

\$1.3 Million Spent on Nixon

By Ronald Kessler

Federal expenditures of \$1.3 million on President Nixon's California home and the Florida presidential complex were defended as being "not excessive" yesterday by the head of the congressional committee that approved the overall budget for the work.

Rep. Tom Steed (D-Okla.), chairman of the Treasury Postal Service, and General Government Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee, recalled the assassination of President John F. Kennedy during hearings on the expenditures yesterday and said "still more" might be spent to protect the President.

"We have urged that decisions (on presidential security) always be made on the side of too much rather

than too little," said Steed, referring to his committee's approval of budgets used by the General Services Administration for improvements at the President's homes.

Committee members said, however, that they were not aware of the specific improvements made at the homes until they read about them in the press. They requested GSA to consult the committee on future improvements.

Some \$4,800 spent by GSA for furniture for President Nixon's den in San Clemente was defended by several committee members as being necessary for the operation of the Presidency.

Rep. Jack Edwards (D-Ala.) compared the expenditures on the President's den with GSA's policy of fur-

nishing congressmen's offices in their home districts. He said he was "appalled" that more was not spent on the President.

However, Rep. Edward R. Roybal (D-Calif.), said, "A congressman cannot have an office in his home. I don't see the parallel." He added, "Does that mean the President can have a home in every state and have GSA furnish it?"

GSA Administrator Arthur F. Sampson said he knows of no legal prohibition against a congressman having a government-furnished office in his home.

Asked about this question yesterday, officials of the Senate Ethics Committee and the House Administration Committee, which are responsible in their respective houses for matters in-

volving furnishings, said that no congressman or senator would place a district office in his home because he would be defeated at the next election.

"I don't think it would be politically wise," said William M. Cochrane, staff director of the Senate committee.

Asked for the legal basis for GSA's expenditures at the Nixon homes, William E. Casselman II, general counsel of the GSA, cited a congressional statement of intent attached to GSA appropriation bills.

The statement says that money should be made available "to provide such fencing, lighting, guard booths, and other facilities on private or other property not in government ownership or control as may be

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appropriate to enable the U.S. Secret Service to perform its protective functions . . ."

The GSA counsel also cited a 1968 law requiring federal agencies to "assist the Secret Service in the performance of its protective duties . . ."

Asked by Roybal for GSA's authority for furnishing the President's den, Casselman said that GSA must provide office furnishings for government officials, and "traditionally services follow the President."

John H. Warner, assistant to the director of the Secret Service, said his agency had requested most of the improvements in the two homes. Among the exceptions

were expenditures in Key Biscayne of \$1,995 for a septic tank, \$587 for a flagpole, \$621 for an ice maker, \$384 for a refrigerator, and \$475 for a swimming pool filter.

In San Clemente, Warner said, the exceptions were the \$4,800 for office furniture, a \$2,329 flagpole, and \$6,125 for surveys of the property.

GSA officials said most of these exceptions were authorized by GSA itself. They said the septic tank was put in a house leased by GSA for the White House Communications Agency.

The flagpoles, they said, were necessary for the operation of the Presidency. The ice-maker, which they said had been requested verbally

by a Secret Service agent, was for Secret Service agents, as was the refrigerator.

The pool filter, they said, was also for the house used by the communications agency. They said installing the filter was cheaper than cleaning stagnant water in the pool.

The surveys, the GSA officials said, were necessary for the walls and fences requested by the Secret Service for security.

Asked about the \$13,500 spent for a new heating system in the San Clemente house, Lilburn E. Boggs, deputy director of the Secret Service, said the existing heaters were "unsafe."

GSA officials said the government paid for a portion of a new sewer line at San Clemente because it would be used by official government visitors.

Asked if GSA had previously spent money on President's houses, Sampson said it would take months to go through the records. GSA has previously said it could find no evidence of such expenditures, although it has said the military might have ordered improvements in the past.

James J. Rowley, director of the Secret Service, said that to his knowledge an airstrip at the LBJ Ranch was paid for by President Johnson.