



Men from the 82d Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, N. C., loading gear after yesterday's alert was announced

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Nixon's Motives in Alert Questioned and Defended

By JOHN HERBERS
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WASHINGTON, Oct. 25 — At his news conference this morning, Secretary of State Kissinger found himself in the strange position of having to deny repeatedly that President Nixon's alert of troops in the Middle East crisis was intended to divert attention from the President's Watergate problems.

"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," Mr. Kissinger said.

On Capitol Hill, the House Majority Leader, Thomas P. O'Neill, found it necessary to make a floor speech assuring members that "there is absolutely nothing political" in the President's foreign policy move.

Widespread Doubts

"Too many members of my own party were snidely referring to the President as a political animal who was capable of exploiting this to his own advantage," Mr. O'Neill said later.

Doubts about the President's motives were widespread in Washington this morning after it was announced that American forces had been alerted against what seemed to be a move by the Soviet Union to send troops into the war area.

Although Democratic leaders moved quickly to dispel the suspicions, the question of Mr. Nixon's credibility and the extent of doubts about the Watergate scandal pointed up the depths of his domestic troubles as members of Congress continued to receive demands from constituents for his impeachment.

Meantime, Mr. Nixon postponed a news conference he had scheduled for 9 o'clock tonight. Gerald L. Warren, his spokesman, said that the President was too busy with the Middle East crisis to hold the conference but would do so tomorrow, at a time to be determined.

TV Report Canceled

Yesterday Mr. Nixon canceled — because of preoccupation with the Middle East, his spokesman said — a scheduled televised report to the nation

on his role in the Justice Department shake-up and his decision to turn over Watergate tape recordings to Federal District Judge John J. Sirica.

Late today Mr. Nixon, accompanied by his wife and daughter, Mrs. Edward F. Cox, flew to Camp David, the presidential retreat in Maryland, to spend the night. It was the President's third overnight trip to Camp David this week amid the Middle East developments and the beginning of a Congressional inquiry into possible impeachment proceedings.

White House officials themselves had connected the Watergate case with foreign policy over the last few days. In defending the President's change of position on the tapes, they said repeatedly that Mr. Nixon had sought a compromise, in part because he felt the issue might weaken his hand abroad.

Alexander M. Haig Jr., Mr. Nixon's chief of staff, said at a news conference Tuesday that, even though he was not suggesting the constitutional issue of the tapes had brought about any international crisis, there was fear that some foreign governments might interpret the internal dispute here as a sign of American weakness. In that regard, he said, Watergate was considered a "key factor."

This morning Mr. Kissinger seemed somewhat surprised

and irritated that the President's motives in the Middle East should come into question. Marvin Kalb, diplomatic correspondent for C.B.S. News, raised the issue by saying:

"There has been some line of speculation this morning that the American alert might have been prompted as much perhaps by American domestic requirements as by the real requirements of diplomacy in the Middle East."

Mr. Kissinger replied, "We are attempting to conduct the foreign policy of the United States with regard for what we owe not just to the electorate but to future generations," and went on to say that such a suggestion was "a symptom of what is happening to our country."

All Advisers Agreed

Later Mr. Kissinger was asked whether the Soviet Union interpreted the events of last weekend, when Mr. Nixon dismissed the special Watergate prosecutor, Archibald Cox, as having so weakened the President that it saw "a target of opportunity and decided on it."

"Speculation about motives is always dangerous," Mr. Kissinger replied. "But one cannot have crisis of authority in a society for a period of months without paying a price somewhere along the line."

Mr. Kissinger was also asked

whether he or the President had recommended the alert.

"I have a general rule not to provide a check list of what advice I give to the President," Mr. Kissinger said. "But due to the particular implications of your remark, I may say that all of the President's senior advisers, all the members of the National Security Council, were unanimous in the recommendations as the result of a deliberation in which the President did not himself participate, and which he joined only after they had formed their judgment."

Pressed still further to provide information why an alert was ordered, and so end doubts about the President's motives, Mr. Kissinger said:

"We are attempting to preserve the peace in very difficult circumstances. It is up to you, ladies and gentlemen, to determine whether this is the moment to try to create a crisis of confidence in the field of foreign policy as well."

Democratic leaders in Congress sought to show their support of the President's actions in the Middle East.

Senator Edmund S. Muskie, Democrat of Maine, one of the President's harshest critics, said, "No one should misinterpret the domestic strains of our democratic system as offering an opportunity for foreign adventure at our expense or the expense of world peace."