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Kissinger's View On Use of Force

'A Very Dangerous Course'

By Murrey Harder
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Secretary of State Henry Kissinger described military action to bring lower oil prices in the Middle East as "a very dangerous course," but he left open possible use of force to prevent "strangulation of the industrialized world."

That double-edged definition was used by Kissinger in an unusually blunt year-end interview with *Business Week* magazine that centered on the world energy crisis.

Kissinger also warned of the danger of mounting pressures on many Western European nations within the next 18 months as a result of soaring oil prices.

Reviving his criticism of European behavior in the 1973-74 period, Kissinger said the European allies of the United States "suffer from an enormous feeling of insecurity" and "impotence," which "produces a certain peevishness" toward the U.S.

Kissinger's discussion of the various methods of inducing the oil-exporting nations to reduce prices which have more than quadrupled, elicited his most specific public comments about military action against the producing nations.

Asked if he has considered "military action on oil," Kissinger responded:

"A very dangerous course. We should have learned from Vietnam that it is easier to get into a war than to get out of it. I am not saying that there's no circumstance where we would not use force. But it is one thing to

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use it in the case of a dispute over price, it's another where there's some actual strangulation of the industrialized world."

Kissinger added: "I want to make clear, however, that the use of force would be considered only in the gravest emergency."

He also said: "Any President who would resort to military action in the Middle East without worrying what the Soviets would do would have to be reckless."

Last night, as he arrived home from a Christmas holiday in Puerto Rico, Kissinger was questioned by reporters.

"I've said repeatedly I didn't think it would come to that point," Kissinger said when asked if he would use force to take over Middle East oil fields. "I'm confident the problem will be solved without the use of force."

At another point, Kissinger said "I'm not saying there is no circumstance where we would not use force."

"I warned against military action," Kissinger said. "I don't think you can rule out use of force but for oil prices it is too dangerous."

Until now, Kissinger has declined even to discuss publicly the possibility of using military force against oil producers.

Kissinger brushed past the subject in an interview published in *Newsweek* magazine's December 30 issue, saying he did not see oil prices as a cause for military action. In that interview, Kissinger also spoke more affirmatively of growing realization in Western Europe of the need for cooperative action to avert economic disaster.

Kissinger, in the *Business Week* interview, said he does not anticipate another oil embargo, "unless there is a war," and added: "I am not even sure of an oil embargo in the event of a war. It would now be a much more serious decision than it was the last time."

He said: "We're now engaged in rather delicate ne-

gotiations, and these still show promise, so why speculate about their failure while they're still in train?"

While there "is always the danger of another Arab-Israeli war" in the absence of a political settlement, Kissinger said, "on the other hand, war is talked about much too loosely." He said, "I think the readiness of either side to go to war is often exaggerated."

The prospects for any immediate reduction in oil prices "are poor," Kissinger said.

Although the U.S. government in the past often indicated that it was encouraged by Saudi Arabia's expressions of support for lowering oil prices, Kissinger said, "I never for a moment believed, nor do I believe today, that the lead in cutting prices will be taken by Saudi Arabia."

Kissinger said: "The only chance to bring oil prices down immediately would be massive political warfare against countries like Saudi Arabia and Iran to make them risk their political stability and maybe their security if they did not cooperate. That is too high a price to pay even for an immediate reduction in oil prices."

An "overthrow of the existing system in Saudi Arabia" could lead to a more radical regime like Libya's, Kissinger said. Similarly, he said shattering "Iran's image of being capable of resisting outside pressures" could produce adverse political consequences.

Creating such a political crisis, Kissinger said almost certainly would be opposed by "Europe, Japan and the Soviet Union."

Instead, Kissinger said, the oil policy course that the United States has embarked upon requires making consuming nations "less vulnerable" to the threat of embargo or financial collapse, achieving sufficient energy conservation "to impose difficult choices on the producing countries," developing financial institutions to relieve individual nations of a "sense of impotence" in negotiating with producers, and creating alternative sources of energy.