges Army

Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping has completed an extensive purge of China's military and will reshuffle key government posts next month in his final bid to ensure his legacy endures. Deng, who turns 89 in August, wants no one to challenge him or his place in history. (WP A1)

Bosnia Peace Plan: Opinions and Analyses (cont.)

Stephen Rosenfeld calls the administration's Bosnia policy "lame." Conceding that President Bush left the President a "foul hand," Rosenfeld nevertheless concludes from yesterday's announcement that President Clinton "is going to be very cautious about engaging American military power," a policy that may offer Bosnia "the agonies of final dismemberment." (WP A27)

In an adjacent op-ed, Charles Krauthammer says that the President does not know what he wants to do on foreign policy other than "to do good." This, he says, is a "dangerous impulse," particularly in the Balkans, because when you take over a negotiation you become responsible for reaching an agreement and for enforcing it. The "first, grievous" cost of this policy, he writes, is now coming into view -- the prospect of American ground troops in Bosnia. (WP A27)

In a news analysis, reporter Julia Preston at the United Nations, says that the Administration must now confront "the steely principle of negotiation: that whoever wins the war -- in this case, the Serbs -- expects to win the peace." She says the key contribution the Administration has made is to enhance the possibility of tough enforcement of an agreement, which would be a "revolution in U.N. peacekeeping." (WP A32)

The Los Angeles Times lead editorial calls the new policy a "huge disappointment." It charges that "President Clinton on Wednesday ratified former President Bush's policy and, in fact, offered the Serbian agressors in Bosnia the strongest indications yet that they need not fear the United States." (LAT A10)

Writing in the New York Times, however, Brian Beedham of the Economist says that the administration is right to try to improve on the Vance-Owen plan. (NYT A33)

Pool Report #2
2/12

Meeting with members of Congress -- Act 1

President Clinton and Vice President Gore met at about 1:15 p.m. with 16 House Democrats (list available from press office) in the State Dining Room. (Tables had been cleared out.) Mr. Clinton and Mr. Gore shook hands and chatted briefly with each of the members before taking their seats in front of the fireplace, facing the Democrats who were seated in a semi-circle.

Rep. James Oberstar said, ""For some of us it's been a draught of 12 years,'' referring to the fact that it had been a long time since he and other Democrats had been in the White House.

""For some of us, it's the first time,'' said Rep. Rosa DeLauro.

""Really? You're kidding,'' the president responded.

Another Congressman quipped, ""It's not even Christmas.''

""It's sure not Christmas,'' said Clinton. ""I can tell you that.''

Act 2
President Clinton and Vice President Gore met with a second group of House Democrats -- 17 of them -- at about 3:10 p.m., also in State Dining Room. As Mr. Clinton walked in the room, Mr. Gore ran in behind him.

They both greeted each of the Congress members. Rep. Gibbons of Florida asked the president, ""Is it OK if I talk to you about taxes?'' Clinton responded: ""That's what we're here for.''

Mr. Gore said to Congresswoman Meek of Florida, ""How do you like our new attorney general? Isn't she great? Y'know, she and Carol Browner are from the same neighborhood.''

After the group was seated (same format-- Clinton and Gore facing semi-circle), Mr. Clinton was asked by reporters what kind of feedback he was getting from the Congress members. ""Very helpful,'' he said.

Question: Do you think the Republicans will go along with you?
Clinton: ""I don't know. Right now I'm gathering their ideas and opinions.''
Are you going to cut spending on the space station and super collider? Clinton: ""Tune in Wednesday.''
Have you started writing your speech? Clinton: ""I've started putting elements of it together. It may not be as much of a speech as a talk.''
-- Susan Baer, Baltimore Sun

PRESS GUIDANCE -- 2:00 PM
Friday, February 12, 1993

General Powell's Roles and Missions Report

(BACKGROUND: General Powell briefed at noon on the "Roles and Missions" of the military. The report, which was prompted by Senator Nunn, will be sent to Secretary Aspin and Congress. Aspin will assess the report and provide comments to the President.)

Q: What does the President think of Chairman Powell's report on roles and missions? Doesn't it fall well short of what Senator Nunn called for last July?

A: -- The President has asked Secretary Aspin to review the report carefully and provide him with a thorough assessment as soon as possible.

-- During the campaign, the President strongly endorsed Senator Nunn's call for a thorough review of duplicative roles and missions among the four military Services.

-- As we consider reductions in military spending that reflect the end of the Cold War, it is even more essential that we eliminate unnecessary overlap and redundancy to the maximum degree consistent with U.S. national security interests.

-- We will have more to say about the issue after the President has had the chance to discuss it fully with Secretary Aspin, Chairman Powell and other military leaders, Congress, and others.

-- (If pressed:) Refer to Secretary Aspin for further details.

Haiti- HIV Cases

Q: Has the President made a decision on the 270 HIV-positive Haitians at Guantanamo Bay?

A: -- We are reviewing the issue.

Q: Does that mean the President is backing away from his campaign promise to drop the ban on HIV-positive persons from entering the U.S.?

A: -- We are reviewing the issue.

Ukraine's Nuclear Stall

Q: Does President Clinton place an "unrealistically low priority" on the danger of loose nukes in Ukraine and elsewhere in the former Soviet Union?

A: -- President Clinton recognizes the extreme seriousness of the nuclear proliferation problem posed by the breakup of the Soviet Union.

-- Among the first leaders he called was President Kravchuk of Ukraine. He emphasized to him the importance of ratifying START I and acceding to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and pledged U.S. help in dismantling the weapons in Ukraine. The U.S. is engaged on a number of fronts to press the Ukrainians on rapid START ratification.

-- This week the President took great pleasure in congratulating the Belarusian head of state, Mr. Stanislav Shushkevich, on that country's vote to ratify START I and accede to the NPT. Washington is actively looking at ways to help Belarus rid itself of the nuclear weapons on its territory.

-- Mr. Clinton has also conferred on the nuclear breakup problem with Russia's President Boris Yeltsin.

Trade/GATT

Q: Have you abandoned hopes for an early completion of GATT?

A: -- The U.S. wants to see the Uruguay Round of GATT negotiations come to a successful conclusion.

-- But to accomplish this, we will need to see further progress, including on the negotiations to improve market access for goods and services.

-- We have high expectations for solving these problems in the Uruguay Round.

Q: Will you ask Congress for an indefinite extension of your authority to negotiate new trade rules?

A: -- The Administration will be requesting an extension of fast-track trade authority from the Congress so that we can continue the GATT negotiations and seek to bring them to a successful conclusion.

-- The details of the extension request, including the length of time of the extension, is still under review.

Germany: Lufthansa Hijacking

Q: Who was the hijacker? Nationality? What was his motive? Is the U.S. investigating?

A: -- The suspect is being arraigned this morning on federal air piracy charges. The FBI is investigating this hijacking, and I would refer you there for further information.

Q: Was this an extraditable offense?

A: -- Under The Hague Hijacking Convention, there is an obligation to either extradite or pursue prosecution locally. Hijacking is also a listed offense in the U.S.-German Extradition Treaty.

Q: Will the United States Government honor an extradition request?

A: -- I am not going to speculate.

Q: Did Germany violate the "no take-off" policy?

A: -- The "No Take-off" Policy (Annex 17 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation) is not an absolute bar to allowing a plane to depart. Take-offs are allowed when "necessitated by the overriding duty to protect human life...."

-- Clearly, German authorities and the pilot judged that a take-off was necessary in order to protect the passengers and crew.

-- We are pleased that this hijacking was resolved with no loss of life and with the apprehension of the hijacker.

Q: What does this incident say about security at Frankfurt airport?

A: -- Clearly, an incident such as this requires an investigation by airport officials, and such an investigation is taking place.

Q: How many Americans were aboard the plane?

A: -- There were 18 Americans who were aboard the plane.

Arab-American Prisoners: Mistreatment

Q: Have the American detainess in Israel been mistreated?

A: -- During a consular visit on February 4, Mohammad Omar (who was released yesterday) alleged that Israeli officials mistreated him during his detention.

-- We immediately protested to israeli authorities and requested that they investigate the allegations.

-- I am not going to detail the specific allegations.

-- Israelis have promised a comprehensive examination of the circumstances of the arrest and detention.

Nixon Trip to Moscow

-- President Nixon is on a private visit to Moscow and met with President Yeltsin Thursday.

-- The White House knows about the trip and was kept informed about President Nixon's plans.

-- President Nixon has played a useful role in the past in analyzing the situation in Russia.

Watanabe Visit

Q: Foreign Minister Watanabe yesterday met with the President and the National Security Adviser. What did they talk about?

A: -- The President and Minister Watanabe held a cordial 30-minute meeting and discussed a wide range of bilateral and multilateral issues.

-- Minister Watanabe is also having meetings on a broad range of issues with the Secretaries of State and Defense, the United States Trade Representative and the Vice President.

-- Japan is an important ally and our largest overseas trading partner. It pays more than 50 percent of the support costs for U.S. forces in Japan which deploy to the Persian Gulf and other areas.

-- At the same time we remain concerned about unresolved market access issues with Japan and over Japan's increasing global and bilateral trade surpluses.

-- We cooperate with Japan on a broad range of global and regional issues including China, Korea, Cambodia, Russia and the G-7 Summit, which this year will be in Tokyo on July 7-9.

Q: Did Minister Watanabe deliver a tough message on trade during his meeting with the President, saying that Japan will retaliate against any U.S. trade actions?

A: -- Trade issues were addressed. We place great importance on our bilateral relationship with Japan. At the same time we do have concerns about trade, and we will pursue them.

-- It would be premature and speculative to talk about retaliatory trade actions. We are currently reviewing our policy toward Japan, and will be looking at it comprehensively, including trade.

North Korea: IAEA Inspection

Q: Can you give us an update on the stand-off between North Korea and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)? Will the IAEA issue a "special inspection" order?

A: -- We fully support the IAEA's efforts to implement nuclear safeguards in North Korea, and for this purpose to have access to any site needed to fulfill the safeguards agreement with North Korea.

-- Discussions continue between the IAEA and North Korea on access to sites within North Korea's primary nuclear facility at Yongbyon.

-- If North Korea continues to refuse to allow the IAEA the access it seeks, the IAEA has the right to request that North Korea accept a special inspection as provided for in articles 73 and 83 of North Korea's nuclear safeguards agreement with the IAEA.

-- It is for the IAEA Director General to determine whether a special inspection is necessary.

-- We hope that North Korea will cooperate fully with the IAEA.

Q: Will you ask the United Nations Security Council to take up this matter?

A: -- That is a matter for the IAEA Board of Governors to decide. (FYI: The U.S. sits on the Board.)

Prince of Wales Visit: Presidential Snub?

Q: The British press is reporting that the President has snubbed the Prince of Wales, who is visiting Washington next month, by not agreeing to meet with him. What is your reaction?

A: -- The Prince of Wales is here on a private visit to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the founding of The College of William and Mary.

-- An appointment with the President was not requested.

-- The Prince has been invited to, and has accepted, a dinner with the Vice President.

ACDA's Future

Q: Why is the Clinton Administration trying to kill the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA)?

A: -- The Clinton Administration strongly endorses the role of the ACDA and is moving to name a director of the agency.

-- No decision has been made about eventual restructuring of the agency.

Former Yugoslavia

(BACKGROUND: Yesterday Secretary of State Christopher announced that the President has decided to take the following six steps with regard to the former Yugoslavia:

1. The United States will engage actively and directly in the Vance-Owen negotiations, bringing the weight of American diplomacy to bear. In order to ensure the most effective possible communication, President Clinton has named Ambassador Reginald Bartholomew, who currently serves as U.S. Ambassador to NATO, as our government's envoy to these talks.

2. The President is communicating to the Bosnians, Serbs, and Croatians that the only way to end this conflict is through negotiation. While no settlement can be imposed on these parties, we believe each party must be prepared to accept a resolution that falls short of its goals.

3. The President will take actions to tighten the enforcement of economic sanctions, increase political pressure on Serbia, and deter Serbia from widening the war. We remain prepared to respond to conflicts caused in Kosovo by Serbian actions, and we will work to strengthen the international presence in Macedonia.

4. The President is taking steps to reduce the suffering and bloodshed as these negotiations proceed. He is calling on all parties to stop shelling and other violence; calling for enforcement of the no-fly zone over Bosnia; urging that humanitarian need be allowed to flow to those in need; and considering further actions to promote greater delivery of aid. The President is also seeking the creation of a war crimes tribunal at the United Nations.

5. The President has taken steps to make clear to all concerned that the United States is prepared to do its share to help implement and enforce an agreement that is acceptable to all parties. If there is a viable agreement containing enforcement provisions, the United States would be prepared to join with the U.N., NATO and others in implementing and enforcing it, including possible U.S. military participation.

6. The President has consulted widely with our friends and allies on these actions. In particular, the President spoke with President Yeltsin and is sending Ambassador Bartholomew to Moscow before he returns to New York for the negotiations. END BACKGROUND)

We have not yet received official replies to the U.S. initiative. However, the President did have very positive telephone conversations with several world leaders, and the initial unofficial reports we have seen are very positive.

(The President spoke with President Yeltsin, Prime Minister Major, Chancellor Kohl, and UNSYG Boutros-Ghali. President Mitterrand was in Cambodia. The President sent letters to a wide range of leaders and notified Congress Wednesday of the decision.

Q: Why is the U.S. pressing for a War Crimes Tribunal now? Won't that impede the parties (Serb) willingness to participate in talks?

A: 1) The War Crimes Tribunal will help promote the sense of peace by making it clear there will be a price for barbaric crimes against humanity.

2) We believe moving forward with a Tribunal now will help address the goal of peace by making it clear that this country will not tolerate such actions.

3) Participation in negotiations does not preclude pursuing the goal of War Tribunals.

Q: Is the U.S. willing to participate militarily in implementation of an agreement?

A: -- The U.S. is prepared to join the UN, NATO and others, to help implement an agreement that all parties are willing to accept, including possible U.S. military participation.

-- We will ask NATO to step up its contingency planning.

--- NATO can provide the organization, and command and control structure, needed to make an agreement work.

--- In NATO discussions, U.S. has been willing to consider any role where we can best contribute to a real solution.

--- We do not envision NATO acting alone. Russia and others would be welcome to participate.

Q: (IF ASKED) Does that include ground forces?

A: -- The kind of enforcement necessary and respective roles depend upon the nature of the agreement and the degree of its acceptance by the parties.

-- It is premature to say whether some ground forces in concert with NATO would be required.

Q: What happened to campaign promises? To use of air strikes? To lifting arms embargo?

A: -- Since last August, President Clinton has indicated that the U.S. should engage in much more active and aggressive efforts to try to bring peace to the former Yugoslavia.

-- This policy does just that.

-- We believe that the direct and active participation of the United States can make a crucial difference with our Allies and with the parties.

-- Because we can make a difference through active engagement we should give the negotiations a chance to work.

-- We will increase political and economic pressures, including tighter sanctions enforcement.

--- We'll explore with allies and others their views in this regard.

-- If an agreement with enforcement provisions can be reached that the parties can accept, the U.S. will join with the UN, NATO and others to help implement it, including possible U.S. military participation.

-- This is the key step that makes the chances of success greater.

Q: What will you do about the detention centers?

A: -- The international community has repeatedly called on all parties to close the camps and to release all detainees. In our view, this should happen without delay.

Q: How will you intensify delivery of aid?

A: -- The continuing humanitarian nightmare has us gravely concerned.

-- We have worked with international relief organizations and others to maintain a lifeline into many areas, including Sarajevo and other parts of Bosnia.

-- We will continue to do our part, along with others, to ensure that adequate food, shelter materials and medical supplies are available for distribution.

-- The parties committed themselves at the London Conference to permit the unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance. We call on them to respect those commitments.

-- We will be looking at ways to get more aid through and will send a governmental team to assess the situation.

Q: But people are dying now?

A: -- An agreement imposed on the parties will not last. An additional effort must be made to find a solution that the parties can support and have confidence in.

-- With the help of U.S. leadership, we believe a real solution can be found.

-- Part of that solution is to work to assure the parties that the international commitment will be there to implement and enforce it, so that the parties know they can trust it.

-- Meanwhile, the international community can step up its humanitarian efforts, put Serbs on notice through No-Fly Zone enforcement and tighter sanctions.

-- The international community must also follow the Kosovo situation closely and insist that the Serbs not precipitate a conflict there.

-- These steps can aid the search for a fair solution and make clear there are lines which can't be crossed.

-- We will undertake active diplomatic efforts to implement these steps now; they help rather than hinder the prospects for getting an agreement.

Q: If you get involved in implementation isn't it open-ended? Won't they just start fighting again when troops leave?

A: -- The better the agreement and the more willing the parties are to accept it, the less need there will be for international enforcement.

-- We will ask NATO to step up its planning. It is too early to speculate on what will be necessary and the eventual terms of withdrawal.

-- We have made clear this is a key question which must be answered in any military options.

Q: What are your reservations about Vance/Owen? What will you try to change?

A: -- The parties have not accepted the Vance/Owen plan as it now stands.

-- Our reservations stem from two key questions:

- o Is it one that the parties can accept?
- o Will it work? That is if they agree, can the parties trust the solution?

-- These factors are related. The parties are more likely to accept an agreement they know will be implemented. They are more likely to implement an agreement they believe to be fair.

-- Our special envoy, Ambassador Reginald Bartholomew, will be addressing these issues directly in the negotiations in an attempt to help Vance and Owen work out a solution that the parties accept and will implement.

Q: What will you do if there is no agreement, or if the parties fail to implement what they agree to?

-- Our efforts will concentrate on helping make these negotiations succeed. If agreement proves impossible, we will review our options at that time.

-- If a viable, enforceable agreement acceptable to the parties can be reached, we are prepared to join the UN, NATO, and others in implementing it, including possible U.S. military participation. Under those circumstances, i.e., with a strong multilateral presence in Bosnia, we would expect all parties to comply with their commitments.

Q: Why is this conflict important enough to talk about involving U.S. forces? What about other areas, e.g., Nagorno-Karabakh, etc.?

A: -- This conflict, particularly if it spreads to the Kosovo or other areas of the region with large minority populations, has the potential to generate a Balkan war. The U.S. has important NATO allies, Greece and Turkey, in the Balkans, and has an interest in the continuation of political reform in the states in the region that have only recently emerged from a tragic communist past.

-- The human tragedy in Bosnia requires an international response. We have been making a major contribution to alleviate suffering. Together with international relief organizations and other concerned nations, we're going to be looking at additional steps to alleviate the suffering.

Iraq - Terrorist Bombings

(BACKGROUND: There have been several terrorist bombings in northern Iraq since mid-January against Kurdish targets. State posted a press notice yesterday condemning them.

UNSCR 687 is the Gulf cease-fire resolution which, among other points, demands Iraq cease all support for and sponsorship of terrorism.

UNSCR 688 was passed after the Kurdish rebellion and demands Iraq cease repressing its own people and allow humanitarian aid.)

Q: What is your view of the recent terrorist bombings in northern Iraq?

A: -- We strongly condemn these acts of terror. There is a pattern of evidence over many months that suggests the Iraqi government's responsibility for most, if not all, of these attacks.

-- Iraq's continued sponsorship of terrorism and its continued repression of its own people are violations of United Nations Security Council resolutions 687 and 688.

-- This Administration remains determined to see Iraq comply fully with all the United Nations Security Council resolutions.

Salman Rushdie

Q: What is the President's position on the Iranian "fatwa" sentencing Salman Rushdie to death?

A: -- We condemn this sentence. It is one of the many examples of Iran's support for international terrorism that deeply troubles this Administration. This Administration strongly opposes terrorism and strongly supports freedom of speech.

Q: Will this Administration meet with Rushdie?

A: -- We have no such request and will not discuss hypotheticals.

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release February 12, 1993

The President met today with the following members of Congress at 1:00 p.m.

Representative Tom Barrett (WI)
Representative Lucian Blackwell (PA)
Representative Glen Browder (AL)
Representative Jerry Costello (IL)
Representative Ronald Dellums (CA)
Representative Cleo Fields (LA)
Representative Maurice Minchey, (NY)
Representative Maroy Kaptur (OH)
Representative Jill Long (IN)
Representative Bob Matsui (CA)
Representative James Oberstar (MN)
Representative Ed Pastor (AZ)
Representative Nick Rahall (WV)
Representative Peter Visolosky (IN)
Representative Pat Williams (MT)
Representative Rosa Delauro (CT)

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release February 12, 1993

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
IN PHOTO OPPORTUNITY WITH DEMOCRATIC CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS

State Dining Room

3:08 P.M. EDT

Q Mr. President, what kind of feedback have you been getting, sir? What kind of feedback you've been getting from the congressmen and --

THE PRESIDENT: Very helpful.

Q Do you think the Republicans will go along with you?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I don't know. Right now, I'm gathering their ideas and opinions, and we'll see. I hope so.

Q Are you going to cut spending, sir, on the space station and the supercollider?

THE PRESIDENT: Tune in Wednesday. (Laughter.)

Q Have you started writing the speech?

THE PRESIDENT: I've started putting the elements of it together. It may not be as much of a speech as a talk.

END 3:10 P.M. EST

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release February 12, 1993

PRESS BRIEFING
BY GEORGE STEPHANOPOULOS

The Briefing Room

1:35 P.M. EST

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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release February 12, 1993

PRESS BRIEFING
BY GEORGE STEPHANOPOULOS

The Briefing Room

1:35 P.M. EST

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: The President is meeting with a couple of groups of members of Congress this afternoon, and then his economic team later this afternoon. Any questions?

Q Can you tell us what the plans are for -- we're hearing so many rumors of full-court press afterwards, traveling all over the country and Cabinet, too, and so forth. What's in the works?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, the President will have a full-court press to make sure the American people understand his economic plan and understand what it's going to do for the country -- the kind of change it's going to bring to our economy and people of this country. So, yes, we're going to be working very hard.

We don't have any set travel plans ready yet. But I expect that the President will be traveling to talk to the American people about his program.

Q Is a bus trip being considered, George?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I don't know about that.

Q What is the format?

Q Why not say no?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: On a bus trip? I think it's highly unlikely. (Laughter.)

Q It's easy to say yes or no --

Q He's going to different cities and finding places where they're having a convention and drop in? What is --

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: No. We're working on the plans right now. We just don't have it set.

Q George, besides jawboning what can the President do if the drug companies are still reluctant to negotiate in good faith with states or with HHS?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: The President can pass an initiative that guarantees universal immunization and that calls for -- one example could be the possibility of having the federal government buy the vaccine and then distribute it through public health centers and other outlets.

Q So it's his intention to move toward that goal or to see if this can be done through negotiations first?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, the President has set forth a three-part program. Number one, put money in the stimulus package now so that we can have vaccinations begin immediately for kids this summer. Number two, start negotiations with the pharmaceutical companies so that they open up the process to states that right now aren't getting vaccines at the appropriate price. And finally, have an initiative that guarantees universal immunization.

Q Can you explain please how it is that the expenditure of government money to buy vaccines is going to create jobs?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: It will have a small job creation effect in just preparing the centers and having the people work the centers and get the vaccine out over the summer, absolutely.

Q But most of the money is going to be spent to purchase the product that's on the market, is that not correct?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: No, not on the stimulus package. That's going to go to build the infrastructure for distributing the vaccine.

Q I'm just talking about -- the money is going to be spent to build facilities?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, not simply to build facilities, but to make sure the vaccination services can be put out to the widest array of people possible. It will go --

Q And you're anticipating that people need to be hired to do this?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Oh, sure. Improve community service and outreach, improve public education.

Q So what this then is like a government job, is that correct?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Not necessarily government jobs, but it could go to grants, to nonprofit public health centers which will then hire people.

Q You would acknowledge, however, that the purpose of that particular phase of the stimulus program is primarily social and not economic, wouldn't you?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Oh, I think in this particular instance it's primarily social. It will save money over the long term. But the other aspects of the stimulus package will clearly create jobs.

Q Is the stimulus package now available as a candidate for other social goals that the administration may see fit to achieve?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, the stimulus package is to address current needs.

Q I understand that.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Absolutely. But it will also have a job creation effect and that is the primary purpose of the stimulus package.

Q Are there other social objectives, apart from job creation, that -- and apart from this one to be achieved through this stimulus package, so called?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, I think one of the President's primary goals throughout all his policies is to make sure we do what we can to give our kids a better start --

Q No, I understand that --

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: -- in the country.

Q I'm just asking whether there are other, other than the vaccination or -- are there other social goals that are to be achieved through this package?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: The major purpose is jobs. We will also be having programs that address children's health and other decisions, possibly education.

Q In the package?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: It's conceivable, sure.

Q George, this morning the President used a figure of a million additional immunizations as a result of the initial part of this program. Do you know how many children are being immunized annually now? A million on top of what?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I'm not exactly sure. I'd have to get you the facts but we can get them from HHS. They have a full fact sheet available and we can get it out to you.

Q Secondly, there appeared to be implied threat to go after the drug companies' favorable tax treatment for research and development if they weren't reasonably on prices for vaccines and other necessary drugs. Is that a fair interpretation?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, I don't know that the President has anything against drug research. In fact, he's a strong supporter of drug research. What he pointed out is that the pharmaceutical companies are also spending an awful lot of money, I believe a billion dollars, on advertising and lobbying expenses and that which is not related to research. Obviously, we all support drug research to get the best vaccines, the newest vaccines out into the market and to the American people. What is objectionable is the high cost in other areas, which is leading to high costs for vaccines for the American people.

Q Those costs are tax deductible now, too. Will that continue to be the case or is that a point of possible pressure if they're not --

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, I think it's something to look at but the President hasn't made any decisions.

Q What other stick does the government have in these negotiations?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, I think the government has the ability to push forward an initiative that would provide for universal immunization.

Q Well, if you say you don't do this -- if you don't negotiate these agreements with the states, we're going to buy up all your vaccines? I mean, I don't understand how this --

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, again, I don't know whether we have to presume necessarily a completely adversarial relationship. We're going to enter into the discussions, we want to have good negotiations and try and do what we can to get broad availability.

Q Does the President believe the drug companies are profiteering? And I wish we could have the malt for this. Does he believe in simply poor management? I'm watching your man with the time -- with the clock and am hoping I catch you before he does that. (Laughter.) Does he believe the companies are profiteering or does he believe it's simply poor management?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I don't know the President would use that word, but what we have to watch is that drug prices have escalated at far greater than the rate of inflation in the last 10 years.

Q He used that word today.

Q He did -- profiting.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Profiting. And we've got to get control of that because we can't have a situation where Americans are paying far more for the same drugs than Europeans and others are. For instance, as he said today, a polio vaccine costs $10 in the United States and it costs just $1.80 in Britain and $.77 in Belgium. Something's got to be done to turn that around.

Q Where's the onus, though? Where's the problem? Is the problem bad management or is the problem greed?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, I think the President thinks we can do a better job of getting more vaccines at better prices to the American people and the drug companies have to do their part.

Q In the economic message on Wednesday, will there be an element for a short-term health plan such as capping rising costs while Mrs. Clinton makes the effort to develop the long-term plan, or will that wait until the --

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I think the President will address cost control in the long run in the health care plan that will come out later. There could be other elements of cost control in the short-term plan, but the bulk of it will be in the long-term plan.

Q Will that be presented as part of the speech Wednesday, the short-term piece of that?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: It's not inconceivable.

Q Will there be short-term taxes for health, universal access, such as cigarettes and liquor consumption taxes, dedicated to health?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, the President hasn't made any final decisions on that. That's one of the issues the task force is looking at.

Q But that would be announced by Wednesday if he reaches that decision?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Again, not necessarily.

Q In the Wednesday's speech, do you think the President will talk at all about the national service program?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: It's one of his prime legislative goals -- I would expect that.

Q George, two questions on the middle class, just so I can get this straight in my mind. Talk of a middle class tax cut, where does that stand now? Is that likely, unlikely or just something that, given the new budget deficit numbers, is unlikely at this point?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, I think again, I would just go back to what I've said time and time again from this podium -- the package will be fair. But the President hasn't made all of his final decisions yet on the tax package.

Q In whose eyes?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: And the American people will see it and think it's fair.

Q Will the middle class have to sacrifice more than had been led to believe during the campaign?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I think the President said that all the American people will have to contribute to the kind of change we're fighting for. But the wealthiest Americans will be asked to do the most.

Q George, can you tell us what percentage of young children now are vaccinated, what percentage would be if the President's program, proposed today, would go into effect, and what it would cost to vaccinate all children?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Right now about half or less of two-year-olds are fully vaccinated. In some inner-city areas the rate is as low as 10 percent. And one of the indications we saw of that was the rise in measles in '89 to '91.

I do know that it will save money. We think that every dollar spent on vaccination for measles will save about $10 in health care costs down the road. But I don't think that I have any real good statistics on how many people would be immunized under this. Eventually it will be universal.

Q This is far from universal, is that correct?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Excuse me?

Q What the President is doing today, with $300 million --

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Oh, no. The long-term policy would lead toward universal. Right now the real problem is with preschool kids. Once you get in school, about 95 percent of the kids are immunized. But the rate before that is far lower.

Q That's what I'm asking -- that young children, that it will be far from universal among the under five-year-old set even with the President's proposal?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: With only the first phase of the proposal. If you take all three phases together it would lead towards universal immunization.

Q What are the time frame for all three phases?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: We'd like to get it done as soon as we can. But clearly, we'd have the first -- the first two phases we can start immediately.

Q What would the first phase cost, George?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: We don't have the final figures on that yet.

Q Many more billions?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Excuse me?

Q This is $300 million, and I'm under the impression, even if you get a great deal with the drug companies, it would cost many billions.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I think many billions is probably too high. But I just don't have a strong estimate right now.

Q When do you plan to submit legislation for the third phase?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I think one of the things we want to look at as we prepare the economic package and health care package and figure out exactly where it fits. But it's something he wants to move on very quickly.

Q How does this money break down between purchase of the product and money devoted to dispersing it? There are states that have these arrangements where -- like Vermont right now has an arrangement, also has a huge measles epidemic right now.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I'd refer you to HHS. I believe that most of the money in the short-term plan goes towards dispersing, education, processing.

Q This is what the drug companies contend is the real problem as opposed to --

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, it is a big problem. It's one of the problems we're addressing. But for the specifics, go to HHS.

Q Does the President right now know what he's going to propose to the Congress next Wednesday, or is he still working on options? Is he working on his address? Do you know what he's doing? (Laughter.)

Q Say yes or no to that one. (Laughter.)

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Yes. (Laughter.)

Q Is he still looking at options; does he have decisions yet to make?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: He's meeting today with his economic team, with members of Congress, and is still working on finalizing some of the plans. But he knows the general direction.

Q George, can we get back to the drug pricing of it? A couple of weeks ago on Capitol Hill there was a subcommittee hearing with the vice president of Bristol Myers there testifying. And he left no doubt at least in his mind that there's very little room to bring down prices, especially of new drugs, he was saying, because they are investing all they can into research and development, he's claiming. But there's very little percentage going

back to the stockholders. And today the President sounded very harsh, very critical of that kind of character assessment of where the money's going. Can you address that a little more?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Yes. We just don't buy that explanation. Drug company profits are very high. Drug costs have escalated out of control at far higher rates and far faster rates than those of our competitors. And we think that something can be done about it.

Q Who else is involved in this traveling road show, post-economic speech? Cabinet secretaries? The Veep? Spouses? Who?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I believe that -- I don't know if everybody will be going to the same place at the same time, but I expect that Cabinet secretaries and others will be also going out into the country to help tell the American people about the program.

Q Who are the others?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: We could have other members of the White House staff, the Vice President.

Q George, the First Lady went after the insurance companies yesterday, and the President went after the drug industry today. Is it fair to infer that this is an effort to build some public support in advance of the big speech Wednesday?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, these are all initiatives that the President cares deeply about. And there are entrenched interests who are trying to fight the initiatives that he cares about. And he's just going to make that clear and push forward.

Q George, if his talks with the drug companies fail -- you said the President's taking an initiative which would lead to the government buying all the vaccines, but obviously at current prices. So can we get an estimate of the cost of such a policy?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: We're working on that now. HHS is looking at that. We just don't have the final cost figures.

Q Not even an estimate, a broad estimate?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: No.

Q George, in Putting People First the President proposed eliminating the tax deduction for lobbying expenses. I haven't heard him say anything about that since, and I don't understand that he spoke to business leaders about that yesterday. What's the status of that? Is that in the package?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I think it's something we're still looking at, but no final decision.

Q But you're not committing to putting that in his proposal?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Not ruling it in or out yet, but it's something that the President did talk about and is looking at very seriously.

Q George, over at the Pentagon today the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs outlined a long and exhaustive effort to revamp the military services. It's been in the works for six months or a year over there. What's the reaction over here to that program, and does it go far enough in your view?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, the President has asked Secretary Aspin to review the report and get back to him with a thorough assessment as soon as possible. As you know, during the campaign the President strongly endorsed Senator Nunn's call for a thorough review of all the roles and missions of the military. We have to make sure that as we bring down defense spending, we don't have any unnecessary overlap or redundancies, and that's what the President is committed to. But he's going to take a good look at General Powell's report along with Secretary Aspin and we'll have something to say later.

Q -- so far has it been the direction that you want to go, or do you think you'll want to go deeper?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I think let's let the Secretary take a look at it first, then we'll comment.

Q George, the President has been very up front about his desire to cut troop strength levels below -- in Europe below what the Bush administration had proposed. Powell specifically warned against that today. Are you saying -- would you continue to say that that's unacceptable, coming from the Joint Chiefs, that we are going to see faster troop reduction?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, the President has called for faster troop reductions, but we're going to take a look at General Powell's report, make an assessment of it, and then we'll get back to you.

Q George, the President has also spoken about the redundancy in the service. And General Powell said today -- seemed to suggest -- Air Force as it has now. Does the President believe that?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: The President stands by what he said before. And Secretary Aspin is preparing his budget figures right now. But again, on the specifics of General Powell's report, we're going to review it right now, and that's all I can say.

Q George, on the members of Congress, the Democrats he's meeting with, is he previewing the package, or is he asking their support, or both, or what?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I think he's doing a lot of things. Number one, he's asking the members what they think about the economic program, the jobs program, to find out if they have any suggestions for the program. He wants to hear what they're hearing. He wants to hear what's on their mind and get their ideas. At the same time, he wants to give them a good sense of the direction that he's going, the principles behind his plan, and the kinds of things that he wants to announce next week. But, again, he hasn't made all the final decisions, but he feels this is part of the decision-making process.

Q Do you have any details?

Q George, the President has repeatedly said that an important component of addressing the deficit is getting health care costs under control and dealing with that crisis. Since his program won't be ready until May 1, how is he going to address that? Is he going to put part of that off limits until later this year? Or will that be specifically addressed in --

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I think it's something, as you know, he talks about it quite often and I would think that he would

probably talk about it again next week. But the specifics of the legislation won't be coming until May.

Q In order for him to -- he has said so often how large a chunk of expected growth and spending and in the deficit, health and health care composes -- doesn't he have to have an estimate of how much his program will save in order to make any projection about how much deficit reduction he's going to achieve by his overall program? Is he going to assign a number to that even though he doesn't have the program yet?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I don't think so. No, not right now. I think he's got an idea in the end of -- he knows that if we don't get health care costs under control, there's no chance of controlling the direction of the deficit. He will try to get some savings in the short run, but also, over the long term, a lot of the savings would go towards access as well. But there's no -- we don't have a good estimate right now on the overall savings over the long term, and it's not necessary for the first phase of the deficit reduction.

Q So you're saying that he's going to announce -- there'll be a number of projected deficit reduction?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Yes.

Q And it will not include any savings of any size. It might be ascribed to health care reform --

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, no, there will be some health care savings, but the bulk of the health care savings is achieved through the long-term plan.

Q So it doesn't come in the first term if there is more than --

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, no. The President is committed to moving forward on the health care plan immediately.

Q I understand. I'm talking about the savings. I'm not talking about the plan.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: You can start to achieve savings in the first term. The President believes you can.

Q Well, how does he get the numbers for Medicare and Medicaid in the budget that he'll submit next month if he doesn't have at least a projected cost of what the country's going to save with the health care program that will be coming later this year?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: No, he can have some projections on the savings he can achieve in the short run. But we're working on this all at the same time and we're just -- we'll have the final numbers on the health care plan when it's ready.

Q But you won't have a -- so any four-year or any out-year deficit projections that would go with this speech and ultimately with his budget will have to be a bit of a question mark, will it not, until your health care plan is finished, right?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I think the four year can be fairly certain, as certain as these things can go. And you might be able to get additional savings through the health care plan. But we don't necessarily -- we wouldn't take credit for any savings that we don't set out how to achieve them. When you get into the fifth, sixth, seventh, eight years, it's a much trickier proposition anyway. But it's something we'll address in the long-term health plan.

Q I thought you said, George, previously that the budget and even through four years would not reflect any health care numbers until the program was done and the numbers were vetted -- that is, you wouldn't include that as a savings in the --

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I'm trying to make a distinction. There are some short-term health care savings we can get in the first four years. That is separate from the long-term plan.

Q Like reducing Medicare?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I don't have the specifics but there are some savings you can get through controlling costs.

Q George, you said a while ago that the President did not want to cancel the space station, and yet, the report today that he's proposing a cut of about 40 percent, which supporters say would, in effect, kill the space station. What is his intention with regard to the space station?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, again, I don't have the specifics, the final decision, but the President is not going to cancel the space station. And he's going --

Q Will he make large cuts in it, though? Huge cuts?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, he's going to do what he can to make sure we don't lose any jobs, but he's looking at the program at this point and he will not cancel it.

Q So will you warn us away from a report that there will be cuts of 40 percent?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I don't have the final numbers. The President is looking at the space station. He wants to do what we can to achieve -- to stop any cost overruns and achieve the best management possible in the system. But he will not cancel the space station.

Q But does he recognize that at a certain point if he cuts by a certain amount then there can't be a space station?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I suppose there is that certain point. I don't believe that he's going to propose anything that would cancel it.

Q How about delaying it? Is it more likely he would put it off a few more years?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I think what he's looking at is how to best manage the system and control the costs.

Q What is your guidance about these reports? Because a 40-percent cut is virtually killing it.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Again, I can't give any more specific guidance than the fact that we're looking at it at this point and we're looking to find the best way we can to achieve savings.

Q Is he of the opinion that the space station is a worthwhile national project?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Yes, absolutely, and it can be. But we have to make sure that it's managed in the best way possible.

Q Will that announcement come in the speech? Will there be --

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I would expect so.

Q Will there be a kind of specificity in the speech or --

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I think there will be accompanying documents to the speech, certainly, that would lay out the plan in greater detail.

Q When will those be made available, George?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Not sure yet.

Q Will it be early in the day?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: If they're ready.

Q How about a briefing schedule?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: We're going to have a full series of briefings on Wednesday.

Q In approaching his budget, did he set a definite figure that he wanted to bring the deficit down and revenues? I mean, did he have an overall figure and then work down?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, he's got -- as he said in the past, he wanted to work towards the goal of $145 billion in deficit reduction.

Q Right. And he said yesterday that he could achieve that?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, he hopes to get as close as he can, certainly.

Q Is that still a go?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Absolutely.

Q Is there any reason for us to think that the figure in Putting People First on collection of increased taxes from foreign corporations that do business in this country will be different in this budget? In other words, do you all expect to get as much money as you said you were before?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: We're looking at all the numbers right now, and we hope we can get as much money out of every area that we can.

Q But what would have changed about that number, since that is not affected by the increased deficit projections, or presumably anything else?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: The whole idea would be on the best way to implement the policy and the amount of money you can get in the short term. But we're looking at it right now.

Q What could possibly be a reason that the President wouldn't be as confident as he was before that he could get as much money --

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, it depends on if the IRS believes that they have the collection resources in place to get the money.

Q You mean you've gotten this new and discouraging report from the IRS that they just can't do it? (Laughter.)

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: No, I didn't say that. I said we're looking at it right now. We're trying to get as much money as we can.

Q You suggested that's a reason why the number might be different.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: That would be one -- if the number were different, that would be one possible reason why it would be different.

Q I guess that's true, George.

Q Has he learned anything from his meetings with the businessmen? Has he changed anything?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I don't know that he's changed anything, but they were very good meetings.

Q Since he doesn't have an IRS commissioner nor an assistant secretary for tax policy, who's evaluating the IRS --

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: The Secretary of Treasury.

Q You said that he hasn't changed anything from these meetings. Is he really consulting and looking for the suggestions?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Oh, absolutely. And he's had these meetings throughout the campaign and before yesterday as well. I don't know that he's had any specific changes directly tied to these meetings, but the plan is still in the works.

Q What is he learning from these meetings then?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I think one thing he's learning is that a lot of the American people, including the business community, are committed to real change and want to help achieve it.

Q How has he learned that? I mean, how does he know that?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Through listening. He listens closely.

Q What is he doing on the three-day weekend on the budget and other matters? Can you give us as detailed a look as possible?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: He'll be meeting with his economic team and members of Congress today. I believe he has some more members of Congress coming in tomorrow. He'll give the radio address tomorrow as well. I'm not sure on the time -- I think it's 12:06 p.m.

Q What is the subject? You can tell me.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: The economy. (Laughter.)

Q Stupid.

Q Gays in the military. (Laughter.)

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: No, we're saving that for Wednesday night. (Laughter.)

Q What about Sunday and Monday?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Sunday, I think he's just going to church and probably spend most of the time in the Residence.

Q Any other travel possible for Saturday?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Not that I know of.

Q Sunday, Monday?

Q Golf --

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I don't think so.

Q And do you plan business as usual on Monday --

Q Wait, wait -- get to Monday.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Monday, there will be more meetings with members of Congress and continued work on the State of the Union and others. And then Tuesday same.

Q How about the operation of the Press Office on Monday? Normal business day?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: We're normal business.

Q It's a holiday.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I know. We're tough. (Laughter.)

Q -- any way yet to block the bonuses the Bush administration granted to his employees at the end of the last term?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, the President's very concerned about that.

Q Did the checks go out?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: We're still looking into -- the President has sent a letter to the Director of the Office of Personnel Management to try and ask for a complete review. In fact, wait, I think I have it.

Q Do you know the answer -- do you know whether -- if it were my check it would have been cashed the next morning.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I don't think all the money has gone out. Some certainly has. Not of all of them went out right away.

Q Is there a Clinton director of the Office of Personnel Management or is that --

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: There's an acting director, Patricia Lattimore.

Q What does it say in the letter?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: It says: "As President, I am determined to restore respect to public service and to remind all

federal personnel the public service is the public trust." It goes on. And then the action is: "To help me determine if additional safeguards are needed for the federal award systems, please initiate a review of awards granted to the headquarters level of major departments and agencies during Fiscal Year 1992 and during the first four months of Fiscal Year 1993." He wants to know if they were granted consistent with established criteria and procedures and whether new safeguards are needed. And he wants the results within 45 days.

Q When did he send the letter?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I believe it went out today. I think he signed it last night.

Q Does he want steps taken to stop checks?

Q Can we get a copy?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Sure.

Q If we could find out definitely when it goes out?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Yes, we'll put it out as soon as --

Q George, but at this point you haven't found the legal device to block the --

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: We're review it right now, but the President is very concerned by these reports. He thinks it smells fishy and he wants to get to the bottom of it.

Q How would the President decide? Is the President looking to find out, a, whether he can block them or whether they may have been justified?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, both. I mean, he wants to find out if they were given out consistent with established criteria and procedures.

Q How much does he think is involved and how many departments?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, we know what we read and it seems like there were several departments involved and it reaches into a couple, $300,000 at least.

Q He hasn't ruled out the possibility that they may have, in fact, been legit?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Hasn't ruled it out, but he's suspicious.

Q What was that?

Q Question please?

Q There were allegations made yesterday please here from the podium that the Bush administration has spent one-third of the money in one quarter of the year. Can you give us some facts that would back up that allegation?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: We can get them from our -- but it is my understanding that they spent about 30 percent, maybe a little over, of the money in the first quarter of the year. That's all I know, but we can try and get the backup for you.

Q Did that money go to career civil servants or to political appointees who were losing their jobs?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I don't think we know fully yet. It was clear some went to political appointees.

Q George, can you tell us how important to the success of this presidency is this speech on Wednesday?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, I don't know about the speech, but the economic program is the centerpiece of what the President wants to achieve. There's no question about that.

Q But this speech itself -- how important is that?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: The speech is a big speech; there's no question about that.

Q The speech itself, how important is that?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: The speech is a big speech. (Laughter.)

Q Is it an overview of everything? Does it include foreign policy, or are you just limited to the economic, or is it an overview of what the whole administration --

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: It will focus on the economy.

Q Has he started writing it?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Yes.

Q And with whom is he working on it?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Lots of people are going to be involved in this. Lot's of people have input.

Q Sort of like the convention --

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: No, no. David Kusnet is the lead speechwriter.

Q George, what about Sessions? Now that you have to wait a couple weeks for Janet Reno to get confirmed, will this whole thing be put on hold until after she's confirmed?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I think the President did indicate that he would like to have the new Attorney General have a chance to review it.

Q That mean they're putting it off for a least a month?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Probably.

Q Going back to the bonuses, if I could?

Q Susan Graham has said that anything much under $700 million would effectively jeopardize the supercollider down the road. Can you say that the President's still committed to that level?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I don't have the specific level of funding, no.

Q George, can I clarify something on the budget deficit number? You talked about, a couple of minutes ago, 145 still

being the operative number. Was that not the number that Clinton used yesterday with --

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: No, it was the goal and he wants to it as he can.

Q But that's not the range he was talking about yesterday. He said 130 to 140. He never mentioned 145. What's --

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I mean, he's trying to get as close to 145 as he can. It might be 140, it might be a little less, it might be a little more. But that is what we're moving towards.

Q It might be a little more?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: A little more than 140.

Q George, is 130 to 140 a good range, because that's what he told the business leaders yesterday?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I know that's what the business leaders came out -- we're still working on the final numbers. I think it's all in that range.

Q George, a clarification please. On this point that the Bush administration spent 30 percent of the money in a quarter of the year -- are you just talking about the White House personnel budget or are you talking about federal government-wide?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: White House. More than personnel but it is the White House budget.

Q And on the bonuses, George, if the review shows that the money was improperly disbursed, will you go after it?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I assume the President will ask that it be returned if it was improperly disbursed. But we don't know yet that it was improperly disbursed.

Q George, are you sending -- obviously, you're suspicious it might have been.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Yes.

Q Are you sending a message out there that folks don't cash -- don't spend the money yet? (Laughter.)

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: That's up to them.

Q Will the sin tax -- revenue from the sin taxes be applied to deficit reduction or go to health -- some of the health care programs?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: The President hasn't made any final decisions on that.

Q That's a trick question.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Yes, really.

Q Is the President going to try to speed up the -- he has all these sub-Cabinet appointments that he hasn't made. Is he going to try to speed up that process now that the Attorney General's been nominated?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I think it is speeding up and we'll have a lot of announcements coming out next week.

Q On the bonuses, assuming that you discover there's precedent, how do you review them in terms of whether -- you're going to try to figure out whether or not somebody deserved this bonus?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: No. I mean, the Office of Personnel Management is going to go through all the procedures, is going to review how these were given out, why they were given out, if the justifications hold. And then we'll be able to act after that.

Q Will they be contacting former Cabinet members to find out?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I don't know if that's how they do it. I would expect that's possible.

Q Does the President believe --

Q You may have answered this earlier, but is the President considering the Gephardt idea that he would return to Congress for a question session?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I know that the Majority Leader has talked to him about it, but I don't know if he's made any decisions.

Q He would know this, right? I mean, he was talking about the day after the State of the Union.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Yes, he was.

Q Is that on his schedule?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: We don't have our schedule for the day after yet.

Q Can he do that and go out of town at the same time?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: It's not impossible.

Q What's the question?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Could the President appear before Congress and go out of town on Thursday at the same time. (Laughter.)

Q Has there been a decision made yet on what to do about the Haitian refugees who are in Guantanamo?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: No.

Q And when Jesse Jackson goes down there on Sunday, will he have anything to announce?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I'm not sure yet, but no decision has been made yet.

Q I'm still not clear what kind of dent the $300 million will make in the immunization problem if you say that not even half of the kids now have all the shots that they should have. Once you spend the $300 million, how much farther down the road are we? Is it then 50 percent or 60 percent?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Again, I don't have the specific percentages that the $300 million would lead to, but it would start and it would increase money for public clinics. It would provide for additional nurses and outreach staff. But we don't have the exact percentage.

Q Is it a big step or a small step?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: It's an important step, but we have to do more.

Q You can't say how big it is?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I know it's $300 million. I know that it will provide for information, education, public service, nurses, outreach, and will help make sure that more kids are immunized this year.

Q But the problem with these clinics is not the people to administer the drugs. It's not a jobs problem. The problem is having --

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Part of the problem is making sure you have all the resources you need to get the vaccine out into the communities, to track people, to educate them. That is part of the problem.

Q You're talking about a big outreach program.

Q Last year there was a suggestion that the immunizations be made a requirement of and administered at the places that women pick up AFDC because that is the community that suffers so greatly. Has that been pursued do you know?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I don't know. I know it's something they are going to look at, but I don't know if they've made any firm proposals.

Q In other words -- I mean, have you heard of it?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I mean, I may have heard it discussed, but I don't know what kind of proposals they've made.

Q Does the President still support all the provisions for a death penalty and the Democratic crime bill from last time?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: This is your favorite question? (Laugher.) He wants passage of the crime bill as quickly as possible.

Q Can he support all the provisions?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: I don't know about every single line, but he supports the bill.

Q Does he support a lot of the death penalty provisions? I mean, why if he supports the bill -- would he support a bill that had all those in there?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: The President believes the country would be better off if the bill had been signed into law last year.

Q Will he sign that bill --

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: He wants to get it through the Congress as quickly as possible.

Q Just in general, does the President support that the practice of awarding bonuses to government workers?

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, I think the President supports the practice of making sure people get paid for productive work. And if they do good work and if that work deserves a bonus,

then certainly it's built into the system. But he wants to make sure that these were done in the proper way and they just weren't political payoffs.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END 2:07 P.M. EST

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