

The U.S.-Soviet
Crisis Eases

Russ Scare Brings a U.S. Alert

Washington

The United States and the Soviet Union passed through the shadows of high crisis yesterday when the Nixon administration saw a threat of possible Russian intervention in the Arab-Israeli war and placed American military forces on "precautionary alert."

By mid-afternoon, the alarm which produced extraordinary 3 a.m. White House emergency conferences by members of the National Security Council, diminished considerably.

A United Nations Security Council resolution to send a multi-nation peacekeeping force to the Middle East war zone, with troops of the superpowers excluded, appeared to remove the risk of what the U.S. feared might be "unilateral" introduction of Soviet military units to defend the interests of Egypt.

STEP

An administration spokesman called that resolution "a step in the right direction" to relieve the U.S.-Soviet tension.

During the early morning uproar following the alerting of American air, ground and sea units around the world, Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger said the world was "at a rather crucial point" over a sudden new risk in the Middle East.

Kissinger said that "the ambiguity of some of the actions" taken by the Soviet Union "and certain readiness measures that were observed," caused President Nixon to order the U.S. military alert.

REPETITION

"We do not consider ourselves in a confrontation with the Soviet Union," Kissinger repeated several times at a tense hour-long

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news conference at the State Department. Kissinger emphasized, however, that "we possess, each of us, nuclear arsenals capable of annihilating humanity," and he said, "The President decided that it was essential that we make clear our attitude toward unilateral steps."

The crisis exploded with out notice on an unprepared public. When it subsided within hours, there was intensive debate about whether it represented a major threat to world peace or whether it was diplomatic brinkmanship on the part of one of the superpowers, or both.

The sudden developments led President Nixon to postpone a scheduled evening news conference in which he was expected to defend his actions in the Watergate tapes controversy.

DENIAL

Kissinger strongly denied suggestions that Mr. Nixon had ordered the alert to deflect domestic criticism.

"It is a symptom of what is happening to our country that it could even be suggested that the United States would alert its forces for domestic reasons," Kissinger said. He added, in his televised news conference, that "the President had no other choice as a responsible national leader" than to follow the advice of his top ad-

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visers and order the alert at 3 a.m.

In a serious mood, and apparently fatigued by the long hours he had spent on the crisis, Kissinger said he had been surprised by the sudden turn of events that he said precipitated the decision to order forces into a "condition three alert" — which means that precautionary steps should be taken.

CONDITIONS

Imminent war is "condition one" on a scale of five.

In his news conference, Kissinger seemed determined to follow a double course. He warned the Russians about the American opposition to a big power involvement directly in the Middle East and he kept open the road to improved relations with the Soviet Union despite the latest strains.

He said that the crisis developed because of the breakdown in the cease-fire he had worked out with Leonid Brezhnev, the Soviet Communist party leader, in Moscow last weekend. This led to certain Israeli territorial gains, and a "worrisome" turn of events, he said.

HEIGHT

Although he did not provide many details, it seemed

from the context of his remarks that the crisis reached its height after Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's request Wednesday for Soviet and American forces to intervene in the area to prevent further Israeli gains against his forces, particularly the 20,000-man Third Corps trapped on the east bank of the Suez Canal.

The U.S. vigorously rejected the proposal Wednesday afternoon, but apparently the Soviet Union in a note delivered to Kissinger by Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin at about 8 p.m. yesterday, indicated it supported Sadat.

Kissinger said that it was "inconceivable" that Soviet and American forces be introduced into the conflict and "transplant the great power rivalry into the Middle East, or alternatively, that we should impose a military condominium by the United States and the Soviet Union."

OPPOSED

"The United States is even more opposed to the unilateral introduction by any great power — especially by any nuclear power — of military forces into the Middle East, in whatever guise those forces should be introduced," he said.

The decision to order the alert, he indicated, followed that message and some military movement.

Without providing details, he said "it is the ambiguity

of some of these actions and communications, and certain readiness measures that were observed, that caused the President at a special meeting of the National Security Council last night, at 3 a.m., to order certain precautionary measures be taken by the United States."

After explaining the American decision, he outlined the U.S. goals in the Middle East:

• The U.S. will assist any United Nations observer force, including supplying some personnel.

• It will aid in taking care of humanitarian problems caused by the fact that there are enclaves within both the Israeli and Egyptian fronts of enemy forces cut off from their main lines.

• The U.S. will make a major effort toward a political solution acceptable to all sides, as called for by the Monday morning Security Council resolution.

In regard to an Arab-Israeli settlement, Kissinger said there is now "an opportunity that the great powers have no right to be permitted to miss."

Kissinger noted that Israel, as a result of the resolution worked out by the U.S. with the Soviet Union earlier this week "has been given an opportunity for the negotiations it has sought for all of its existence."

He left no doubt that the United States would, as he put it, "lend its diplomatic weight to a serious effort in the negotiating process." With some finality, he said: "The United States recognizes that the conditions that produced the war on October 6 cannot be permitted to continue."

Kissinger indicated that the U.S. has some specific ideas about the shape of a settlement, although he was careful not to spell them out. "We will make a major effort to bring about a solution that is considered just by all parties," he said.

POLICY

Kissinger was asked about the "detente policy," and he said "I think we can make a better judgment when we know whether peace has taken hold."

"If the Soviet Union and we can work cooperatively — first, toward establishing the cease-fire, and then toward promoting a durable settlement in the Middle East, then the detente will have proved itself," he said.

He said that neither country had made any threats against each other, and that "we are not talking of a missile crisis type situation."

This was a reference to the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 when Russia and the United States came the closest to war.

"We are talking about a precautionary situation and not an actual one," he said.

Other officials said the "hot line," a direct telegraphic connection between Moscow and Washington for emergencies, had not been used.

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