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The Washington Merry-Go-Round

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Nixon Jet Remodeling Costs

By Jack Anderson

The U.S. Treasury has already subsidized President Nixon's luxurious living at San Clemente and Key Biscayne. Now it is ponying up \$1,785,000 to deck out his jet to suit H.R. Haldeman's and Pat Nixon's ideas of posh air comfort.

The White House recently ordered a new jet from Boeing to replace the well-traveled "Spirit of '76" as the President's lead plane. Haldeman personally took charge of the interior decorating and before he had finished, the bill had run up to \$1.5 million.

When Pat Nixon found out about the appointments, she hit an air pocket. The former top White House aide, with typical Prussian efficiency, had put the staff quarters between the presidential suite and the quarters for extra family and guests.

This would have permitted top staffers to maintain their 24-hour-a-day access to the President, but the arrangement would have forced family and guests to squirm through the staff quarters to visit the President and First Lady.

After she discovered what Haldeman had done, Mrs.

Nixon, who often has laid down the law to her strong-willed husband, insisted that the plane be re-designed to her own liking. As a result, the Air Force, which had faithfully followed the original Haldeman specifications, is now spending \$285,000 more to conform to Pat's request that the guest lounge be next to the Nixon quarters.

Footnote: A spokesman for Mrs. Nixon confirmed that Haldeman drew up the original plans but she was unable to say whether any of the Nixons approved them before the first \$1.5 million was spent. The new plane, like its predecessor, will be called the "Spirit of '76," the spokesman said. Those who have seen its deluxe comforts say it has little in common with the original spartan "Spirit of '76" which George Washington and his troops showed at Valley Forge.

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\$285,000