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Gifts of Jewels to Nixons From Saudis Disclosed

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WASHINGTON, May 14—The White House acknowledged today that Mrs. Richard M. Nixon and her daughters had received gifts of jewelry, including a \$52,400 matched set of emeralds and diamonds, from the Saudi Arabian royal family.

The existence of the gifts was disclosed in The Washington Post this morning, and the matter of the Saudi Arabian jewels occupied most of the morning's White House news briefing. The 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 against accepting such personal gifts from a foreign government or its representatives by any Government employe or a member of his family. Such gifts can only be accepted on behalf of the United States.

Mr. Warren said that Mrs. Nixon and her daughters had always considered the jewels to be the property of the United States, 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.

Mr. Warren described The Post's article, by Maxine Cheshire, a columnist, as "blown completely out of proportion and sensationalized" and "shows the lengths to which some people . . . will go to, by inference, cast the First Family in a bad light. This is the White

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House view."

Mr. Warren was asked why there has 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 was assumed by spectators 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, a ring, earrings and a brooch, presented to Mr. Nixon for his wife by Prince Fahd of Saudi Arabia in October, 1969. The Prince is a half-brother of King Faisal of Saudi Arabia.

The King, during a state visit in May, 1971, gave Mrs. Nixon a pair of long, dangling, diamond and ruby earrings. And 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 Presidents two daughters: a diamond and sapphire pin for Mrs. Edward Cox, and a diamond and ruby pin for Mrs. David Eisenhower.

Winston Appraised

The emerald and diamond set, according to a White House counsel, J. Fred Buzhardt Jr., was appraised at \$52,400 by Harry Winston, Inc., the New York City jeweler, in 1970. Mr. Warren was unable to say this morning why 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.

Article I, Section 9 of the Constitution and a 1966 law deal with the subject of foreign gifts.

The Constitution states that



Associated Press

Mrs. Nixon wearing the earrings and necklace at a state dinner on Oct. 9 last year.

"no person holding any office of profit or trust . . . shall, without the consent of the Congress, accept of any present, emolument, office, or title, of any kind whatever, from any King, Prince or foreign state."

Under the 1966 law, no "employe" of the Federal Government, including the President, or any member of his family, may accept a gift of more than "minimal" value from a foreign government or its representative or agent. 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."

'Property of United States'

But, the 1966 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."

Mr. Warren said that during Mr. Nixon's tenure, "all gifts are recorded in the gifts 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 asserted. "Every piece of jewelry was recorded." He said that Mrs. Nixon and her daughters will

not wear the jewelry after the President leaves office, and then they will go on display.

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

Mrs. Helen Smith, Mrs. Nixon's press secretary, said that Mrs. Nixon was 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 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.

At Agnew Dinner

Mrs. Nixon has worn the emerald and diamond parure, 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 Agnew in March, 1972.

Until the 1966 statute, the wives of Presidents were not prohibited from accepting gifts, such as the leopard coat that Mrs. John F. Kennedy received from Emperor Haile Salassie of Ethiopia. Mr. Warren said today that it was "by tradition" that "state gifts exchanged on private occasions" were 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 the Oval Office.