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Nixon Causes Stir By Commenting On Trial

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Nixon, returning home Monday night, issued a statement saying flatly that he did not intend to speculate that Charles Manson, defendant in the Sharon Tate murder case, was guilty.

Air Force One delayed its landing for nearly a half hour as the President prepared a formal statement clarifying his earlier impromptu remarks in Denver that produced a motion by Manson's defense for a mistrial.

Before going into a conference in Denver with law enforcement officials, Nixon had said of Manson:

"Here is a man who was guilty, directly or indirectly, of eight murders without reason."

In his statement upon landing at nearby Andrews Air Force Base, Md., Nixon said:

"The last thing I would do is prejudice the legal rights of any person, in any circumstances.

"To set the record straight, I do not know and did not intend to speculate as to whether the Tate defendants are guilty, in fact, or not."

"All of the facts in the case have not yet been presented. The defendants should be presumed to be innocent at this stage of their trial."

Nixon said that his Denver remarks "were in the context of my expression of a tendency on the part of some to glamorize those identified with a crime."

The chief executive had said, in fact, that the news media—not further identified—had tended to make heroes out of some criminals.

Nixon said he issued his statement because "I've been informed that my comment in Denver regarding the Tate murder trial in Los Angeles may continue to be misunderstood despite the unequivocal state-

ment made at the time by my press secretary.

After considerable prodding by reporters, press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler had said, shortly after Nixon spoke, "He failed to use the word 'alleged,'" in declaring Manson, still on trial, to be guilty.

Perhaps more remarkably, Nixon was flanked by Atty. Gen. John N. Mitchell, a fellow law-

yer, of course, when he made his original declaration and Mitchell made no move to prompt an immediate presidential correction of his remarks.

In Los Angeles, defense attorneys for Manson, on trial in connection with the slayings of actress Sharon Tate and six others, sought dismissal of the case because of Nixon's statement. The trial judge denied the mo-

tion.

Nixon, appearing on short notice just before a conference with state law enforcement officers at the federal courthouse in Denver, said his remarks were "not to be interpreted as any criticism of the news media. What I say now is simply an observation of the kind of times we live in and how attitudes develop among our young people."