

Nixon Off Today on Trip To Five Mideast Nations

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WASHINGTON, June 9— President Nixon leaves on a nine-day trip to the Middle East tomorrow, in an atmosphere of controversy in Washington and expectation in the Arab world.

It will be the first time an American President has toured the Arab states and Israel while in office, and American officials said today that they expected Mr. Nixon to further accelerate the trend toward improved Arab-American relations while he is in the area.

They also said that they expected Mr. Nixon to give a new pledge of continued American support for Israel when he meets with the new Israeli Government during the mission, which will take him to five Middle Eastern nations.

Mr. Nixon's first stop in his Air Force jet will be in Salzburg, Austria, tomorrow night. He will stay in the Austrian resort town through Tuesday, meeting briefly with Chancellor Bruno Kreisky before flying on Wednesday to Cairo to start the Middle Eastern part of the trip.

Because of the impeachment investigation in Washington, many political observers here have tended to denigrate Mr.

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Nixon's trip as an attempt to divert public attention from the Watergate affair.

The White House has steadily denied this charge, but the trip will be extensively covered by news media. The chief anchor-men for the television networks will accompany the President and the networks have invested thousands of dollars to set up adequate communications in Middle Eastern cities that up to now have had rather antiquated facilities.

Senator Henry M. Jackson, Democrat of Washington, a frequent critic of the Administration, said today on television that the trip "doesn't make much sense."

"It is more cosmetic and ceremonial than it will be substance," he said, on the CBS television program "Face the Nation."

Asked if he thought the trip should be described as "impeachment diplomacy," Mr. Jackson said that although he would not use that term, "I think it's poor judgment on the

part of the President to be out of the country while the House Judiciary Committee moves into its more serious phase of the charges against him."

The trip, however, has been supported by some members of Congress. Senator Charles H. Percy, Republican of Illinois, said on Friday that he fully backed the mission as very important to American diplomatic efforts.

Mr. Nixon will spend two days in Egypt before flying on to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on Friday. In addition to his stay in Cairo, he will probably also visit the Mediterranean city of Alexandria.

Kissinger in Party

From Saudi Arabia, the Nixon party, which includes two chartered press planes, will fly to Damascus, Syria.

The President is due in Israel next Sunday. He plans to conclude his Middle East trip in Amman, Jordan, on June 18, and will return to Washington by way of the Azores on June 19.

Secretary of State Kissinger, who returned to Washington on May 31 after a 34-day Middle Eastern trip that produced a Syrian-Israel agreement on disengagement of troops on the Golan Heights, will serve as Mr. Nixon's top adviser during the journey.

Mr. Kissinger will break away from the party on Tuesday to meet at the Austrian-West German border with the West German Foreign Minister, Hans-Dietrich Genscher. He will leave the Middle East a day before Mr. Nixon to arrive in Ottawa in time for a North Atlantic Treaty Organization meeting there on June 18.

Senior American officials have not provided any details of what substantive matters Mr. Nixon will discuss in the area. They have emphasized instead the need for Mr. Nixon to strengthen the ties that have developed in recent months between the United States and the Arab world while reaffirming the commitment to Israel.