

White House Report

Doctor Says Nixon Risked His Life

Blood Clot Danger

Key Biscayne, Fla.

President Nixon risked his life by traveling to the Middle East early last month, because he had a blood clot in his leg, a White House official confirmed late yesterday.

Dr. Walter Tkach, the chief White House physician, said he had advised Mr. Nixon of potentially extremely serious complications that could develop as a result of the condition which was discovered while Mr. Nixon was stopping in Salzburg, Austria, on his way to the Middle East.

Tkach said he advised the President not to go on, but that Mr. Nixon said the journey to five Middle East nations "was important" and that he had to proceed.

The clot was in Mr. Nixon's left leg and the result of phlebitis, an inflammation of the veins. Tkach said "the blood clot is now fixed."

Press Secretary Ronald L. Ziegler, in relaying Tkach's assessment, said the use of the term "fixed" meant the clot no longer was likely to move in the blood stream where it could be dangerous by lodging in lungs or the brain.

Mr. Nixon kept symptoms of the condition, particularly substantial swelling, a secret from his doctors for a couple of days before he in-

formed them in Salzburg.

Tkach confirmed that Mr. Nixon "took a calculated risk" and "it could have killed him."

But he insisted that "the president is now feeling fine" and the dangerous aspects of the phlebitis had cleared up before Mr. Nixon took his trip to the Soviet Union on June 25.

Tkach first revealed his serious concern in an interview with a reporter for the

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New York Daily News, which published the story last night. White House officials confirmed the existence of the clot a few hours later along with confirmation of Tkach's comments to the newspaper.

Ziegler minimized the news of the clot, maintaining that it was a routine occurrence in cases of phlebitis. He and a deputy press officer, John Carlson, said "the matter had resolved itself" before Mr. Nixon went to the Soviet Union. They apparently meant that Mr. Nixon's doctors had concluded by that time that the danger of the clot breaking loose was no longer serious.

Tkach said in an interview that Mr. Nixon "understood what the risks were to him. It was outlined to him."

He described Mr. Nixon's condition as a "thrombo phlebitis — an inflammation of the vein and a clot."

"We had an obligation and we told him what the potential hazards would be of a clot breaking off and hitting his heart or lungs," Tkach said. When pressed further he said that if it was a big clot it could cause death.

Tkach said "the President said he understood that, but had an obligation to make the trip to the Middle East."

He said that most of the danger period was while Mr. Nixon was traveling in the Middle East and that it was only "very slight" during his weeklong summit mission to the Soviet Union which had ended Wednesday.

"The clot was pretty much fixed by the time the President went to the Soviet Union," said Tkach.

"The clot will always be there," he said.

Mr. Nixon still has some slight swelling but is suffering no pain now, Tkach said. "The swelling will go down but not completely," and there will always be some sign of swelling, he said.

Mr. Nixon discovered the swelling in his left leg on June 8 while he was at the presidential retreat at Camp David, Md., but he kept it a secret for two days from his doctors. Not until he reached Salzburg, Austria, the first leg of his Middle East journey, on June 10, did he summon Dr. Tkach and his deputy Dr. William Lkash.

Tkach said that Mr. Nixon told his doctors about the swelling in his left leg for the first time then.

From then on they began watching him closely, applying hot packs, and Tkach disclosed for the first time that Mr. Nixon was put on an anti-coagulant type of medicine for a week while he was in Salzburg and during part of his journey through five nations of the Middle East. He declined to identify the medicine by name.

Tkach had earlier said that Mr. Nixon rejected the advice of his doctors and they could not convince him otherwise. "He's the president," explained Tkach at that time, indicating there was no way to compel Mr. Nixon to follow their medical advice.

In response to a question, Tkach said that Mrs. Nixon was told of the President's condition, but he refused to disclose her reaction or whether she had tried to persuade her husband to postpone the trip.

Tkach said that hospitalization was, of course, recommended when the ailment was first discovered.

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