

# Nixon Flies to Coast on Commercial Airliner

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 26—

President Nixon and a party of 12 slipped away from the White House this evening and took a commercial airline flight to Los Angeles to spend a post-Christmas holiday at his San Clemente home.

Gerald L. Warren, deputy White House press secretary, had denied only a few hours earlier that the President would vacation in California. He said tonight, after the President had left, that the plans had been kept secret for "security reasons."

Accompanying the President

were Mrs. Nixon, his daughter Tricia, Ronald L. Ziegler, his press secretary; Rose Mary Woods, his personal secretary, security officers and other support staff.

The extraordinary move of secretly taking a commercial flight was an effort to show that Mr. Nixon was not consuming fuel for his own holiday during the energy crisis. Mr. Warren said that no other persons were bumped from their seats to make way for the President's party, and airline officials confirmed this.

White House observers said that the only time they could recall a President or President-

elect having used a commercial airline was on Thanksgiving Day of 1960. At that time, John F. Kennedy, the President-elect, flew back to Washington from West Palm Beach, Fla., when his wife gave birth prematurely to a boy. The child later died in a Boston hospital.

The flight, United Air Lines No. 55, a regularly scheduled flight, was due to leave at 5:30 P.M. from Dulles International Airport in nearby Virginia. However, the flight was delayed and finally lifted off the runway at 6:30 P.M. in rain and fog.

Mr. Warren said that the President and his family

boarded the airplane first and were followed by the rest of the party, including 10 or 12 Secret Service agents.

An airline source said that the White House arrangements were made Monday night by an unidentified White House staff member. Mr. Warren said that the aircraft had been checked out earlier by security personnel.

Mr. Nixon had previously discussed going to Key Biscayne, Fla., for a post-Christmas vacation but changed his mind several times.

When the President makes a

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trip out of Washington, he is customarily accompanied by the small press pool, a group of about 15 reporters and photographers. However, no pool accompanied him on the commercial flight, and the White House press was not informed of the move until after the President had boarded the plane.

It was not announced how long the President planned to stay in California, but it was believed that he would be there over New Year's.

One of the concerns about the President's traveling by any means other than his regular jet aircraft is the need for communications if an emergency arises while he is in flight. Mr. Warren said that there were "adequate communication facilities" on the DC 10 "to deal with any emergency."

A fleet of seven jets, and a number of Petstar jets and helicopters are kept for Mr. Nixon at Andrews Air Force base near Washington. Since the energy crisis, however, the White House has been sensitive about the President's frequent travel, and he has not been using any of the aircraft in recent weeks except to make short trips to Camp David and for one speaking tour in the South, in November.

Mr. Warren said that the decision to go to California was made Christmas Eve.

"It just demonstrates his confidence in the airlines," he told reporters. "He just decided to go to California and thought that he could, as President, take many steps to set an example in the field of energy."

He also said that the President "wanted to get away for a period during the holidays" to work on the budget, his State of the Union Message and energy legislation and "to get some rest."

A spokesman for United Air Lines said that the President had paid for his family's first-class tickets. The price was

\$217.64 per person. How other fares were paid was not known immediately.

Mr. Warren said that after the airplane had begun its flight, he had talked with Mr. Ziegler, and that he had come through "loud and clear."

Mr. Warren recalled that on the President's flight to China in 1972 the communications equipment installed aboard Air Force One, the President's airplane, had occupied no more space than a medium-sized suitcase.

Earlier today, Mr. Warren said flatly that the President would stay in the White House throughout today, cleaning up work left from Congress, which adjourned Saturday, and tending to a number of other matters. As the President departed, there were indications that part of his campaign started in November, to clear his name in Watergate and related matters was faltering.

A major part of the effort to restore credibility was the release of documents and transcripts relating to White House involvement in several controversial matters. This began almost three weeks ago with the release of data on Mr. Nixon's personal finances, including his income tax returns, for the last four years.

A second installment of documents—transcripts of tape recordings subpoenaed in the Watergate break-in—had been scheduled for release late last week, although no announcement of the plan was made.

However, this installment did not materialize. Gerald L. Warren, deputy White House press secretary, said today that there was no indication of when the next documents would be released or what they would be.

Mr. Warren depicted the President as preoccupied with some 50 bills that the 93d Congress sent to him to sign or veto after adjourning Saturday, and with the Middle East and the energy crisis.

It now appears, after several changes of plans, that Mr.

Nixon will fly to Key Biscayne, Fla., later this week and remain over the New Year's holiday. He had planned to go today, either by train or small plane, but that plan was changed, without announcement, sometime last week.

In the past, the President's holiday travels were planned firmly for some time ahead. Every indication is that Mr. Nixon wants very much to get to his Florida home for a few days but has been hesitant because of the example that his travel might set at a time of fuel shortage and because of public criticism of his living style during much of his Presidency.

The campaign for credibility — it has been called Operation Candor, but White House officials did not originate that term — was conceived as a multistage effort:

¶The President would hold a series of meetings with members of Congress, Governors and other officials, answering all questions put to him on Watergate and related matters. This was done in a number of White House gatherings and on a Southern speaking tour in November.

¶He would meet more regularly with more people — Cabinet officials, Republican leaders, high-ranking visitors to Washington — to show that he was firmly in control of his Administration and to counter the image of a lonely, isolated President meeting only with a few close advisers.