

Congressional Trip Worries Kissinger



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SECRETARY OF STATE Henry Kissinger is worried that an upcoming congressional study trip to the volatile Middle East may tip the sensitive diplomatic balance that now holds the truce together.

The 21-member special subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee plans to meet with both Israeli and Arab leaders during its Thanksgiving week trip.

While reluctantly sanctioning the trip, the State Department has shown its displeasure by quietly informing the delegation that it will not receive the usual VIP treatment afforded visiting congressmen by American Embassies. The staffs of the Embassies are too busy, the congressmen were told, to arrange local transportation and accommodations for the visitors.

Our own State Department sources, however, tell us that Kissinger did not want the congressmen in the Middle East for fear they might unwittingly throw a monkey wrench into the delicate negotiations.

Representative Samuel Stratton, (Dem-N.Y.) the chairman of the special subcommittee, huffed to us, "We don't care. We'll walk from the airport if necessary." He said his group will assess the military aspects of the war and its impact on American defense, and not do any negotiating.

Stratton said the trip was necessary because the Pentagon probably will want an additional \$3 billion to beef up the U.S. airlift system — and Kissinger or no Kissinger, the committee needs first-hand

facts to deal with the Pentagon request.

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VICE PRESIDENT-DESIGNATE Gerald Ford dished money out of his own campaign funds for two members of Congress who sit on the committees now investigating him.

Two separate \$1000 transfers were made from Ford's funds to political committees supporting the reelection of Senator Robert Griffin, (Rep-Mich.), on Oct. 24, 1972, and Nov. 1, 1972. Griffin is a member of the Senate Rules Committee which has been conducting hearings on the Ford nomination.

Griffin conceded that he hadn't told Rules chairman Howard Cannon, (Dem.-Nev.), about the \$2000 turnover but contended, "this is no more a conflict of interest than the fact that Ford has been a close friend of mine for 25 years."

Another \$1000 was transferred from Ford's campaign chest to Representative Trent Lott, (Rep.-Miss.), on Aug. 1, 1972. The Mississippi freshman serves on the House Judiciary Committee, which is also holding hearings on Ford.

Lott neglected to report the specific \$1000 contribution to the Clerk of the House, as required by law. "There was no effort to cover this up," he told my associate Bob Owens, "because I reported it to the State of Mississippi. Whatever mistake there may or may not have been, it was just an interpretation of the law."

He added that he saw no conflict in participating in the house investigation of Ford after having accepted \$1000 from him.