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Nixon Gifts Inquiry

Washington

The General Accounting Office disclosed yesterday it intends to seek access to records of the White House gifts unit to try to determine whether the First Family has complied with the law regarding foreign gifts to government officials.

A spokesman said the GAO received a letter from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee April 11 asking the agency "to make a review of the administration and operation of the Foreign Gifts and Decoration Act of 1966" and subsequent legislation.

The letter preceded an article by Washington Post columnist Maxine Cheshire this week that said the Saudi Arabian royal family had made three gifts of jewelry, including a diamond and emerald set appraised at \$52,400, to Pat Nixon and her two daughters over the past five years.

Mrs. Cheshire wrote that some of the jewelry was not fully recorded in the gift unit files until after she began making inquiries last March. The White House acknowledged that some of the jewelry had been kept in the wall safe in the family quarters.

"Eventually we will have to ask for access to the gift files," a GAO spokesman said, but added that it would take months for the investigation to "get rolling" because of the time-consuming legal research that must be done first.

United Press