

President's Middle East Visit Is Set

By Carroll Kilpatrick
Washington Post Staff Writer

The White House announced officially yesterday that President Nixon will leave Monday for a 10-day visit to five countries in the Middle East—Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Israel and Jordan.

The President will return to the United States June 18 or 19 and leave again within a week for a summit meeting in Moscow with Soviet leader Leonid I. Brezhnev.

In making the announcement, which had been widely predicted ever since Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger last week negotiated a Syrian-Israeli disengagement agreement, White House spokesman Gerald L. Warren sought to reject suggestions that Mr. Nixon is traveling to divert attention from the impeachment drive.

"The President feels it is important to build on the foundation which has been laid" for a Middle East peace, Warren said.

"The President's trip to the Middle East will serve to ratify the new environment that now exists in the area, and it will afford an opportunity at the highest level for each of the parties involved to consolidate what has been achieved on the road to peace."

Mr. Nixon will be the first American President to visit most of these countries. Franklin D. Roosevelt visited Cairo in 1943 after the Tehran conference with Marshal Josef Stalin and Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill.

It was while Roosevelt was in Cairo that he made the decision to name Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower commander of Overlord, the plan for the invasion of Europe.

In February, 1945, following a final meeting with Stalin and Churchill at Yalta, Roosevelt conferred with three Middle East and African leaders aboard the USS Quincy anchored in Great Bitter Lake in the Suez Canal. They were King Farouk of Egypt, King Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia and Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia.

There were reports yesterday that a restoration of diplomatic relations between the United States and Syria will be announced while the President is in Damascus.

The State Department said that this country is prepared to restore relations anytime the Syrian government is ready to do so.

In Damascus, Foreign Minister Abdul Halim Khaddam said diplomatic relations will be restored "very shortly."

Khaddam said the talks between President Nixon and Syrian President Hafez Assad "are bound to be rewarding. We believe talks between peo-



By James K. W. Atherton—The Washington Post
Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger confers with Rep. Thomas E. Morgan (D-Pa.) before testifying on foreign aid before the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

ple are a necessity to improving relations."

Asked whether Syria is doing anything to prevent Palestinian guerrilla activity against Israel in order to safeguard the disengagement agreement, Khaddam replied: "I assure you no Arab government is capable of preventing the Palestinians from struggling to restore their legitimate rights, no matter what guarantees may be given to Israel by other governments."

Following a meeting with the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Kissinger brushed aside reporters' questions about the trip and its relation to impeachment.

"Foreign policy is not conducted in relation with Watergate," Kissinger said.

Asked what the purpose of the President's trip was, Kissinger said that the disengage-

ment agreements between Egypt and Israel and Syria and Israel have ushered in "a new political relationship" between the United States and the Arab countries.

Warren said also that the trip will allow an exchange of views on ways "to assure the most effective continuation of the steps already taken toward a just and stable peace."

Over the past seven months, Warren said, "we have witnessed a definite strengthening of mutual trust and confidence between the United States and Middle East countries. It is the President's intention to confirm personally his dedication to carrying forward this positive trend."

The President will fly on Monday to Salzburg, Austria, where he will spend Monday and Tuesday nights. He stopped in Salzburg to rest and overcome the jet lag in May,

1972, en route to his first summit meeting in Moscow.

On Wednesday, the President will fly from Salzburg to Cairo and a meeting with President Anwar Sadat, who has long urged the visit.

The President will be in Egypt June 12-14; in Saudi Arabia, June 14-15; in Syria, June 15-16; in Israel, June 16-17, and in Jordan, June 17-18.

He will return to Washington June 18 or 19. The President will be accompanied by Mrs. Nixon and by Kissinger and other officials, the White House said.

In Vienna, Chancellor Bruno Kreisky said Mr. Nixon "gladly accepted" his invitation to use the Klesheim Palace on the outskirts of Salzburg as a rest stop.

Kreisky met the President when he stopped in Salzburg in 1972 and plans to confer with him again next week.

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