

# Nixon Hails Kissinger's Work

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President Nixon yesterday hailed Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger's negotiation of a Syrian-Israeli disengagement agreement as "a major diplomatic achievement" that could open the way to permanent peace in the Middle East.

The President made the first official announcement that an agreement had been reached when he walked into the White House press room at 1 p.m. to read, live on television, the brief statement released moments later in Jerusalem and Damascus.

Although it was the kind of announcement Mr. Nixon likes best, he was solemn and hesitant in his remarks.

On Jan. 17, the President also walked into the press room to announce that an Egyptian-Israeli agreement had been reached on disengagement and separation of their military forces.

The successful negotiations, at a time when the President's political standing at home is at a low point, opens the way for him to make a dramatic trip to the Middle East.

Whether it will be before or after his summit meeting in Moscow in late June had not been decided last night, according to official spokesmen, but Mr. Nixon would like to travel to the Middle East as soon as possible.

The Middle East has been a major problem to him since he entered office. In his first news conference, he said he considered "a powder keg, very explosive," and he said "it needs to be defused."

Six weeks later, he referred to the Middle East as "a terribly dangerous area," and ap-

pealed to the Soviet Union to play a peace-making role.

The President said yesterday that Kissinger's mission almost broke down on several occasions during the month that he shuttled between Jerusalem and Damascus trying to find a formula for a mutual troop disengagement on the Golan Heights.

Kissinger deserves "enormous credit for the work he has done, along with members of his team, in keeping this negotiation going and finally reaching an agreement," the President said.

He said he had sent messages of congratulations to Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir and to Syrian President Hafez Assad. The President praised the "statesmanship" they

showed in resolving differences "that seemed totally without any prospect of resolution a month or so ago."

Despite the Egyptian-Israeli and Syrian-Israeli disengagement agreements, "There are many difficulties ahead before a permanent settlement is reached," the President said.

However, "what was a major roadblock to any permanent settlement has now been removed," the President said.

He promised that the United States would continue its diplomatic efforts to bring about a permanent settlement.

Based on the success of the for a permanent peace "now latest mission, the prospects are better than they have been at any time over the past 25 years," Mr. Nixon said.



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