

'Security' Work On Nixon Shrubs

Washington

The U.S. government spent \$76,000 to landscape President Nixon's personal property at his San Clemente estate, according to federal officials.

This disclosure brings the total the government is known to have spent to improve the Nixon property to more than \$176,000.

At least \$100,000 in U.S.-financed improvements has previously been revealed — including a beach cabana, three gazebos, and a heating system for the President's house. The government says that all these improvements, including the landscaping, were done in the name of "security."

'SECURITY'

The admission that \$76,000 was spent to landscape the Nixon grounds was made reluctantly last week as the result of an interview with the head of the General Services Administration, Arthur F. Sampson, and other officials. Sampson first refused to divulge the landscaping figure, citing "security" reasons. But a Secret Service official present at the interview then conceded, in response to a reporter's question, that there could be no objection on the basis of "security" to making the figure public.

GSA spokesman Terry Angelo supplied the \$76,000 figure an hour after the interview ended.

According to Sampson, the sizable, federally-financed landscaping operations on the Nixon grounds were necessary to repair damage done by workmen who had

installed facilities at the request of the Secret Service. "We tore up much of the landscaping and had to replace it," he said.

SHRUBBERY

The Secret Service official, assistant to the director for public affairs John W. Warner, added that in some cases the Secret Service had felt it necessary to order shrubbery removed because it blocked the operations of protective devices installed on the Nixon property.

And in some cases, Warner added, the Secret Service had ordered shrubbery planted to obscure a direct line of vision to the Nixon grounds from outside the area.

The White House issued the following statement when asked to comment on the need for \$76,000 in landscaping on the Nixon property: "We would have no comment on measures ordered by the Secret Service in connection with their protection of the President. The White House has nothing to do with their determinations in this regard, as has been the case throughout the history of the Secret Service and the protection of the Presidents of the United States."

RECORD

Sampson also admitted that Seabees had helped install the prefabricated office buildings for the President and his staff on Coast Guard property adjacent to the land owned by Mr. Nixon and his friend, industrialist Robert Abplanalp. But no records of the Seabee work were kept, Sampson main-

tained.

The reporters then asked to see construction records pertaining to the Nixon home, in an effort to learn just how much federal money had been spent there and why. Sampson replied that there were two kinds of records: those relating to security, which could not be made public; and those which were the President's own private affair.

A reporter then suggested: "In other words, there are two kinds of records — those we can't see, and those we can't see."

Replied Sampson: "That's right."

Later in the interview, Sampson was asked to disclose the cost of government-paid landscaping on the Nixon estate. He refused to do so, saying: "Anything that involves the security of the President, we're not going to reveal. Every piece of information we reveal, reveals how much security was done. Every little piece of information, no matter how small, threatens the security of the President."

It was then that the Secret Service official conceded there was no "security" reason for withholding the information, and Sampson was pressured into executing an about-face.

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