

Work on Proposed Vault for Nixon's Tapes and Papers is Held Up as Opposition Mounts

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LAGUNA NIGUEL, Calif., Oct. 3—The construction of a \$110,000 Government vault here to make former President Richard M. Nixon's tapes and papers readily available to him has been halted because of mounting Congressional opposition.

An outer concrete fire shield around the area set aside for the vault is nearly completed, but work on the vault has been held up by a lack of Congressional authorization, according to Richard Vawter of the General Services Administration.

The storage facility where space had been set aside for 30,000 cubic feet of Mr. Nixon's White House files and tape recordings is in a newly acquired Federal document center one-third the size of the Pentagon. It is 11 miles across the rolling Laguna hills from the Nixon oceanfront estate at San Clemente.

The vault could not be opened except with two keys, one in possession of Mr. Nixon and the other held by the G.S.A.

Unrestricted Use

Mr. Nixon, as owner of the materials with acknowledged sole rights to them; could—by withholding his key—challenge

Government access to the vault, but the Government could not restrict his use of the materials.

Officials of the G.S.A. indicated they were preparing to cancel plans for the vault and adjacent office facilities for Mr. Nixon's use because of the Congressional fund-slashing and growing uncertainty whether the records would be shipped here from Washington under an agreement that accompanied President Ford's pardon of Mr. Nixon Sept. 8.

The House voted overwhelmingly yesterday to slash three-fourths of the Ford Administration's \$850,000 request to pay for Mr. Nixon's transition from President to private citizen. In reducing the amount to \$253,000, the House eliminated the \$110,000 sought for the vault and \$50,000 for its around-the-clock protection by armed guards.

Under a Senate proposal, Mr. Nixon would be prohibited from destroying the tapes and documents after Sept. 1, 1979, as agreed to at the time of his Presidential pardon. The Government would retain full custody indefinitely, with Mr. Nixon's access to the tapes and papers subject to new G.S.A. regulations.

There is strong sentiment in

Congress for holding the materials in Washington until the Watergate special prosecutor, Leon Jaworski, and the courts have completed their inquiries into events during Mr. Nixon's five and one-half years as President.

On the Main Floor

The space set aside for the tamper-proof vault, together with an adjoining office for Mr. Nixon's use in drawing on them with the help of a specially assigned G.S.A. employe to write his memoirs, is on the cavernous main floor of the new Laguna Niguel Document Center.

Of the seven-story building's 1,017,000 square feet, half of which already has been assigned to various Government agencies, 190,000 square feet have been taken over by the National Archives, the center's first tenant. The archives section is being divided into compartments with steel-reinforced fire walls.

A spokesman for the G.S.A. said that since work on the Nixon vault had not yet started, the space could easily be converted to more conventional document storage.

A freeze on the shipment of any Nixon tapes or records to the new center has been ordered by the Ford Administra-

tion until the controversy over their control is resolved.

The most sensitive of the materials, including Watergate and other conversations recorded on tape in the White House by Mr. Nixon over a three-year period, have been segregated from the main body of his files and are in custody of the Secret Service in the Executive Office Building.

The controversy over the files has thrown into limbo plans of the Richard M. Nixon Foundation, headed by a group of his wealthy backers; to build an \$8-million Nixon library and museum.

Taft Schreiber, a vice president of Music Corporation of America and a member of the foundation's development committee, said:

"We have problems, legal and financial. I don't think the time is right to launch any fund-raising drive for the library."