

# Security Council Move Cuts Tension After Soviet Threat

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The United States and the Soviet Union passed through the shadows of high crisis yesterday when the Nixon administration saw a threat of possible Soviet 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 U.N. Security Council resolution to send a multinational peace-keeping force to the Middle East war zone, with troops of the superpowers excluded, appeared to remove the risk of what the United States feared might be "unilateral" introduction of Soviet military units to defend the interests of Egypt.

An administration spokesman called that resolution "a step in the right direction to relieve 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.

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

The crisis talk exploded without notice on an unprepared public. When it subsided within hours, there was intense debate about whether it represented a major threat to world peace or whether it was diplomatic brinkmanship on the part of one, or both, of the superpowers.

What set off the alarm was Soviet fear that Israel's forces in the 20-day-old war, despite the cease-fire initially ordered into effect on Monday, gravely threatened major forces of the Egyptian army, as a result of the Israeli breakthrough across the Suez Canal earlier in the fighting.

For the Soviet Union, and the Arab nations it supports, this Israeli challenge evidently raised imminent danger of a dire turnabout for their entire investment in the war.

Egyptian President Anwar Sadat on Wednesday publicly called for the United States and the Soviet Union to send their own troops to the war zone to impose a cease-fire. The United States Wednesday afternoon flatly rejected that appeal, without waiting to receive any formal communication about it.

According to Sen. Henry M. Jackson (D-Wash) about 8 Wednesday night Soviet Ambassador Anatoliy F. Dobrynin delivered in Washington what Jackson described as a message with "brutal" language.

The Soviet Union, Jackson told newsmen, in very "rough" language told the United States that if it refused to send American forces to help keep the peace in the Middle East, the Soviet Union would do so on its own. Another source said the Soviet note spoke of Russian "volunteers."

Jackson said the Soviet message charged that numerous Israeli violations of the cease-fire provided full justification for intervention by the major powers.

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This Soviet message, Jackson said, was a "shock" to the administration, producing "an hour of peril" in which, he said, "the whole spirit of [American-Soviet] detente would seem to be involved."

Another Capitol Hill source said the Soviet message was the toughest he had ever seen, and contained a threat to destroy Israel, if necessary.

Kissinger declined yesterday to make public or to describe the Soviet note, on grounds that the United States was determined to do nothing to add to a confrontation atmosphere.

He said that "if the Security Council today were to pass a resolution that permitted the introduction of United Nations forces, except those of permanent members, the United States would feel that we are back on the road that had been charted earlier this week."

If the resolution is "carried out," said the secretary, it should "lead to an immediate easing of the situation." The American military alert, Kissinger said, will be "taken off as soon as any danger of unilateral action is removed."

Administration officials last night were not prepared to say that the danger they perceived has disappeared, even after the Security Council acted.

State Department spokesman Robert J. McCloskey, who called the Security Council action an encouraging step,

said the United States "will be watching developments as they proceed . . ."

The tension in official Washington eased noticeably by last night, however, after an extraordinary day that brought, among other things, a second cancellation of a public appearance by President Nixon.

Mr. Nixon earlier had planned a nationwide address on the domestic uproar aroused by his ouster last weekend of Watergate Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox, and then shifted plans to schedule a press conference last night. That was canceled early yesterday morning because of the new Middle East crisis and rescheduled for today.

About 5 p.m. yesterday, after a 40-minute conference with Kissinger, the President left for his mountain retreat at Camp David, accompanied by Mrs. Nixon and their daughter Tricia Cox.

Kissinger's press conference almost inescapably provoked questions yesterday about possible links between the nation's latest domestic trauma and the sudden turn of events in the Middle East.

One questioner even asked if the President's order for a worldwide U.S. military alert was "a totally rational decision."

Kissinger stiffened, and then said that because of the unusual implications of the question, he would break a standard rule and disclose that "all of the president's



senior advisers, all the members of the National Security Council, were unanimous in their recommendation" that the alert was required.

President Nixon, Kissinger said, only expressed his view after his advisers had given their judgment.

At another point Kissinger said, "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." When the record is made public, said Kissinger, "it will be seen that the President had no other choice, as a responsible national leader."

When asked, however, if the Soviet Union might have been tempted to lay down an unusual demand because domestic events "so weakened the President," Kissinger said: "... One cannot have crises of authority in a society for a period of months without paying a price somewhere along the line."

There was a marked difference, however, in the state of alarm that registered in official Washington yesterday, and the much milder reaction reported among foreign diplomats at the United Nations.

At the United Nations, it was reported, some diplomats expressed the belief that the Soviet Union had no serious intention of acting unilaterally. These sources concluded that the United States had overreacted to a calculated Soviet ploy, designed to satisfy Egyptians and

to squeeze out of the Security Council the resolution that was produced yesterday.

To administrations officials, and apparently to most of the 14 congressional leaders who were summoned to the White House early yesterday to meet with the President and Kissinger, the challenge was real and somber.

Kissinger, at his new conference, raised the prospect of momentous dangers that could be ahead for the United States and the Soviet Union. Yet he simultaneously said that Soviet actions do not yet mark any "irrevocable" course of conduct.

It is too early, Kissinger said, to reach a judgment about what impact the new developments will have on the entire prospect for reducing tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union.

"I think we can make a better judgment," he said, "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.

"If this does not happen," Kissinger continued, "then we have made an effort for which we have paid no price, that had to be made, and then one has to wait for another moment when the task of ensuring or of bringing peace to mankind can be attempted."