

# Government has right to deceive, official says

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WASHINGTON — White House national security adviser John Poindexter, author of a controversial memo outlining a disinformation campaign against Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi, said Tuesday the government has an inherent right to use deception to protect the national security.

"The whole question comes down to: 'Is deception going to be a tool that the government can use in combatting a very significant national security problem,' and I

think that the answer . . . has to be yes," Poindexter told reporters.

He insisted that the campaign launched as a result of his memo last August was not intended to deceive the public or the press. But he conceded that some people who were not targets of the campaign might have been deceived inadvertently.

"We had no intent and did not plan or conspire to mislead the American press in any way," Poindexter said. "The objective of the program with Gadhafi was to deceive Gadhafi.

"Now, the foreign press is obvi-

ously more likely (than the American press) to pick up various reports of things that were happening (as a result of the U.S. deception campaign), but the goal was not to deceive the foreign press, either," he said.

Poindexter's proposal was approved at a White House meeting in mid-August, according to a report originally carried by the Washington Post and later confirmed by administration officials. The plan suggested a campaign to convince Gadhafi that the United States was preparing to take military action against him when, in

fact, no attack was imminent.

Later in August, the Wall Street Journal reported increased U.S.-Libya tensions and said U.S. intelligence agencies had uncovered increased terrorist activity by the Libyan leader. At the time of the newspaper report, Poindexter said Tuesday, Gadhafi was in a "quiescent" period as far as terrorist activity was concerned, although he might have been planning to step up his activities.

Although the Journal story now appears to be a result of the effort to deceive Gadhafi, White House spokesman Larry Speakes de-

scribed it at the time as "authoritative," in effect recommending the information to other newspapers and broadcast outlets.

Poindexter said intelligence reports indicated as early as July that Gadhafi was planning to use offices of the Libyan airlines as a base for terrorist activity. Previously, Libya used its embassies, which it calls People's Bureaus, as terrorist headquarters, but many European nations either closed the bureaus or imposed tough restrictions on them, reducing their value to terrorists.



John Poindexter