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# Reagan lays down law for security council

From Chicago Tribune wires

WASHINGTON—President Reagan instructed his national security staff Tuesday that the rule of law must be respected and that competing views must be fully aired in planning and implementing foreign policy.

Reagan laid down the law in a meeting with about 50 members of the newly overhauled National Security Council staff in the wake of the release of the Tower board report last Thursday.

The panel concluded that the arms-to-Iran initiative did not get a serious review in the White House, was handled in an unprofessional way and that legal considerations were not pressed. It said Reagan did not exercise control over his national security advisers, was not aware of the way the Iran policy was being implemented and did not recognize its full consequences.

Addressing the NSC staff assembled in recent weeks by Frank Carlucci, his new national security adviser, Reagan said that "sound management of the NSC process ultimately depends upon the skills and integrity of each of you here."

Reagan directed that "views must be fully aired." He said: "Agency participation should not be short cut. I want the range of options developed for my consideration. Legal issues must be addressed head-on, and the rule of law respected. And of course, recommendations and decisions must be properly documented."

The press was not allowed to cover Reagan's remarks, but they were quoted by presidential spokesman Marlin Fitzwater.

He said no one should infer from Reagan's remarks that he had concluded that laws were broken in the Iran-contra arms affair.

Reagan is scheduled to address the nation Wednesday night to give his response to the Tower board's criticism.

Fitzwater said the administration was pressing its search for a new candidate to be chief of the CIA following the withdrawal Monday of Robert Gates' nomination. "We are searching for a candidate, talking to a lot of

people. . . . It could come at any time," he said.

Asked whether former Sen. John Tower [R., Tex.], head of the panel that produced the critical NSC report, had turned down the job, Fitzwater replied, "I don't know."

Other candidates reportedly under consideration included FBI Director William Webster and retired Air Force Gen. Brent Scowcroft, a former national security adviser under President Gerald Ford and a member of the Tower board.

The withdrawal of Gates' nomination helped avoid a lengthy confirmation process in the Senate that would have prolonged the controversy over his role and the CIA's conduct in the Iran-contra affair at a time when Reagan is trying to put the issue behind him.

Gates, 43, would have been the youngest CIA director in history. He has served as acting head of the agency since former CIA Director William Casey underwent surgery for removal of a brain tumor in December. Gates was nominated to replace Casey last month.

But Reagan was told by congressional leaders last Friday that Gates' nomination was in trouble on Capitol Hill, even though the deputy CIA director was not directly implicated in the Tower board's investigation of the Iran-contra affair.

His nomination suffered nonetheless because some lawmakers were angered over several of the Tower report's revelations about the CIA's role in the sale of U.S. arms to Iran at a time when Gates served as Casey's deputy.

Several members of the Senate Intelligence Committee also have closely questioned Gates on allegations that he may have advocated a U.S. invasion of Libya in 1985 and assisted in a CIA attempt to cover up aspects of the Iran arms sales. In addition, Gates was accused by some lawmakers of failing to inform Congress of evidence that some proceeds from the sales may have gone to the Nicaraguan rebels, or contras.

In a letter Sunday to Sen. David Boren [D., Okla.], chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, Gates vehemently denied the charges, calling them "outrageous" and "false allegations." By then, however, he had already decided

to ask that his nomination to head the agency be withdrawn rather than face a lengthy confirmation battle. White House officials said.

Gates will continue to serve as acting CIA director until a successor to Casey is confirmed, Reagan said. After that, Gates will return to his deputy director's position.

Casey, meanwhile, has been released from Georgetown University Hospital. Casey, 73, was admitted to the hospital Dec. 15 after suffering a seizure at his office. He underwent surgery on a brain tumor three days later and then received radiation treatment. He was released Saturday, the hospital said.

Howard Baker, making his public debut Monday as chief of staff three days after replacing controversial Donald Regan, held a spirited press conference on a range of delicate issues, including the President's capacity to govern at age 76 and the powerful influence of First Lady Nancy Reagan.

Reflecting concerns about the Tower report's portrayal of Reagan as a detached and confused chief executive, Baker repeatedly insisted that the President has never been "more energetic, more engaged."

"He's never been better," Baker

said. "He was superb. . . . I do not see a hands-off President, or I do not see an AWOL President; I see a man who is very much in touch with the issues before this country."

Baker said a draft of Reagan's nationally televised speech on Wednesday was "marvelous" and would "go a long way" toward alleviating concerns about the President on Capitol Hill.

Baker said he had not yet spoken to Mrs. Reagan on his first day on the job. When asked what they would discuss, Baker indicated he would try to avoid the widely publicized conflicts his predecessor had with the First Lady.

"Whatever she wants to talk about," he said, laughing.

In other developments:

● The Pentagon announced that Vice Adm. John M. Poindexter, the White House national security adviser who resigned in the Iranian arms controversy, has decided to accept a reduction in rank, to two stars, rather than leave the Navy.

● The New York Times-CBS Poll, taken after release of the Tower Board report, found that President Reagan's popularity is at its lowest level in more than four years.