

Agnew Is Off on 10-Nation Tour; Carries Messages From Nixon

By ROBERT B. SEMPLE JUN 28 1971
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HONOLULU, June 27—Vice President Agnew embarked today on a 31-day goodwill mission that will take him to 10 friendly nations in Asia, Africa and Europe.

Speaking briefly to reporters before he left for Hawaii this morning from El Toro Marine Corps Air Station near the Western White House in San Clemente, Calif., Mr. Agnew said he would be taking "some confidential message" from President Nixon to several heads of state.

He said the messages contained "nothing of tremendous moment" and he characterized his journey as part of a continuing effort to maintain good relationships with other nations.

Mr. Agnew was asked whether he intended to discuss with foreign leaders the recent publication of articles based on the Pentagon papers dealing with United States involvement in Vietnam.

To Sound Out Leaders

"I certainly will be interested in learning what comments might come" from the heads of state, he replied.

Officials said Mr. Agnew's present journey, unlike his previous trips, had no central theme and some elements had been incorporated at the last minute.

The Vice President traveled to 10 Asian nations in December, 1969, and January, 1970. In August, 1970, he returned to the area for consultations in Cambodia, Thailand, South Vietnam, Taiwan and South Korea.

In both instances his purpose was to discuss the United States withdrawal from Vietnam and the Nixon Doctrine of replacing direct American combat assistance with military and economic support to Asian nations.

Variety of Countries

What his present trip lacks in specific purpose, it makes up in variety. Mr. Agnew will visit South Korea, Singapore, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia, Kenya, the former Belgian Congo, Spain, Morocco, and Portugal.

Mr. Agnew will be visiting

most of these countries for the first time.

After spending the night in Guam, Mr. Agnew and his entourage will travel to Seoul, where he will attend the inauguration Thursday of Chung Hee Park, South Korea's President, for a third term in office.

The inaugural ceremonies for Mr. Park, who has already ruled his country for 10 years, provided the original reason for the trip. Other stops were added later. Saudi Arabia was placed on the list, for example, when King Faisal lunched with Mr. Nixon at the White House on May 27 and invited the President to send a representative to Saudi Arabia.

In South Korea, Mr. Agnew is likely to touch upon the question of textile exports, which the United States has sought to limit, as well as South Korea's defense needs in light of the reduction of United States force levels.

China Trade an Issue

In Singapore, Mr. Agnew is likely to be asked about Mr. Nixon's recent efforts to expand trade and travel to Communist China. He will undoubtedly discuss the Middle East conflict while he is in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

Talking points in Ethiopia, Kenya, the Congo and Morocco will include economic aid and broader questions of African unity.

The trip to Spain is described as little more than a vacation for the Vice President.

The delegation accompanying the Vice President to the inaugural ceremonies in Seoul includes representatives G. Elliott Hagan, Georgia Democrat, and Samuel L. Devine, Ohio Republican, former Gov. Winthrop Rockefeller of Arkansas, and Bryce Harlow, former Assistant to the President for Congressional Relations and now the Washington representative of Procter and Gamble Manufacturing Company.

Senator James Buckley, conservative of New York, is expected to join the party in South Korea. Mrs. Agnew is not accompanying the Vice President on this trip.

Agnew Would Visit China

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GUAM, Tuesday, June 29—

Vice President Agnew said yesterday that he would be happy to visit China despite what he described as personal reservations about its diplomatic posture.

Mr. Agnew, who has expressed misgivings to the National Security Council and to reporters about some aspects of President Nixon's efforts to lift restrictions on trade with and travel to China, said that its attitude toward the United States, as expressed in official publications, remained "basically quite hostile."

But he said he shared Mr. Nixon's concern "about the need to diminish hostilities and open communications with mainland China."

"To have a chance to visit and to converse directly with the representatives of that country would be quite a privilege," he added.

Mr. Agnew's comments came during an exchange with newsmen aboard the Presidential jet carrying him from Honolulu to Guam on the first leg of a 31-day tour of 10 nations in Asia, Africa and Europe.

Due in Seoul Today

He will make his first major stop today in Seoul, capital of South Korea, where he will attend inaugural ceremonies for Chung Hee Park, who was re-elected to a third term as President two months ago.

Mr. Agnew said he expected to cover a wide range of subjects in his discussions in Seoul, including the level of South Korea's commitment to the war in Vietnam. In response to questions, he said he did not think that Seoul's dis-

Despite Doubts

cussions with Saign on the possibility of withdrawing 15,000 of its 48,000-man contingent in Vietnam "affect in any way the announced program of withdrawal of American troops."

The Vice President virtually conceded that his visit to South Korea—a short plane ride across the Yellow Sea from China—represented the centerpiece of his tour as well as its original reason.