

Return Flight

Washington

The military plane that brought President Nixon back to Washington over the weekend became available because it broke down and was left in California by Air Force Secretary John L. McLucas, officials disclosed yesterday.

While it was being repaired, they said, a second Lockheed Jetstar was dispatched from Washington California to pick up McLucas, who was in the midst of a cross-country inspection tour.

Replying to questions, the White House said that even

if the McLucas plane hadn't been available, an Air Force plane would have been sent for Mr. Nixon.

The President distressed some of his aides, the Secret Service and other government officials when he elected to fly to California on December 26 aboard a United Airlines commercial jet.

The latest questions about Mr. Nixon's travel arose after he made the surprise return trip to Washington Sunday aboard the Air Force plane despite earlier White House indications that he would fly back commercially.

Associated Press