

Slow-Moving Subpoena for Nixon Only a Day Late, Post Office Says

By Ronald Kessler

Washington Post Staff Writer

The U.S. Postal Service said yesterday that although a historic subpoena requesting President Nixon's appearance in a Los Angeles courtroom took six days to be delivered from Los Angeles to Washington, it was delayed by only a day.

The Postal Service said it assigned its inspection service to look into the letter's journey after the judge who signed the subpoena said he was "speechless" because it had not been delivered a week after it was authorized.

The Postal Service said the inspection service gave this report:

Although the subpoena

was authorized by the judge Monday, Feb. 4, it was not mailed by the court's mailroom until Wednesday, Feb. 6.

The letter — actually a large, brown envelope sent by certified mail — was postmarked the previous day because it was dated with a postage meter. Dates on postage meters are set by their operators and may not coincide with actual date of mailing.

The letter should have been delivered on Saturday if it had met the Postal Service's delivery standards from Los Angeles to Washington. Instead, it arrived at the D.C. Superior Court on Tuesday, Feb. 12.

The reason, the Postal Service said, was that the letter could not be delivered on Saturday because the D.C. court was closed. It should have been delivered Monday, but the substitute clerk who delivered mail to the court that day had "inadvertently" left his certified mail behind at the post office.

The mail was found by his supervisor, and the letter was delivered Tuesday.

"The letter was never lost or misplaced," the Postal Service said. "Normal delivery would have been on Monday, Feb. 11. Actual delivery was made on Tuesday morning, Feb. 12 one day's difference."