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Ford's tell-all policy on foreign gifts

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WASHINGTON — The Ford Administration will announce a new record-keeping system that would provide for full public disclosure of all gifts to the First Family from heads of state and other foreign officials.

A White House spokesman said that President Ford has given his tentative approval and is planning to announce details after "a few minor points are ironed out with the State Department."

The press office has released a list of everything President Ford and his family received from foreign "kings, princes and foreign states" during his first

months in office.

Still being processed is a list for gifts received on his recent trip to Japan and Vladivostok.

Under the new system, reporters will have access to all records and photographs maintained for public scrutiny in the office of the U.S. chief of protocol at the State Department.

The Foreign Gifts and Decorations Act of 1966 specifies all gifts from foreign officials worth more than \$50 are deemed to belong to the U.S. government and are supposed to be turned over "as quickly as possible" to the chief of protocol for disposition as public property.

President Nixon's advisers, deciding in 1969 that the

First Family was probably exempt from the law, decided to keep their records in the White House Gifts Unit. To be in compliance, should Congress ever question the system, the Nixon Administration gave the chief of protocol access to the records if he should ever need to see them. But that "access" was seldom, if ever, used.

Reporters were not allowed to examine the Nixon's gift records while he was in office.

The Nixons' records, and the gifts themselves, are in a legal limbo that may not be resolved for months or even years.

The Ford Administration has impounded all records and gifts left behind in Washington when Nixon resigned.

Some recent acquisitions

Among the latest presidential gifts:

- An electric microscope to the President; a petit point embroidered evening bag to Mrs. Ford; a black wool short cape to Susan Ford from Austria.

- A carved mahogany baby seal to the President, and a blue-and-black carved box, containing a pink, black and white mantilla and a small fan, to Mrs. Ford from Mexico.

- Two tan lambskin jackets with white lambs wool lining, seamed with rawhide strips — one each for the President and Mrs. Ford — from Mexico.

- A bronze wall plaque

with silver and brass etched designs to the President from Syria.

- A palekh box to Mrs. Ford, and 10 bottles of vodka and ten containers of caviar to the President from Russia.

- A large size kente (a cloth traditionally woven for royalty) and a pair of black thong sandals for the President, and a kente stole to Mrs. Ford from Ghana.

- A sculptured sterling silver figure of David slaying Goliath, mounted upon a base of rough-cut black marble and yellow granite inset with two silver plaques to Mrs. Ford from Israel.

- Four cans of caviar from Iran.

Both the quantity and the quality of gifts received thus far by the Fords seems modest in comparison to the largesse bestowed on the Nixons by foreign leaders.

Of 74 gifts the Fords received prior to the President's recent travels, 24 were bouquets of flowers. There are no valuable jewels on the list.

The Fords appear to have taken a detached attitude toward such gifts, which can never be theirs under the law and can only be displayed someday in a presidential library or some other museum.

First Lady Betty Ford has told her staff she doesn't even want to see most of the gifts.

Few are probably worth as much as the \$1,500 wolf-skin parka President Ford received from a furrier in Anchorage, Alaska, as he passed through on his way to meet with Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev.

Since the 1966 law does not apply to gifts from either U.S. citizens or private foreign citizens, the President was legally entitled to keep that parka, which he later gave to Brezhnev. There was nothing to prohibit him from accepting another just like it, which is being delivered as a replacement from the same manufacturer.