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Ford Says PLO

Aided in Pullout

Washington

The Palestine Liberation Organization and all other groups involved in the battle in Lebanon cooperated in the evacuation of Americans from Beirut, President Ford said yesterday.

Mr. Ford met with reporters in the White House Rose Garden to express his satisfaction with the operation, which had kept him up until after 5 a.m.

"The PLO and all other parties in the Lebanon area cooperated completely in making it possible for us to evacuate the Americans and the other nationals without any incident," Mr. Ford said. It was the first official word that the PLO had participated.

Mr. Ford also praised the State and Defense Departments and termed the operation "well planned and well executed."

The President's remarks elaborated on brief comments he had made to reporters at 5:16 a.m. when, en route to bed, he dropped into the White House press room.

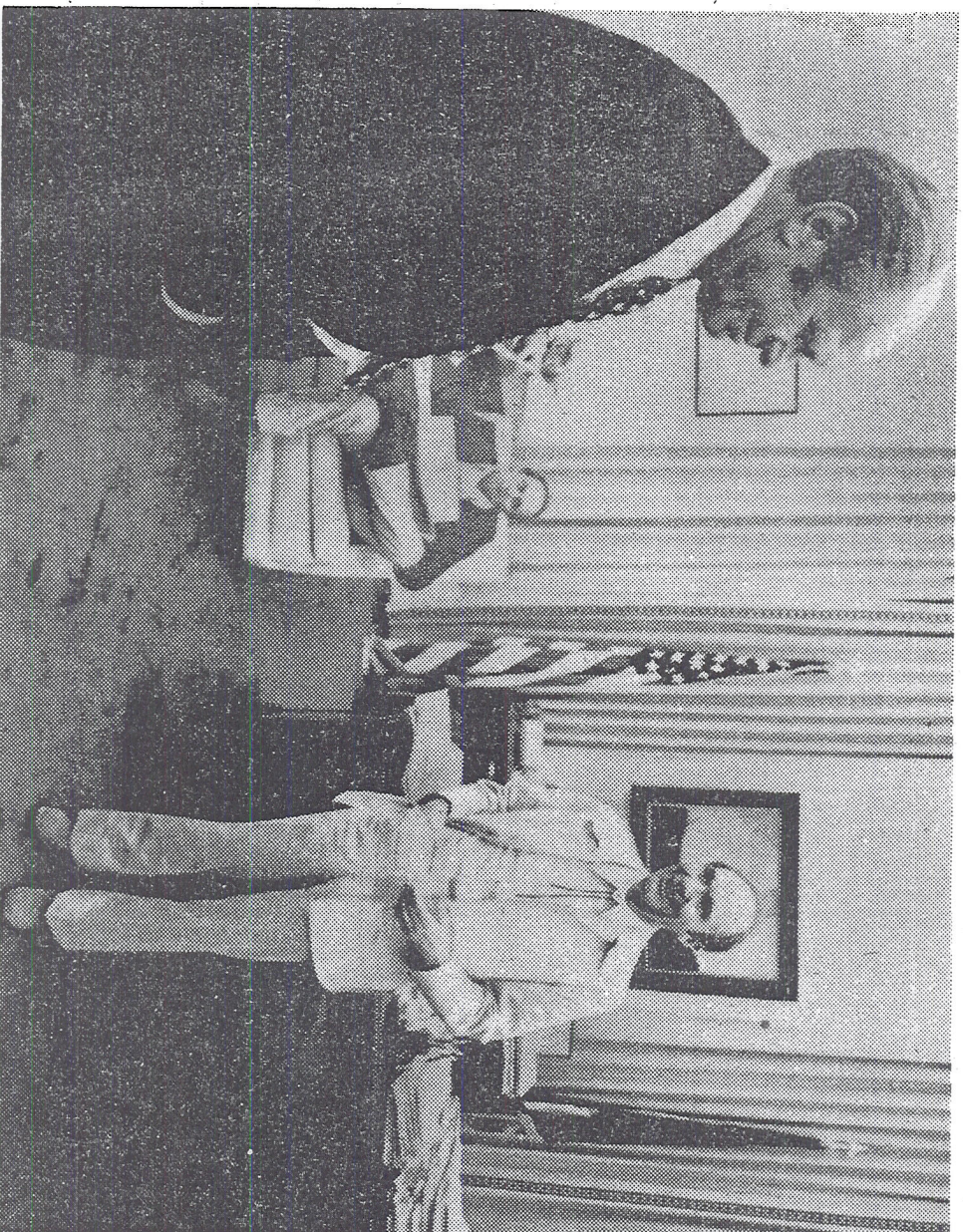
The Pentagon called it Operation Fluid Drive, and for 263 persons, two dogs and a parakeet, the American naval evacuation from Beirut was as smooth as its code name.

Mr. Ford proclaimed the operation a complete success after jokingly telling reporters that he had merely come to see what movie they were watching.

Mr. Ford was up after three hours' sleep and attended Sunday services at St. John's Episcopal Church near the White House. Talking to reporters there he said of the evacuation, "Everybody did a fine job."

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and the National Military Command Center monitored the operation from the Pentagon and relayed periodic reports to the White House, where Mr. Ford kept an all-night vigil with the National Security Council.

White House press secretary Ron Nessen said Mr. Ford "was there to be ready to make whatever



A smiling President Ford heard the news of the successful Lebanese departure from national security assistant Brent Scowcroft (right). At rear was presidential assistant Richard Cheney

UPI Telephoto

decision would have to be made if it did not go as smoothly as it did." further evacuation from Beirut," 1400 Americans in Lebanon decided "There are no plans for any know why most of the remaining to stay behind.

United Press