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Foreign gifts law gets interpretation

By Maxine Cheshire
Washington Post

WASHINGTON — State Department legal officers have interpreted the law barring United States officials and their families from accepting foreign gifts to exclude "an adult son or daughter living in his or her own household."

Such an exemption would apply to, among others, the married daughters of President and Mrs. Nixon. Both have received valuable gifts, including jewels, from foreign donors since their father took office in 1969.

State Department officials said yesterday that it is unclear whether a diamond-and-ruby pin given Julie Nixon Eisenhower and a diamond-and-sapphire pin given Tricia Nixon Cox by Saudi Arabian Prince Sultan in July, 1972, are covered by the act.

While both were married before then, they frequently have returned to stay at the White House for brief or extended periods when they were ill or when their husbands were away fulfilling military obligations or at times of family crisis.

Deputy Chief of Protocol Stuart Rockwell said that he is "of the opinion that anything given to the President's daughters while they were living at the White House comes under the law."

Newspaper files record that Tricia Cox and her husband "lived" at the White House from June until November, 1972, while he studied for the New York State bar exam.

White House counsel J. Fred Buzhardt declared in May that the Nixon family considered all such gifts "public property" and intended to put them in "a public repository when the President's term ends."

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