

Ford Ad

Hints of Military Action Over Oil



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A GRIM, new mood is developing in Washington that military intervention may be necessary to bring down the price of oil and save the West from economic ruin.

Until the last few weeks, military action was considered out of the question. But the mood definitely is changing, as the consequences of the oil gouge have become more devastating.

Oil is the lifeblood of the industrial West. A growing number of policymakers now agree that the United States cannot stand by while a few recklessly greedy potentates interfere with the normal flow of our lifeblood.

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OUR SOURCES say the President is willing to use U.S. military power as a last resort to prevent the oil cartel from causing disastrous economic and political dislocations in the West.

The policy experts don't believe the Soviet Union would interfere with a U.S. military operation in the Middle East.

Kissinger believes the Russians wouldn't likely risk a nuclear war with the United States over Middle East oil.

The secret speculation is that Libya would be the most likely target of U.S. intervention. Libya's radical strongman, Muammar el-Qaddafi, isn't popular with his Arab neighbors or the Russians. They would be less perturbed over an attack

upon Libya, therefore, than any other Arab oil state.

It was also the fiery Qaddafi who triggered the oil price rise. In late 1971, he moved in on Occidental Petroleum, a U.S. company, which depended upon Libya for its crude. His squeeze tactics were so successful that by early 1974 he had boosted the price of Libyan oil from \$1.50 to \$16 a barrel.

CIA sources have suggested that the simplest way to knock the props out from under Qaddafi would be to engineer a coup and replace him with a leader more friendly to the West.

One secret report tells of a discussion between a CIA agent and an Occidental official about putting up \$50 million for Qaddafi's assassination. High officials have assured us, however, that the \$50 million talk was nothing but barroom banter and has never been given serious consideration.

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THERE IS ALSO talk in the backrooms about giving Israel the green light to take over Kuwait's oil fields. The secret assessment is that no combination of Arab armies could stop an Israeli march upon Kuwait.

Perhaps significantly, the United States has suddenly started to rush arms shipments to Israel. In some cases, the U.S. military's own stocks have been depleted to make the weapons available to Israel.