

Gift Hunt Upsets the Nixons

Washington

Former President Richard Nixon was described yesterday as angry and Mrs. Nixon as deeply hurt by implications that they intentionally kept some valuable foreign gifts that belong to the government.

"Right now she is going through stuff in the house, like the boss' jewelry, to see if there are cuff links or stuff like that," Nixon's aide, Jack Brennan, said in a telephone interview from San Clemente.

Another aide, Ken Khachigian, spoke of "the really crummy implication that they have broken the law — in a sense, taking things that belonged to the public."

Nixon's lawyers asked a court Wednesday to bar the

government from rummaging through storage boxes for photographs, lists or other clues about foreign gifts presented to Nixon and his family while he was president. The law requires that any gift worth more than \$50 be turned over to the State Department and such items usually end up as displays in presidential libraries.

A federal judge refused to halt the search, which will begin next week.

On Monday, the Washington Post said some government officials believe some gifts are in the Nixons' custody. The newspaper listed some "missing" items as a carpet, watches, antiques, an oil painting, a silver box, a gold necklace and bracelet, several other bracelets.

The value of state gifts to Nixon and his family in the 5½ years he was president has been estimated at \$2 million and there have been published allegations that the value of "missing" items may be as much as one-fourth of that.

Any allegation that the Nixons purposely kept such valuable gifts "is utterly false," Khachigian said. He would not rule out that some items may have been packed in crates sent into storage in San Clemente.

"If it turns out that any state gifts were inadvertently sent to San Clemente, then we'll return the damn things as soon as we can," he said. "The problem is there were some 2000 gifts and as far as we know,

99.9 per cent are in Washington."

Nixon's papers, tapes and 124 crates labeled foreign gifts are being held by the National Archives.

Brennan said Nixon is upset because his wife is upset.

"He's very angry that these implications are being made, especially about Mrs. Nixon," Brennan said. "He's very angry that the imputations of wrongdoing are just sort of hovering over this like a dark cloud."

The request for a search of the Nixon files was made by Evans S. Dobbelle, the U.S. chief of protocol. He referred to "allegations" that some of the gifts were missing.

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