

Ford's trip:

Politics, golf and politics

By Sydney Kossen
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President Ford, returning to California only two weeks after an assassination attempt in Sacramento, said yesterday he doesn't know whether Israel has nuclear weapons.

But, the President said in a Los Angeles television interview, the United States is obligated to "study" Tel Aviv's request for Pershing tactical missiles, which could be equipped with nuclear warheads.

His three-day trip, which brought him to Monterey yesterday and will take him to Stanford University this afternoon and San Francisco tomorrow, is billed as nonpolitical. Ford does not intend to go to San Diego where Republicans are holding a state convention.

But politics came up, with

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Ford saying he welcomes "healthy competition" for the Republican presidential nomination from former Gov. Ronald Reagan. "We're close personal friends," the President said.

He also said he does not regard last Tuesday's victory of Democrat John Durkin in the New Hampshire Senate election as a "defeat," although he campaigned for Durkin's GOP opponent. He termed it an "organizational victory" for the Democrats.

The President arrived in Monterey to golf at 2 p.m. yesterday after dedicating the new Firestone Field House at Malibu's Pepperdine University. Pepperdine president William Banowsky is California's Republican national committeeman and a Ford campaign committee member.

His host at Pebble Beach was Leonard Firestone, who turned over his home to the President last night. That, too, was regarded as political.

Firestone, U.S. ambassador to Belgium, backed Reagan during the former governor's two terms but last week announced he supports Ford's re-election. He said he now considers Reagan "too right wing."

In his only discussion of foreign policy, Ford said documents relating to the recent Israeli Egyptian Sinai disengagement agreement "spell out that we will study Israel's request" for Pershing tactical missile batteries.

U.S. officials say any Pershings sold to Israel would have only conventional warheads. The missiles are designed to take nuclear warheads as well.

The President reiterated his opposition to court-ordered school busing and said "we must not allow" private universities like Pepperdine, which awarded him an honorary degree, to close because of financial problems.

The President did not mention the incident in Sacramento two weeks ago when Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme, a member of mass murderer Charles Manson's "family," pointed a loaded .45 gun at him.

Ford also said he might contact former President Nixon at his San Clemente villa. Asked why, Ford said: "I worked with him in the past. What's happened in the past, I don't think should destroy a friendship."

Special security measures have been taken for the President's Bay Area appearances today and tomorrow.

Ford's only public speech on this Northern California visit will be delivered at 4 p.m. today when

he dedicates Stanford University's new law school.

The President will then fly from Moffett Field to Long Beach to address a dinner meeting of the National Association of Life Underwriters at Disneyland.

Ford will speak twice in San Francisco tomorrow—a major economic address about 11 a.m. to the AFL-CIO Building and Construction Trades Council in the Hyatt-Union Square Hotel, then a discussion of intelligence-gathering operations at a luncheon meeting of the World Affairs Council of Northern California in the St. Francis.

Howard "Bo" Callaway, the President's campaign chairman, attended the convention informally.

Ford will return to California next month for GOP fund-raisers. His travel tab then will be picked up by the Republican National Committee, instead of the taxpayers.