

Saudi Arabia's Jewelry Gifts To the Nixons

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Washington.

The White House acknowledged yesterday that Mrs. Richard Nixon and her daughters have received gifts of valuable jewelry — including a \$52,400 matched set of emeralds and diamonds — from the Saudi Arabian royal family, but said this was “a natural situation of gifts to the family.”

The existence of the gifts was disclosed in the Washington Post yesterday, and the matter of the Saudi Arabian jewels occupied most of the morning's White House news briefing.

Deputy White House press secretary Gerald L. Warren denied any impropriety in Mrs. Nixon's acceptance of the jewelry.

There is both constitutional and, more recently, specific legal prohibition on accepting such gifts from a foreign government or its representatives by any government employee or a member of his family.

Warren said that Mrs.



AP Wirephoto
TRICIA NIXON COX
Dangling earrings



UPI Telephoto
PAT NIXON
Matched set



AP Wirephoto
This emerald and diamond set, appraised at \$52,400, was given to Mrs. Nixon by Prince Fahd

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Nixon and her daughters have always considered the jewels to be U.S. property, although they have worn them publicly without any public acknowledgement of their existence or source. At least some of the jewelry was apparently not recorded in the White House gifts files until nearly two years after acceptance.

Warren described the Post's article by columnist Maxine Cheshire as "blown completely out of proportion and sensationalized." He said it "shows the lengths to which some people . . . will go to, by inference, cast the first family in a bad light. This is the White House view."

Warren was asked why there had been no public announcement of the gifts, as is usual when a president or his family receives presents from foreign governments or heads of state. He replied that it was "a matter of protocol" to do so when gifts are exchanged on state occasions, but not when they are given on "private occasions."

The jewelry at issue, some of which has been worn by Mrs. Nixon and her daughters in public and apparently assumed to be costume jewelry, was received on three separate occasions.

First was a parure, or matched set, of emeralds and diamonds comprising a necklace, a bracelet, earrings and a brooch, presented to Mr. Nixon for his wife by Prince Fahd of Saudi Arabia in October, 1969.

King Faisal, during a state visit in May, 1971, gave Mrs. Nixon a pair of long, dangling, diamond and ruby earrings. Prince Sultan, another half-brother of the king, gave Mrs. Nixon a diamond bracelet with a concealed watch in July, 1972. At the same time, there were presents for the President's two daughters: a diamond and sapphire pin for Tricia Nixon Cox, and a dia-

mond and ruby pin for Julie Nixon Eisenhower.

The emerald and diamond set, according to White House counsel J. Fred Buzhardt, was appraised at \$52,400 by Harry Winston, Inc., the New York Jeweler, in 1970.

Warren, yesterday morning, was unable to say when the jewelry had been appraised.

"It's not the practice of the White House to appraise every gift," he said, adding that it was felt "that an accurate appraisal was necessary in this case." None of the other pieces has been appraised.

Under the Constitution, and even more specifically under a 1966 law, no "employee" of the federal government, including the President, nor any member of his family, may accept a gift from a foreign government or its representative or agent of more than "minimal" value. An exception is made "when it appears that to refuse the gift would be likely to cause offense or embarrassment or otherwise adversely affect the foreign relations of the United States."

But, the law continues, such a gift "is deemed to have been accepted on behalf of the United States and shall be deposited by the donee for use and disposal as the property of the United States . . ."

Federal regulations promulgated in 1966 require that such gifts "shall be deposited with the chief of protocol" at the State Department in accordance with the provisions of yet another section of the regulations.

This, in turn, provides that they "may be returned for official use by the appropriate agency with the approval of the chief of protocol."

Warren said Mr. Nixon's policy is that "all gifts are recorded in the gift unit, in the Executive Office Building, to whose files the chief of protocol has access. "All

these gifts were recorded when they were received," he said. "Every piece of jewelry was recorded."

He said that Mrs. Nixon and her daughters will not wear the jewelry after the President leaves office; the jewels will then go on display.

They were, until recently, kept in a wall safe in Mrs. Nixon's bedroom. About two months ago, they were transferred to the gifts unit. Warren would not say who recommended the transfer.

Helen Smith, Mrs. Nixon's press secretary, said that Mrs. Nixon is not upset about the jewelry disclosures because "she knows the truth" of the situation. But Mrs. Smith predicted that "she will never wear any (of it) again."

A reproduction of one of the file-cards published in the Washington Post indicated that "jewelry for Mrs. Nixon, Julie and Tricia" presented by Prince Sultan in 1972 was not received in the gifts unit until the end of March, 1974.

Mrs. Nixon has worn the emeralds and diamonds, or some part of the set, on several occasions. Mrs. Cox evidently borrowed the ruby and diamond earrings, for she was photographed wearing them at a dinner for former Vice President Spiro Agnew in March, 1972.

Until the 1966 statute, first ladies were not prohibited from accepting gifts, such as the leopard coat that Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy received from emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia.

Warren said yesterday that it is "by tradition" that "state gifts exchanged on private occasions" are not publicized. "They are recorded in the gifts unit," he said, "and become the property of the United States."

Some state gifts are usually on display cases in the White House, including in the Oval Office.

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