

NIXON FEARED RISK OF HEALTH REPORT

Gravity of Leg Ailment Held Threat to Success of His Foreign Negotiations

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MIAMI, July 5 — President Nixon ordered that the seriousness of his leg ailment be kept secret during his recent trips abroad because he feared public disclosure would interfere with his negotiations with foreign leaders, Gerard L. Warren, the deputy White House press secretary, said today.

The President did not want his health problems discussed because he felt it would get in the way of the goals he hoped to achieve on what he considered to be two important trips, Mr. Warren replied to a reporter's question on why the gravity of Mr. Nixon's condition had been kept hidden from the American public.

Mr. Warren did not elaborate on how disclosure of the seriousness of Mr. Nixon's ailment would have interfered with his negotiations.

Dr. Walter Tkach, the President's personal physician, disclosed yesterday that a blood clot in the President's leg could have been fatal during Mr. Nixon's recent trip to the Middle East. The clot, caused by an ailment called thrombophlebitis, could have broken off and traveled to Mr. Nixon's heart or lungs and possibly caused his death, Dr. Tkach said.

'Calculated Risk'

The physician added that he had warned the President of the gravity of his condition but that Mr. Nixon had decided to go on the trips anyway, thus taking what Dr. Tkach called a "calculated risk."

Dr. Tkach said the danger had abated before the President departed on his trip to the Soviet Union, but indicated that complications still could have arisen. He also disclosed that Mr. Nixon had been taking medication throughout the first week of his trip to the Middle East.

The doctor also reported that the clot had now become "fixed" to the vein in the President's leg and, while it would always be there, no longer could break loose and threaten Mr. Nixon's life.

Ronald L. Ziegler, the White House press secretary, put out a notice today saying that the President "feels fine" and adding that "the phlebitis has resolved itself and there is no danger."

Exercise and Rest

A combination of physical exercise and rest for Mr. Nixon's left leg has been prescribed to deal with the thrombophlebitis. Yesterday, the White House referred to the President's condition as simply phlebitis rather than thrombophlebitis. The prefix "thrombo" indicates the complication of blood clotting.

One probable reason that the White House disclosed at this time the seriousness of the President's physical condition during his foreign travels is that the trips are now over, and whatever need for secrecy there may have been is now ended.

Also, the disclosure that the President was willing to go abroad in pursuit of his foreign policy goals despite the risk from his illness may, in the view of political observers, stimulate public sympathy for him. Public opinion polls indicate that popular support for Mr. Nixon is still low because of the Watergate scandal, and he still faces the possibility of impeachment.