

Weinberger Promises Leaner, Meaner DOD

SALT talks could resume within "months," the new Defense Secretary thinks; conservatives disagree

Balance and judiciousness are the virtues that recommended Caspar Weinberger to the new Administration for Secretary of Defense, but they also seem to have inspired some opposition. Weinber-



Caspar Weinberger

Wide World

ger's nomination sailed through the Senate on 20 January with an overwhelming vote of approval (97 to 2). Yet it also evoked a stern warning from the far right conservatives, represented by Senator Jesse Helms (R-N.C.).

In a 17-page speech delivered on the Senate floor, Helms gave the reasons why he and his junior colleague from North Carolina, John East (R), voted against the nominee. Weinberger's good qualities were "not enough," said Helms. The Department of Defense (DOD) does not require an evenhanded leader today, he argued, but one inspired by a vision of crisis and by a resolve to make radical changes. Weinberger, Helms said, may just "manage the decline of U.S. power." Helms claimed to be speaking for many who agree but are "publicly taking the opposite stand."

The only other DOD official who has been approved by the Senate Armed Services Committee is Frank Carlucci, the deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency under President Carter, now destined to be Weinberger's deputy secretary. Weinberger insisted

on having Carlucci, and Carlucci told the senators that the chief reason he was agreeing to stay on in government after 25 years of service was that he would enjoy working for Weinberger. The Senate is expected to approve Carlucci by the same margin given to Weinberger when it gets around to voting on sub-Cabinet officers.

No name has been put forward for the key technical post at DOD, that of under secretary for research and engineering. The present tenant, William Perry, who has won approval on Capitol Hill for his openness and ability, will stay on for a few weeks as a consultant. Richard DeLauer, executive vice president of TRW Inc., has been mentioned as a likely replacement. DeLauer says he is on the list of candidates, but has not received the final word.

In his confirmation hearing, Weinberger demonstrated his loyalty to the Reagan defense agenda, along with a frank ignorance of how it might be carried out. Asked at one point about Soviet strategy, Weinberger declined to get into specifics. "As far as my own assessment at the moment is concerned," he said, "it is obviously imprecise and not formed on any sort of adequate briefings or knowledge of the situation in the last 5, 6 years." This demurral and a couple of vague responses given to strategic questions asked by Senators Gary Hart (D-Colo.) and Jeremiah Denton (R-Ala.) prompted Helms to charge that the nominee "did not seem to have a theoretical grasp of what [the senators] were talking about." Helms concluded, "These are issues upon which the man entering into the post of Secretary of Defense should not have to be briefed."

Weinberger comes to DOD from the Bechtel conglomerate, where he has been vice president, director, and general counsel. Before that, he served the federal government under Presidents Nixon and Ford as secretary of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare; as director of the Office of Management and Budget, with Carlucci as his deputy; and as chairman of the Federal Trade Commission. His professional training is in law, and he has been promi-

nent in Republican politics in California since his election to the state legislature in 1952. There he ran a committee on government organization. Weinberger also has been a television talk show host, a newspaper columnist, and a magazine book reviewer—the career in journalism being part of what he called his "ill-spent youth." Weinberger earned a national reputation and the nickname "Cap the Knife" because of his skill in trimming unwieldy federal budgets.

At the confirmation hearing, senators ran through a familiar litany of perceived weaknesses in U.S. defense, and Weinberger recommended more federal support in nearly every case. There should be more shipbuilding for the Navy, better pay and benefits for military personnel, more money spent to maintain existing equipment, a new mobile or protected shelter system for the MX missile, an expanded rapid deployment force, "high priority" for space-based laser weapons research, and accelerated development of a strategic bomber. Weinberger would not say which programs would take precedence, but he seemed to put a heavy stress on the need for improvement in personnel benefits.

How might the department be made more efficient? Weinberger suggested that the procurement process could be simplified—although he did not say just how—in order to accelerate purchasing and lower the cost of new equipment. He also suggested that the department might strive for standardization of equipment used by the Army, Navy, Air Force, and NATO forces. Other DOD officials have recommended this sensible approach to weapons buying in the past, without much success. William Perry, for example, failed to persuade the Air Force and the Navy to develop a common missile for use on land and at sea. Because he could not win an agreement, the Air Force's new MX missile is too large to fit in the Trident submarine's launching tubes. A separate weapon will have to be produced just for the Trident.

On broader policy issues, Weinberger revealed himself to be flexible, to the annoyance of Senator Helms. Weinberger favored resuming negotiations on strate-

gic arms limitations (SALT), but not until the new Administration has set in motion its plan for rebuilding U.S. defenses. The period of reorganization, he suggested, would last perhaps 6 months. Helms found this "incredible," for the time allowed seemed scarcely adequate for gaining what he thought would be a sufficient technological advantage over

the Soviets. The senator was distressed as well to learn that Weinberger thinks the SALT talks are valuable in themselves, and not, as Helms sees them, "a calculated strategy by the Soviets to relieve us of our remaining advantages." The nominee opposed a peacetime draft, arguing instead that the volunteer approach should be tried a bit longer. He

did not want to end draft registration, however. Lastly, Weinberger said he supported the principle of the Carter Doctrine, which declares the Persian Gulf to be a zone of strategic importance for the United States, but he thinks that at present the United States does not have the wherewithal to wage war in the area.—ELIOT MARSHALL

Former Carolina Governor to Head DOE

The next secretary of the Department of Energy (DOE), James B. Edwards, is an oral surgeon who served as governor of South Carolina from 1975 to 1978. He is an enthusiastic supporter of nuclear energy and, while governor, created the South Carolina Energy Research Institute, a privately funded body that does studies related to the state's energy needs.

Prior to his Senate confirmation hearings, Edwards was widely quoted as being eager to preside over the demise of the DOE. However, the senators on the Energy and Natural Resources Committee set him straight, saying that was not what they expected from him, and he readily agreed that for the present, anyway, the government needs a "focus" for its energy activities. He did, however, express a desire to "streamline" the department, an activity that could include divesting it of its regulatory functions.

Edwards is as strong an advocate of nuclear energy as anyone could wish. He wants to do whatever is necessary to revive the country's sagging uranium industry (all the signs are that Reagan intends to reverse the Carter policy related to nuclear nonproliferation and allow freer trade in nuclear materials). He wants to move ahead on breeder technology. He indicated that he wants the nation to get back into the reprocessing business—"We should recycle everything including spent fuel rods" (the country's only nuclear reprocessing plant was located in Barnwell, South Carolina). Asked what he would do about the nuclear waste problem, Edwards expressed confidence that glassification of wastes and their deposit in retrievable form in storage facilities would be adequate until permanent geologic disposal sites are found.

Edwards tends to look at energy from the standpoint of suppliers. Asked by Senator Dale Bumpers (D-Ark.) if he approved of the fact that 40 percent of all manufacturing profits in this country go to oil companies, Edwards said that what bothered him more was how much of these profits went out in taxes. Asked why there was no consumer representation on the board of the Energy Research Institute, which is almost entirely composed of industry representatives, Edwards said "the best thing I can do for consumers is be sure when they turn on the switch the light goes on. . . ." Asked by Bumpers, "What does 'Three Mile Island' conjure up in your mind?" Edwards replied, "It conjures up a company that's in trouble and needs some help."

Edwards, who favors a strategic petroleum reserve, expressed optimism about the future oil supply. Bumpers protested that even Exxon and the American Petroleum Institute had predicted that no matter what policies the coun-

try follows, it will be producing less oil in 1990 than it is now. But Edwards replied, "Once we deregulated, people came up with an awful lot of natural gas. The same thing will happen with oil." Like many observers across the political spectrum, Edwards thinks the United States should be allowed to export oil to Japan in exchange for taking over their purchase contracts for Venezuelan oil.

Edwards, like other states' righters Reagan has appointed, found his philosophy sometimes at odds with his goals. He does not, for example, favor government subsidies for commercialization of new technologies, but he made an exception for nuclear power. If the nuclear industry had not been subsidized, he said, "we would be in Siberia now rather than the free world." He seemed to have only a fuzzy idea of the purpose of the Synfuels Corp., which is to



James B. Edwards

subsidize commercialization; however, he did not appear to favor withdrawal of the \$20 billion already earmarked for that purpose.

Edwards made only fleeting reference to the value of alternative, nonrenewable energy sources. And, despite the fact that a half-dozen major studies have shown that energy conservation would be the quickest way to reduce oil imports, Edwards did not seem much interested. "It certainly does make sense to conserve," he said, but "I wish we would conserve ourselves into full employment but we can't. We have just got to produce, produce, produce and put conservation on top of that."—CONSTANCE HOLDEN