

3 Agencies Critical of Nixon Flight

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—Three federal agencies today criticized President Nixon's decision to travel to his vacation estate by commercial airliner, but White House spokesmen regarded the decision as a political triumph.

Federal Aviation Administrator Alexander P. Butterfield said he was "dismayed" that he didn't know about Mr. Nixon's surprise departure until the United Air Lines DC-10 jumbo jet carrying the presidential party was taxiing out to take off Wednesday.

"This serious oversight left precious little time for our air traffic control people to implement the special precautionary procedures that must always be followed when the President takes to the airways," Butterfield said.

A spokesman for the Secret Service said that it would have been preferable for Mr. Nixon to have used military aircraft in his flight to the West Coast.

And federal energy director William E. Simon, while praising the President's decision, said he hoped that Mr. Nixon would "get back in his normal mode of transportation in the very near future."

In private discussions, White House officials left no doubt that they thought Mr. Nixon had won the approval of the American people by his decision to leave behind his

See **PRESIDENT**, A8, Col. 2

PRESIDENT, From A1

special Boeing 707 four-engine jet, the Spirit of '76, in favor of commercial travel.

The White House view is that the President's decision set a positive example for the American people to follow during the energy crisis.

"The success of the trip was shown by the fact that no extraordinary precautions were taken except for the presence of the Secret Service," said White House press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler.

Ziegler said the Secret Service had approved the trip despite misgivings. He also contended that Mr. Nixon "learned something about the problems flying commuters face" in taking the trip.

The President boarded the plane first after purchasing first-class tickets for himself, his wife and their daughter Tricia. He also had special

communications equipment aboard, although both the White House and United Air Lines said there was no preferential treatment for the presidential party aboard the flight.

Mr. Nixon broke precedent in taking no pool of reporters with him, even though there was room for them on the plane. According to Ziegler, this was for security reasons.

United Press International learned about the President's unannounced departure from the White House more than an hour before the flight, and was asked by deputy press secretary Gerald L. Warren to withhold this information on these same security grounds.

Neither Ziegler nor Warren would comment on the apparent inconsistency of asking the wire service that was not trusted to be taken on a pool for security reasons to observe these reasons and not disseminate the news story of the President's flight.

However, other White House officials indicated that the "security" reason was less important in Mr. Nixon's decision than his recurrent hostility to the White House press corps.

One source said that Mr. Nixon's bitterness about the press has grown because of what the President regards as unfair coverage of his income tax disclosures, which showed him paying minimum taxes during most of his term in office. Another point of resentment, this source said, is the criticism that was heaped on the President for his uncompleted plan to take a train to Key Biscayne after Christmas.

Warren promised Wednesday that only "minimum staff" would fly to the West Coast during Mr. Nixon's present indeterminate stay in San Clemente.

But the size of the presidential party grew steadily today.

The President was accompanied by 10 staff members on his flight Wednesday in addition to Mrs. Nixon and Tricia and 12 Secret Service agents.

Today, an additional 13 staff members flew out to join the President on American Airlines Flight 77, which arrived at Los Angeles International Airport at 11:25 a.m. PST.

The late arrivals included Warren and four other members of the White House press staff, plus four White House transportation aides, two dictationists, a U.S. Navy corpsman and the White House photographer.

Warren said that some other White House officials may join the President during his San Clemente stay. The most likely additional arrival is chief of staff Alexander M. Haig Jr., who is expected to be accompanied by his secretary.

The President is expected to

take time out from his holiday and from work on his State of the Union message to attend a wedding in nearby La Jolla at 4 p.m. Friday of his chief physician, Dr. Walter Tkach, to Cheryle Ann Gaillard, a member of the Western House support staff.