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Near East War Could Break Out During Presidential Switch-Over

THANKS to the changing of horses in Washington's midstream, another full-scale war could well break out in the Near East. If so, the proximity of the American and Russian fleet makes the area as dangerous as a pack mule strapped with dynamite wandering loose in a mine field.

However, the Johnson Administration has only two weeks in which to carry out any policy it starts, while the Nixon Administration sits on the sidelines waiting to take over.

Earlier, attempts at cooperation between the two men were polite but not too satisfactory. When the President discussed with Nixon a summit meeting with Premier Kosygin of Russia, the President-elect threw cold water on the idea. Later, to make sure that Mr. Johnson did not go ahead with the summit meeting anyway, Nixon sent secret word to the Russians that he was against the meeting. So rather than get off on the wrong foot with the new Administration, the Russians politely sidetracked Mr. Johnson's feelers.

More recently, the President-elect yielded to the pressure of Max Fisher of



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Detroit, one of his biggest campaign contributors, and made an exception to his no-foreign-talks rule by seeing Gen. Moshe Dayan, the one-eyed Israeli Minister of Defense. This put Amir Abbass Hoveyda, Prime Minister of Iran, a much bigger country and one extremely friendly to the United States, in an embarrassing position in the Moslem world. He had asked for an interview with Nixon and been turned down.

MOST NEAR EAST experts, including American, Soviet and Arab, believe that war can only be averted by an "imposed" peace. In other words, the two big powers must force Israel and the Arab belligerents to the conference table.

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ers have conveyed private word to the United States and Russia that they would welcome an imposed peace. Their own populations have become too volatile and too bitter, especially after the Israeli raid on the Beirut airport, to enter a peace discussion without being forced into it by the two major powers—Russia which supplies arms to Egypt, and the United States which has just agreed to sell 50 Phantom jets to Israel.

However, the Israelis remember the U.N. peace terms imposed upon them at Eisenhower's initiative after the 1956 war, and are suspicious of a repeat performance. Gen. Eisenhower picked up the trans-Atlantic telephone and in barrack-room language told Prime Minister Anthony Eden that he had to get British troops out of Suez. He was so tough that Eden became ill, and resigned shortly thereafter. Ike was almost as tough with the French.

Compared to Gen. Eisenhower, President Johnson has been like an indulgent father slapping a wayward child on the wrist.

Meanwhile, the situation daily drifts closer to war.