

President Says U.S., Soviets Agree to Press for Settlement

PRESIDENT, From A1

tente had held and "we not only avoided a confrontation but we moved a great step forward toward real peace in the Mideast."

The precautionary alert of American forces he ordered this week has been discontinued in part, he said. The alert with regard to the North American Air Defense Command (NORAD) and the Strategic Air Command (SAC) has been ended, the President said.

By taking these two elements off alert the President defused the nuclear part of the crisis. Other forces are being maintained in a state of readiness, the President said, as are Soviet forces.

No one can afford the continuing conflict in the Middle East, the President said. Both Washington and Moscow recognize that while they have conflicting interests there, they "cannot allow our differences... to jeopardize even greater interests that we have, for example, in continuing a detente in Europe, in continuing the negotiations which can lead to a limitation of nuclear arms... and in continuing in other ways that can contribute to peace in the world."

"Without detente," he said, "we might have had a major conflict in the Middle East. With detente, we avoided it."

When asked about the world shortage of oil, the President said it is "indispensable" that "we avoid any further Mideast crisis so that the flow of oil to Europe, to Japan and to the United States can continue."

Referring to the Brezhnev note that resulted in the decision to alert American forces, and which Sen. Henry M. Jackson (D-Wash.) described as "brutal," the President said that "it was very firm and it left very little to the imagination as to what he intended."

"And my response was also very firm and left little to the imagination of how we would react."

On many occasions during the news conference, Mr. Nixon seemed to relish foreign policy questions, and he repeatedly referred with pride to his decisions and accomplishments in Vietnam, Cambodia and the Middle East.

Particularly, he emphasized his relations with the Soviet leaders. It was because he and Brezhnev have had personal contacts, he maintained, "that notes ex-

changed" with firmness and frankness "result in a settlement rather than a confrontation."

On another occasion, when a reporter asked how he was bearing up emotionally under the stress of recent events, Mr. Nixon claimed that those who saw him during the Middle East crisis "thought I bore up rather well."

"I have a quality which is—I guess I must have inherited from my Midwestern mother and father—which is that the tougher it gets, the cooler I get," he boasted.

"It has been my lot throughout my political life, and I suppose because I have been through so much, that may be one of the reasons that when I have to face an international crisis, I have what it takes."

When asked whether he thought his Watergate trouble influenced the Soviet leaders to test his ability to respond to the Middle East crisis, he replied that Brezhnev "probably can't quite understand how the President of the United States wouldn't be able to handle the Watergate problems."

"He (Brezhnev) would be able to handle it, all right, if he had them. But I think what happens is that what Mr. Brezhnev does understand is the power of the United States. What he does know is the President of the United States."

Recalling how he was under "unmerciful assault" at the time of the bombing in Cambodia, at the time he ordered the mining of Haiphong harbor and at other times of foreign policy crisis, Mr. Nixon said Brezhnev had learned that regardless of the political pressures he, the President, "would do what was right. That is what made Mr. Brezhnev act as he did."

Mr. Nixon spoke of the heavy losses both sides have suffered in the Arab-Israeli fighting, and he said neither side could afford such blood-letting again.

But he did not discuss the differences between Arab and Israeli aims in the fighting or the fact that Israel had demanded freedom of negotiation between the belligerents without outside pressure.

The decision to impose a cease-fire, at the time Israeli troops were on the offensive, drew criticism in Tel Aviv, and some Israelis are saying that while they won on the battlefield the Arabs won the political fight.

The Israelis succeeded in encircling and trapping 22,000 men of the Egyptian Third Army, a victory the Israelis believed might lead to the beginning of face-to-

face negotiations for a settlement.

The President confirmed that the United States will send observers to the Middle East if requested by U.N. Secretary General Kurt Waldheim.

But the President insisted that the major powers should not be part of the U.N. peace-keeping forces and must not introduce military forces into the Middle East.

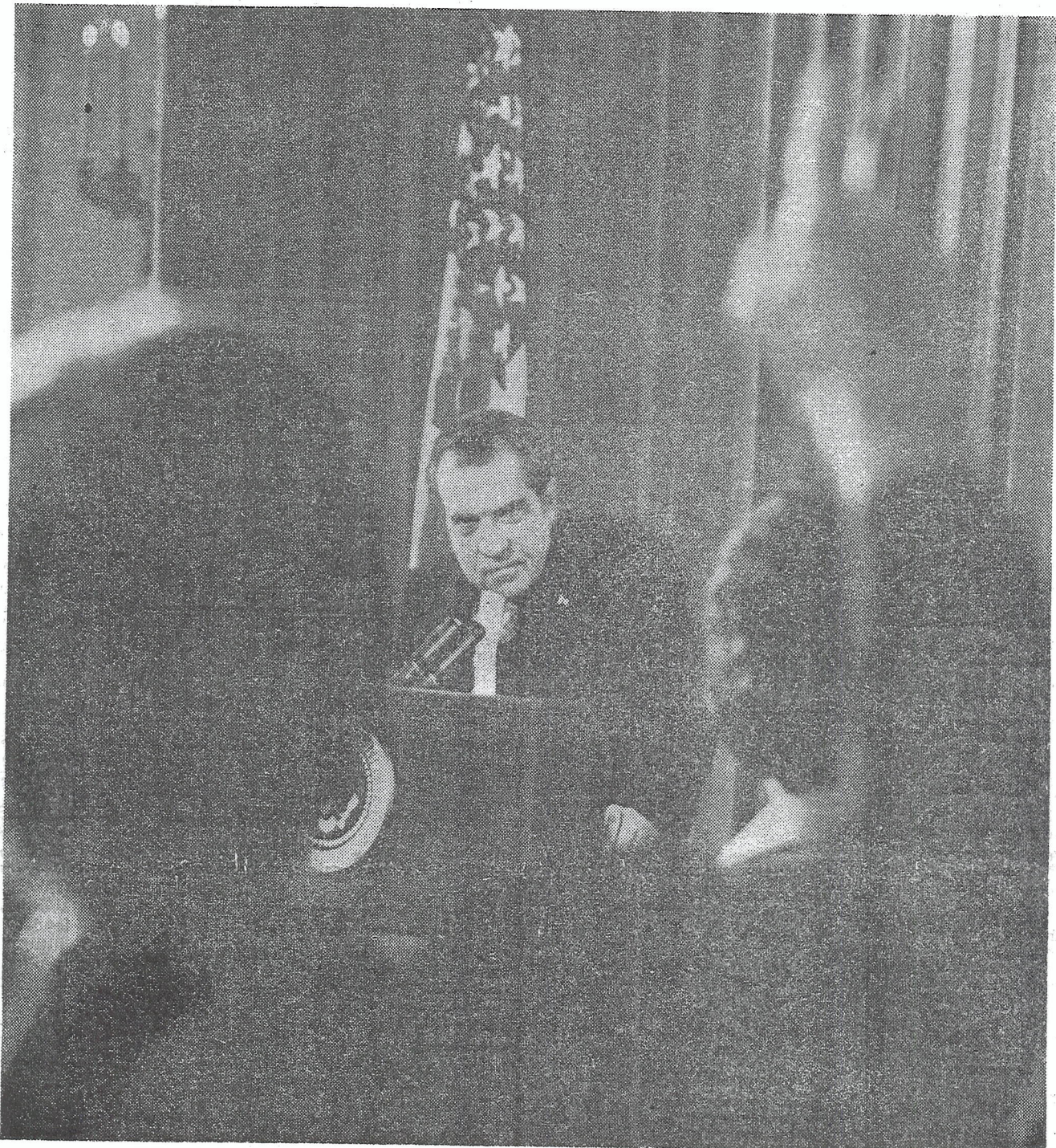
"We obtained information which led us to believe that the Soviet Union was planning to send a very substantial force into the Mideast—a military force," the President said.

But observer teams are another matter, he said. Other U.S. officials said earlier that they assumed the Soviet "representatives" sent to Egypt were unarmed observers intended to become part of a U.N. observer team.

State Department spokesman Robert J. McCloskey said that the Soviet move came as no surprise "as a result of exchanges that went between Washington and Moscow the last 24 to 36 hours."

McCloskey said "we make the assumption that those are noncombat personnel that will be folded into" the truce observer team.

Two hours after the news conference ended, Mr. Nixon left by helicopter for Camp David. He arrived there at 10:06 p.m., accompanied by Mrs. Nixon, Tricia and Julie and David Eisenhower.



By Ken Feil—The Washington Post

A reporter raises his hand to get the President's attention during press conference at the White House.