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THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN...

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Very little is expected from the President's Middle East tour in the way of tangible agreements, although there are strong signs he may announce resumption of full relations with Syria while in Damascus.

Without putting a date on it, Syrian President Hafez Assad said Sunday that such a restoration "is what is required in the interest of both countries." Syria broke relations during the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

It is from that low point in Arab-U.S. relations that Nixon is trying to recover. And, even though Kissinger moved the United States into a much more advantageous position in his recent mediation successes, Nixon said "all problems that exist in the area will not be solved."

The tour will be "a difficult trip from the standpoint of diplomacy," Nixon declared, adding that he nevertheless will try to convince Arab and Israeli leaders that the U.S. objective is "one of assurance for every nation in the area . . . of the right to independence, the right to security, the right to seek their own way, to achieve their own goals."

Meanwhile, there was congressional criticism about another Nixon trip, the one he will take to Moscow later this month. Sen. James R. Buckley, Cons.-R-N.Y., said in a radio interview that Watergate has created a domestic situation that would make that trip a "mission in futility."

He said, "The Soviets, quite probably because of what they see in terms of our domestic situation here, they've hardened their lines, they have appeared to become more intransigent in terms of what they will and will not discuss at the SALT Strategic Arms Limitation Talks agreements. So that I have the feeling that in many real respects a mission to Moscow is a mission in futility."

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