

Ford Plans Review Of Mideast Policy



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PRESIDENT FORD AND HENRY KISSINGER
The goal is avoiding new Arab-Israeli fighting

'All Aspects And All Countries'

Washington

President Ford ordered a total re-examination of American policy toward the Middle East yesterday following the collapse of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's efforts to bring about a new Egyptian-Israeli agreement.

The White House and the State Department said the policy review would include "all aspects and all countries."

Privately, a key State Department official said the goals of the study are largely two-fold: to see what can be done to avert a new outbreak of war in the Middle East, a development Kissinger believes is quite possible with the failure of his step-by-step diplomacy efforts; and to assess American attitudes toward the Arab states and Israel in all spheres—military, economic and political.

Several top congressional leaders who attended a briefing at the White House given by Mr. Ford and Kissinger yesterday morning reported that Kissinger said no blame should be fixed on either Egypt or Israel for the breakdown in the talks.

But the congressional leaders said that they had the impression that a principal focus of the study would be to reevaluate the American policy toward Israel. Kissinger believes that Israel missed a crucial chance for moving the Middle East toward peace by failing to adopt a more flexible approach in the negotiations.

This impression was underscored when well-placed sources confirmed Israeli reports that Mr. Ford sent a strong message to Israeli Premier Yitzhak Rabin last week urging Israel to be more conciliatory and warn-

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ing that a breakdown in the talks would lead to a "reassessment" of American policy toward Israel.

State Department spokesman Robert Anderson said the note could not be characterized as harsh and had not been a threat to Israel. A source who said he had excerpts of the letter read to him said, however, that the message was "tough" and was critical of Israel for being "stubborn."

In answer to questions, Anderson said only that the policy review ordered by Mr. Ford would cover all questions, including U.S. aid to Israel. Anderson said that there is no question that aid to Israel will continue, but

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that the amount of it has not been decided.

Totally dependent on the United States for foreign assistance, Israel has asked for a total of \$2.5 billion — about \$2 billion in military aid — for the fiscal year beginning July 1.

Kissinger said later in the day that the reassessment is not a question "of cutting off any aid."

"Reassessment means that we are facing a new situation of some peril," he told newsmen outside the Senate Foreign Relations Committee room where he

had just briefed the committee members.

He said it is "inevitable in such a situation that the President order a review to see what is the best policy for the United States to follow."

Asked if the U.S. is going to punish Israel for not going along with a new Sinai disengagement proposal, Kissinger said, "We are not engaged in any punitive actions."

After the briefing, Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield and Republican leader Hugh Scott introduced and pushed through a virtually empty Senate floor a resolution praising Kissinger and Mr. Ford for their efforts in search of a Middle East peace.

In the morning briefing, Kissinger was reported to have asserted that political problems in both Egypt and Israel blocked both sides from making the compromises necessary to reach an agreement and that as a result, his efforts are now all but dead and that attention must be focused on a new Geneva conference.

Primarily, Kissinger believes diplomatic efforts must be made to persuade Egypt to accept another renewal of the United Nations buffer force on the Sinai front when the U.N. mandate expires at the end of April.

The U.N. forces on the Syria-Israeli front expires at the end of May and Syria already has said it will not allow another renewal beyond then.

But of more concern to Kissinger is the stepup in polemics in the Middle East with Arabs and Israelis exchanging charges and countercharges and the United States influence declining because of the failure of his mission.

New York Times