

Judge Permits Nixon File Search For Clues to 'Missing' Gifts

Washington

A federal judge gave his blessing yesterday to a search of Richard M. Nixon's impounded files for clues to the whereabouts of some very expensive foreign gifts that may be missing.

Unless there is an appeal from U.S. District Judge Aubrey E. Robinson's ruling, government investigators will rummage through file boxes next week under the watchful eye of a Nixon representative.

This is the first time since Nixon resigned the presidency three years ago that the government will have a chance to look through the Nixon material for items not connected with national security or legal proceedings. The materials are being held by the government's General Services Administration.

"I have no desire to further impugn the integrity of Richard Nixon and his family, but there are sufficient allegations that give me concern to proceed," Evan S. Dobbelle, chief of protocol, told reporters after the two-hour hearing.

"We understand that within Box 118-C there exist photos of various jewelry items that were not officially recorded in the gift unit. The inclusion of those in our records will make the only complete list we've ever had," Dobbelle said.

Archivists will be looking through a box that the judge said may contain "photographs of bracelets, photographs of trinkets and descriptive lists."

U.S. law requires officials, including presidents, to turn over to the State Department's gift unit any foreign gifts worth more than \$50.

The Washington Post said on Monday that while some gifts to Nixon may be unaccounted for because of sloppy records, "in some cases, State Department and GSA officials say the gifts are believed to be in the custody of the Nixons, which is a violation of the law regulating the gifts."

Dobbelle's demand for access to the Nixon files came after the Supreme Court on June 28 upheld a law giving the GSA government custody of the materials

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left behind when Nixon resigned the presidency.

The regulations that permit government access to the files were challenged by Nixon lawyers, who had obtained a restraining order.

While saying there is no doubt the

government has the right to search the materials, the judge complained that "there are no procedures set up to insure there will be a minimum intrusion; no preliminary screening at all."

He invited the government to submit changes in the regulations that might be more acceptable to Nixon.

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