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**Always threat  
of war if U.S.  
keeps pledges**

## ANALYSIS

Knight News Service

WASHINGTON — Like it or not, the U.S. could be dragged into a new war by any one of hundreds of "commitments" President Ford is now fervently assuring the world he is determined to honor.

They include:

- Forty one formal mutual defense treaties with nations around the globe, from Korea to New Zealand, Norway to Turkey.

- Network of military bases the administration considers "commitments" — more than 340 major bases in some 30 countries, and at least 3,000 other minor ones.

- Scores of "executive agreements" with nations on every continent. Each raises the question of whether the U.S. should intervene if threats arise.

- Pledges to provide a "nuclear shield" to Europe, Japan, Korea and Latin America. The U.S. has strongly suggested the "shield" extends throughout the Pacific, to the shores of China. This means it would use nuclear bombs to defend allies attacked by nuclear weapons.

These are the commitments the President and Secretary of State Kissinger are talking about in a concerted campaign to reassure allies, the U.S. intends to stand by them.

But few, even at the top levels of the government, can say precisely what all of the commitments are.

That is because U.S. commitments have been built up since World War II and have become so complex, and often so subtle, there is no way to know them all.

The point is that commitments range from formal treaties involving many nations, ratified by the Senate; to bi-lateral (two-country) treaties; to announced agreements, sometimes in the form of communiques; to public announcements by a president, or a cabinet official; and perhaps to secret communications between heads of state.

The U.S. had no treaty with South Vietnam. It went to war anyway, citing the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty (SEATO), to which South Vietnam wasn't a party, as legal authority.

In a very real sense the nation's most important "commitments" are not what is on paper. They involve what the President in

power believes to be important.

Today, top officials say the most important U.S. commitments are, in order:

- The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), signed in 1949, involving 14 countries. The U.S. has pledged to go to war if any are attacked.

To officials, NATO is the most sacred of all U.S. commitments. The U.S. has fought two wars to keep central Europe in friendly hands and NATO is designed to prevent a third world war, this time with Russia.

- The survival of Israel. This is a totally different package, in which no treaty is involved. The U.S. has not pledged to use its own troops to defend Israel, but presidents repeatedly have accepted responsibility for Israel's survival.

Exactly what the U.S. would do in a crisis, officials say, would depend on the circumstances. If Russia sent troops to the Middle East, U.S. troops might be sent, too.

Said one top official: "If Israel couldn't defend itself with our arms, we would be hard put not to go to war."

- South Korea and Japan. This is now considered the most sensitive area in the Far East, because the interests of four of the world's great powers converge — China, Russia, Japan and the U.S.

The U.S. has 40,000 troops in South Korea, equipped with nuclear weapons, including some on the North Korean border. They play the role of "trip wire" in case of attack.

To some top officials the Korean-Japanese commitment is more important than the commitment to Israel — but Israel lies in an area where dangers are more immediate.

A vitally important point now, however, is that top officials are not identifying the U.S. "commitment" to Thailand as among major concerns.

The U.S. will not go to war over Taiwan, officials say privately, regardless of the treaty that exists.