

A contingency plan to seize Arab oil

ANALYSIS

By Thomas B. Ross
Chicago Sun-Times

WASHINGTON—Secretary of State Kissinger's guarded warning of a possible U.S. military intervention in the Middle East has provided Israel with its first good news about the oil crisis since the Arabs launched their economic offensive against the West two years ago.

For implicit in Kissinger's pointed remarks was the recognition that Israel might have to be used as a staging area for any effort to seize the Arab oil fields along the Persian Gulf.

Kissinger did not spell out the military scenario in his interview last week, and top aides in the State Department and the Pentagon refused to disclose details of contingency plans.

But a former key politico-military strategist, with long experience and intuition as to how and when such plans are drawn up, has been circulating a paper here recommending urgent military action.

The strategist warns against alienating Israel by

—Turn to Page 16, Col. 1

—From Page 1

trying to squeeze too many concessions out of it so as to get a peace agreement that might make the Arabs more reasonable on oil.

"Before going too far in pressuring Israel," he cautions, "the West would do well to bear in mind that if negotiations fail, for whatever reason, Israel may prove ultimately that last bastion from which meaningful 'co-belligerent' military operations could be mounted."

The strategist, concerned that his proposal might embarrass his former high-ranking government associate and his present business associated, asked that he not be identified.

Drawing upon extensive dealings with the Russians, he argues in the paper that the "bugaboo" that they will militarily challenge a U.S. intervention is "vastly overrated."

"At worst," he contends, "they could probably be

bought out by a spheres of influence arrangement, whether explicit or tacit, in which the ambitions in the Persian Gulf and elsewhere were given relatively free rein in return for a nonintervention pledge with re-elsewhere in the same area. guard' to Western interests

"As one expert in the area recently put it: 'It is getting to be a close question whether it would be any worse from the U.S. point of view for Russia to exercise a predominant influence in Iran than to have the Shah, at least in his present mood of megalomania, in ever firmer control and ever more powerful position throughout the entire region.'"

Kissinger said that "Any president who would resort to military action without worrying what the Soviets would do would have to be reckless."

But he went on to note that "The question is to what extent he would let himself be deterred by it."

Kissinger, who later made it clear that his remarks re-

flected the views of President Ford, said: "I am not saying there's no circumstance where we would not use force . . . I want to make clear, however, that the use of force would be considered only in the gravest emergency."

The former government strategist insisted that the gravest emergency already exists for the United States, Western Europe and Japan.

He warned that the world was entering a depression comparable to that of the 1930s.

Robert Tucker, a Johns Hopkins University professor writing in Commentary magazine, tends to agree. But he cautions that the oil producers are getting the wrong idea because "there is no evidence that the alternative of military intervention, or the credible threat of intervention, has been given serious consideration by the American government."

But Kissinger's interview seemed designed to make clear that the government, indeed, was thinking about such intervention.

Kissinger warned, however, that military action is a "very dangerous course."

"We should have learned from Vietnam," he commented, "that it is easier to get into a war than to get out of it."