

WASHINGTON DATELINE

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President Gerald Ford -- in his foreign policy address to a joint session of Congress -- said that in the best American tradition the United States has committed, often with striking success "our influence and good offices to help contain conflicts and settle disputes in any regions of the world.

"We have, for example, helped the parties of the Middle East take the first steps toward living with one another in peace."

The President stressed that the interests of America, as well as our allies, are vitally affected by what happens in the Middle East.

"So long as the state of tension continues, it threatens military crisis, the weakening of our alliances, the stability of the world economy, and confrontation among the nuclear super-powers," he said. "These are intolerable risks. Because we are in the unique position of being able to deal with all the parties, we have at their request been engaged for the past year and a half in the peacemaking effort unparalleled in the history of the region."

Mr. Ford said that our policy has brought remarkable successes on the road to peace. He noted that last year two major disengagement agreements were negotiated and implemented with our help; and that for the first time in 30 years a process of negotiation on the basic political issues was begun -- and is continuing.

"Unfortunately, the latest efforts to reach a further interim agreement between Israel and Egypt have been suspended," he said. "The issues dividing the parties are vital to them and not amenable to easy and quick solutions. However, the U.S. will not be discouraged."

The President went on to say that the momentum toward peace that has been achieved over the last 18 months must and will be maintained. "The active role of the U.S. must and will be prevented," he said. "I pledge the U.S. to a major effort for peace in the Mideast -- an effort which I know has the solid support of

the American people and their Congress. We're now examining how best to proceed. We have agreed in principle to reconvene the Geneva Conference. We're prepared as well to explore other forms. The U.S. will move ahead on whatever course looks most promising, either towards an overall settlement or interim agreements, should the parties desire them. We'll not accept stagnation or a stalemate, with all its attendant risks to peace and prosperity and to our relations in and outside of the region."

The President added: "The national interest -- and national security -- require as well that we reduce the dangers of war. We shall strive to do so by continuing to improve our relations with potential adversaries."

He also said that the U.S. and the Soviet Union share an interest in lessening tensions and building a more stable relationship. "During this process we have never had any illusions. We know that we are dealing with a nation that reflects different principles and is our competitor in many parts of the globe. Through a combination of firmness and flexibility, the U.S. has in recent years laid the basis of a more reliable relationship founded on mutual interest and mutual restraint. But we cannot expect the Soviet Union to show restraint in the face of U.S. weakness or irresolution.

"As long as I am President," he added, "America will maintain its strength, its alliances, and its principles -- as a prerequisite to a more peaceful planet."

"As long as I am President, we will not permit detente to become a license to fish in troubled waters. Detente must be a two-way street."

President Ford said that central to U.S. - Soviet relations today is the critical negotiation to control strategic nuclear weapons; and that he hopes to turn the Vladivostok agreements into a final agreement when General Secretary Brezhnev visits the U.S. this year.

"Such an agreement," he said, "for the first time would put a ceiling on the strategic arms race and would mark a turning point in postwar history and would be a crucial step in lifting from history and would be a crucial step in lifting from mankind the threat of nuclear war."

Turning to trade and the Soviet Union, Mr. Ford said that our use of trade and economic

sanctions as weapons to alter the internal conduct of other nations must also be seriously re-examined.

"However well - intentioned the goals, the fact is that some of our recent actions in the economic field have been self-defeating," he said. "They are not achieving the objectives intended by the Congress. And they have damaged our foreign policy."

Ford pointed out that The Trade Act of 1974 prohibits most-favored nation treatment, credit and investment guarantees and commercial agreements with the Soviet Union so long as their emigration policies fail to meet our criteria. "The Soviet Union has therefore refused to put into effect the important 1972 trade agreement between our two countries," he said. "As a result, Western Europe and Japan have stepped into the breach. Those countries have extended credits exceeding \$8 billion."

President Ford concluded his one-hour long speech on national television by stating: "History is testing us today. We cannot afford indecision, disunity or disarray in the conduct of our foreign affairs. You and I can resolve here and now that this nation shall move ahead with wisdom, assurance and national unity."

"The world looks to us for the vigor and vision that we have demonstrated so often before at great moments in our history."

"I see a confident America, secure in its strength and values -- and determined to maintain both."

"I see a consiliatory America, extending its hand to allies and adversaries alike, forming bonds of cooperation to deal with the vast problems facing us all."

"I see a compassionate America, its heart reaching out to orphans, to refugees and to our fellow human beings afflicted by war and tyranny and hunger."

"As President, entrusted by the Constitution with primary responsibility for the conduct of our foreign affairs, I renew the pledge I made last August: To work cooperatively with the Congress."

I ask that the Congress help to keep America's word good throughout the world. We are one nation, one government, and we must have one foreign policy."

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