

GSA Scolded on Funds for Nixon

Washington

Government auditors have ruled that the General Services Administration had no authority to spend money for former President Nixon's transition to private life without first getting an appropriation from Congress.

As a result, the GSA obtained approval yesterday to use money from a special fund appropriated by Congress for President Ford.

Government documents show that the new administration authorized spending up to \$450,000 for Mr. Nixon a week before it asked Congress to appropriate funds for the transition.

The GSA already has committed about \$6000 of that money, but Comptroller General Elmer B. Staats said it wasn't authorized to do so.

President Ford's request for \$850,000 to help Mr. Nixon's transition to former-President status ran into stiff congressional opposition when GSA tried to defend the amount in Senate and House hearings this week.

Advance expenditures were approved by Roy Ash, director of the White House Office of Management and Budget, in a letter to General Services Administrator Arthur F. Sampson dated August 21.

Seven days later, Mr. Ford asked Congress for \$450,000 under the Presidential Transition Act and \$400,000 under the Former Presidents Act to assist Mr. Nixon. The amount was more than twice what former President Lyndon B. Johnson received in a comparable period.

On Tuesday, ^{10 SEP} Comptroller General Staats wrote Ash:

"After careful examination of existing statutes, we find no authority to utilize current appropriations to the General Services Administration to provide services to former President Nixon."

Staats said, however, that funds from a special \$500,000 appropriation for "unanticipated personnel needs" of the new President could be made available to Mr. Nixon if Mr. Ford chose to do so.

A GSA spokesman said yesterday the GSA had received permission to use funds from the special appropriation. Asked for documentation, the spokesman said:

"The OMB has told us over the phone today to go ahead and use this fund and that the paperwork will be sent over to us."

There are indications that those funds are already



ELMER B. STAATS
Comptroller General

being spent at the White House and for salaries of White House personnel detailed to Mr. Nixon's San Clemente offices and estate.

It was disclosed yesterday that in addition to 13 White House staff members still on the payroll but working exclusively for the former President there are at least eight and perhaps as many as 17 other government employees still in Mr. Nixon's service.

They include Mr. Nixon's personal maid and valet, a military aide, three drivers, a medical corpsman and one or more GSA secretaries.

The White House aides, among them former press secretary Ronald Ziegler, appointments secretary Stephen Bull and personal secretary Rose Mary Woods, have combined annual salaries of \$340,000.

Congressional aides say it was anticipated that the \$500,000 would be spent during the transition period when new people joined Mr. Ford's White House staff while outgoing Mr. Nixon aides stayed around to help their replacements "learn the ropes."

Associated Press