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**CIA Praised
By President**

President Nixon, in a speech to CIA employes, called the agency "one of the great instruments" for preserving peace.

The President yesterday also presented three Medals of Honor, his first since becoming President. Last night, Mr. Nixon left for a weekend at his Key Biscayne, Fla., home.

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By Carroll Kilpatrick

Washington Post Staff Writer

President Nixon went to the defense of the Government's most secret and defenseless agency yesterday and said that it is "one of the great instruments" for preserving peace.

He was talking about the Central Intelligence Agency in the CIA auditorium before an unusually appreciative and demonstrative audience.

Before departing for a weekend in Key Biscayne, Fla., the President went by helicopter to CIA headquarters in nearby Langley, Va., for the same kind of pep talk he has given all the regular departments.

But the CIA employes outdid most of the others in the enthusiasm of their welcome and the Chief Executive was unreserved in his praise of the clandestine agency's work.

The CIA has a mission that "runs counter to some of the deeply held traditions in this country," the President said. "The American people don't like war. They don't like secrecy. They don't like cold war."

But he said that "it is necessary for those who make deci-

sions at the highest level to have the very best possible intelligence so that the margin of error will to that extent be reduced."

The American people should understand, he said, that the CIA "is a necessary adjunct of the Presidency." He quoted a message former President Truman sent the CIA calling it "absolutely necessary to any President of the United States—from one who knows."

"I know, and I appreciate what you do," Mr. Nixon added.

Presents Medals

The President told the CIA officials that he had had "the great honor" earlier in the day to present Medals of Honor to three Army enlisted men.

There will be no medals and no recognition for heroic work done by CIA officials, he said. "Your successes will never be made public and your failures will always be public," he said.

"I recognize that, and I am deeply grateful to those of you who make that kind of sacrifice."

The President presented

his first Medals of Honor at an East Room ceremony to Staff Sgt. Joe R. Hooper of Saugus, Calif., Spec. 5 Clarence E. Sasser of Rosharon, Tex., and Sgt. Fred W. Zabitovsky of Trenton, N.J., for heroic service in Vietnam.

These soldiers, the President said, are "men who faced death and instead of losing their courage gave courage to their fellow men."

Lumber Price Rise

Later, the President met with the Cabinet Committee on Economic Policy and named a task force to investigate "dramatic" increases in Douglas fir and plywood prices.

Budget Director Robert P. Mayo was named chairman of the task force to identify the causes of the price increases, to recommend immediate corrective action, and to recommend a long-term policy to facilitate supply and demand adjustments in the industry.

Press Secretary Ronald L. Ziegler said that fir and plywood prices had increased from 30 to 92 per cent in a year's time, causing inflationary pressures in the whole construction industry.

The President met with Liberian Vice President William Richard Tolbert, who is in the country to attend a meeting of the World Baptist Alliance.

Nomination of Governor

In another action, the President announced that he would nominate Peter A. Bove, a one-time Republican candidate for Governor of Vermont and since 1957 comptroller of the Virgin Islands, as Governor of the islands.

If confirmed, Bove will succeed Ralph M. Paiewonsky, a Democrat, who resigned Feb. 12.

Accompanying the President to Florida for the weekend were special assistant H. R. Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman, counsel to the President. Mr. Nixon is expected to return to the White House Monday and shortly thereafter to announce his decision on whether to give the go-ahead for construction of a limited anti-ballistic missile system.

President Praises CIA As Instrument of Peace