

House Halts Bid For Alert Data

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The House yesterday killed a resolution demanding information on President Nixon's controversial military alert order during the Middle East war last October.

On a voice vote, the House tabled the resolution introduced by Reps. Michael Harrington (D-Mass.) and Fortney P. (Pete) Stark (D-Calif.) after Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger failed to provide Congress with the information.

The resolution would have required Kissinger to turn over the text of all the messages between Mr. Nixon and Soviet officials and a list and chronology of all the orders and actions taken during the crisis last Oct. 24-25.

The House agreed with the Foreign Affairs Committee, which disapproved the measure 26 to 2, that most of the information was sensitive and in the national interest should not be released now.

In his response to the committee, Kissinger said he did not believe public airing of the information "would contribute toward the goal of peace which we all seek."

"Despite the considerable progress made in the Middle East since November, the situation there remains delicate."

"In our view, resurrecting the October episode now might well impair the progress achieved thus far."

In an unclassified summary of what happened during the crisis, Kissinger said an "unusually tough" letter from Soviet Communist Party chief Leonid Brezhnev which followed movement of Soviet ships into the Mediterranean led to Mr. Nixon's decision to put U.S. forces on full alert.

"It was essential to clear up any doubt about U.S. determination in this situation and prepare to cope with the quickly unfolding events," he said.

Kissinger promised shortly after the incident last fall to provide Congress with the material, much of it classified, but had not done so by March 25 when Harrington and Stark introduced their resolution.

Rep. H.R. Gross (R-Iowa), who voted to table the resolution both in the committee and in the House, nevertheless put the President and the State Department "on notice" that Congress was entitled to such information more quickly in the future.

"Never again should members of Congress permit themselves, for lack of reliable information, to be sucked into a war as they were in Southeast Asia," Gross said.