

Court Doctors to Examine Nixon

From News Dispatches

LOS ANGELES, Nov. 24—The head of the three-physician team that will examine former President Nixon to see if he is well enough to testify in the Watergate trial in Washington arrived here today and said he hoped to complete the examination by Monday night.

Dr. Charles Hufnagel, chief of surgery at Georgetown University in Washington, said he had been asked by U.S. District Court Judge John J. Sirica to find out under what conditions Mr. Nixon could testify.

Hufnagel said he would go to Long Beach hospital Monday morning to study the records of the Oct. 29 blood clot

operation following which Nixon almost died.

Nixon's own physician, Dr. John C. Lungren, has said that he feels that even a visit by the court-appointed medical team could send Mr. Nixon's blood pressure up and threaten new internal bleeding.

"If after examining the data we felt that was true, we would so state and not proceed," Hufnagel told a press conference at Los Angeles airport.

The other two surgeons on the team are Dr. John Spittell Jr., of Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., and Dr. Richard Starr Ross of Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. "We will hope to complete

the examination within one day," Hufnagel said.

He was asked if he felt any reluctance to give a medical opinion which might clash with Lungren's.

He replied: "No—in the sense that we came here without bias. There is always room for some difference of opinion in medical matters. We don't come to challenge any medical opinion which has been given.

"We are here to render an independent opinion for the court."

Hufnagel came off the plane with a thick, hardcover volume of the life of another American President, Thomas Jefferson, under his arm.

The medical team was selected by Sirica on Nov. 13, the day before Nixon came

was released from the hospital to his oceanside home at San Clemente.

The three surgeons have been charged with deciding if Nixon is well enough to travel or whether he could make statements under oath at his home which could be videotaped for the trial jury to see and hear.

He is subpoenaed by the prosecution and the defense as a witness in the trial of five of his former aides by the defense and by the court.

Hufnagel said the team would interview Dr. Eldon Hickman, who operated on the former President, at Long Beach hospital at 9 a.m. Monday.

"Obviously we would like to spare Mr. Nixon all the stress

that would be possible, and we will determine how that would best be done," Hufnagel said.

He said the examination of Nixon would take place at San Clemente, possibly Monday afternoon.

Nixon's doctors have said he is too ill to give a deposition for another three to four months and will be unable to fly east for an "indeterminate" time. The trial is expected to end by Christmas.

Nixon, 61, recovering from phlebitis surgery and postoperative complications, has said he is not opposed to the examinations, although Lungren said last week that he could not imagine any sort of physical examination which would not endanger the health of his patient.