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5/23/75

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A P Wried
on the BB & Presidential
Interview

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Central Files

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URGENT

ADV 1 P.M. EDT

FORD A102 LEAD

BY FRANK CORNIER

ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

WASHINGTON (AP) - PRESIDENT FORD SAID TODAY HE SENSED THE UNITED STATES IS ENTERING A NEW ERA DURING WHICH IT WILL SHOW THE WORLD IT CAN MAKE A DECISION AND "STICK WITH IT."

THE PRESIDENT WAS ASKED AT A NEWS CONFERENCE WITH FOREIGN JOURNALISTS WHETHER HE THOUGHT THE UNITED STATES WAS MOVING INTO A PERIOD OF NEOISOLATIONISM.

HE SAID HE DID NOT AGREE WITH THAT ASSESSMENT AND ADDED THERE ARE INDICATIONS CONGRESS IS MORE WILLING TO LET THE PRESIDENT HAVE A FREER HAND IN FOREIGN POLICY.

AS AN EXAMPLE HE CITED DEFEAT IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES LAST WEEK OF AN AMENDMENT THAT WOULD HAVE FORCED WITHDRAWAL OF 70,000 AMERICAN TROOPS FROM OTHER COUNTRIES.

"THAT WOULD HAVE AFFECTED OUR COMMITMENTS TO NATO," FORD SAID. "AS I REMEMBER IT, THE VOTE WAS 311 TO 95. THIS IS MORE FAVORABLE THAN A VOTE TAKEN LAST YEAR."

FORD CALLED LAST WEEK'S VOTE AN "INDICATION THAT THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ARE GETTING OUT FROM UNDER THEIR TRAUMA OVER VIETNAM."

FORD ALSO SAID HE FEELS HIS HANDLING OF THE MAYAGUEZ AFFAIR OFFERS "A FIRM ASSURANCE THAT THE UNITED STATES IS CAPABLE AND HAS THE WILL TO ACT IN EMERGENCIES AND CHALLENGES."

THE PRESIDENT: 3RD GRAF A100; A101.

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URGENT

ADV 1 P.M. EDT

FORD-MIDDLE EAST 350

By BARRY SCHWEID

ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

WASHINGTON (AP) - PRESIDENT FORD SAID FRIDAY HE WILL COMPLETE HIS MIDDLE EAST REASSESSMENT SHORTLY AFTER ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER YITZHAK RABIN'S VISIT IN MID-JUNE AND UNVEIL IN DETAIL A NEW U.S. POLICY FOR THAT TROUBLED REGION.

IN AN INTERVIEW WITH EUROPEAN NEWSMEN, FORD ALSO INVITED NATO ALLIES TO TAKE AN UNOFFICIAL BUT ACTIVE ROLE IN THE ARAB-ISRAELI DISPUTE. THIS, HE SAID, WOULD BE "EXTREMELY BENEFICIAL AND MOST HELPFUL."

THE PRESIDENT GAVE NO HINT OF THE RESULT OF THE MIDDLE EAST REASSESSMENT, UNDERTAKEN AFTER SECRETARY OF STATE HENRY A. KISSINGER FAILED LAST MARCH TO WORK OUT A PARTIAL ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL IN SINAI. PRIVATELY U.S. OFFICIALS HAVE BLAMED THE RABIN GOVERNMENT FOR A MISSED OPPORTUNITY TO REACH A SETTLEMENT WITH EGYPT.

ARMED INTERVENTION TO SECURE MIDDLE EAST OIL IN THE EVENT OF ANOTHER EMBARGO, A PROSPECT NEWLY RAISED BY DEFENSE SECRETARY JAMES R. SCHLESINGER, IS NOT UNDER ACTIVE CONSIDERATION, THE PRESIDENT SAID.

BY EMPHASIZING COOPERATION INSTEAD OF CONFRONTATION, FORD SAID UNDER INTENSE QUESTIONING, "IN EFFECT WE RULE THAT OUT."

FORD WILL CONFER WITH EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT ANWAR SADAT IN SALZBURG, AUSTRIA, JUNE 1-2 AND THEN RECEIVE RABIN HERE JUNE 11-12. SADAT HAS SAID HE EXPECTS TO BE GIVEN THE RESULTS OF THE REASSESSMENT WHEN HE SEES THE PRESIDENT.

HOWEVER, FORD SAID, "SOME TIME SHORTLY AFTER THE MEETINGS (WITH SADAT AND RABIN) HE WILL LAY OUT WHAT HE THINK IS THE BEST SOLUTION" FOR THE MIDDLE EAST. HE SAID "DETAILS WILL BE SET FORTH" IN A PRESIDENTIAL STATEMENT AT THAT TIME.

AS FOR THE SOVIET UNION, THE PRESIDENT SAID, "OBVIOUSLY IT HAS AN INTEREST AND A RESPONSIBILITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST" AND COULD PLAY A CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE.

EARLIER THIS WEEK, SCHLESINGER SAID THE UNITED STATES MIGHT NOT BE SO PATIENT IN THE EVENT OF ANOTHER OIL EMBARGO LIKE THE ONE WAS IMPOSED BY ARAB AND OTHER MAJOR PRODUCERS AFTER THE 1973 ARAB-ISRAELI WAR. SCHLESINGER REVIVED THE THREAT OF A TAKEOVER OF OIL FIELDS.

AT TIMES IN THE PAST, BOTH FORD AND KISSINGER ALSO HAVE MENTIONED PUBLICLY SUCH A CONTINGENCY - AND BACKTRACKED AT OTHER TIMES.

MORE

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URGENT

ADV 1 P.M. EDT

FORD-MIDDLE EAST ADD

WASHN FORD-MIDDLE EAST A206 ADD: TIMES.

THIS TIME FORD DID NOT FLATLY CONTRADICT SCHLESINGER, TRYING INSTEAD TO SKIRT THE SUBJECT BY STRESSING U.S. INTEREST IN COOPERATION AND SOLUTIONS.

THE PRESIDENT SAID THE UNITED STATES HAD MADE "A TREMENDOUS EFFORT TO IMPROVE ITS RELATIONS WITH ALL ARAB COUNTRIES."

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