

Los Angeles Times

Weinberger Calls Nuclear Plans Report 'Inaccurate'

Defense Secretary Writes to 70 Newspapers Denying That Administration Endorses Idea of Protracted War

WASHINGTON (AP)—Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger has written to 70 newspapers to dispute what he contends are "completely inaccurate" impressions that Reagan Administration policy involves the possibility of protracted nuclear war.

"Our entire strategy aims to deter war of all kinds, but most particularly to deter nuclear war," Weinberger wrote. "To accomplish this objective, our forces must be able to respond in a measured and prudent manner to the threat posed by the Soviet Union."

Improvements in U.S. strategic forces are needed, Weinberger said, "but it does not mean that we endorse the concept of protracted nuclear war, or nuclear 'warfighting.'" Instead, he argued, "It is the Soviet Union that appears to be building forces for a 'protracted' conflict."

Response to Stories

(The letter was sent Monday in response to press accounts, based on secret government documents, that the Administration had decided that to deter nuclear war, the United States must demonstrate that it is capable of fighting a prolonged nuclear war—perhaps as long as six months—with the Soviet Union.)

(The government's annual defense guidance statement, which the Pentagon draws up each year to project its needs, said that "protracted nuclear war is possible" and

Text of Weinberger letter, Part II, Page 6.

that "the United States' nuclear capabilities must prevail even under the condition of a prolonged war."

(Weinberger signed the defense guidance statement, which was leaked to the New York Times this spring. The Pentagon subsequently completed a strategic master plan to give the United States the capacity to wage a protracted nuclear war, which the Los Angeles Times reported last week. That plan is now awaiting the approval of the National Security Council.

(The Los Angeles Times also reported that, last fall, the national Security Council adopted National Security Decision Document 13, which for the first time declared that it is U.S. policy to prevail in a protracted nuclear war.)

In his letter, sent to 30 U.S. newspapers and 40 foreign publications, Weinberger said he was "increasingly concerned with news accounts that portray this Administration as planning to wage protracted nuclear war This is completely inaccurate, and these stories misrepresent the Administration's policies to the American public and to our allies and adversaries abroad."

Weinberger said that although U.S. policy is not based on the concept of protracted war, "we must have a capability for a survivable and enduring response—to demonstrate that our strategic forces could survive Soviet strikes over an extended period."

'Defer Any Attack'

"Thus we believe we could deter any attack. Otherwise, we would be tempting them to employ nuclear weapons or to try to blackmail us."

Weinberger's chief spokesman, Henry Catto, refused Tuesday to explain the difference between the U.S. view that America must "prevail" in a nuclear war and the belief that the Soviets perceive nuclear war as winnable.

"This is the kind of semantic game that I don't think is useful to get into," Catto said. "The main point is that nobody is going to win a nuclear war."