

Hill Panel Hits Nixon Homes' Cost

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A secret report of a House subcommittee looking into federal expenditures for President Nixon's San Clemente and Key Biscayne homes concludes that the government has spent more than \$17 million in five years—"more than the combined salaries of all U.S. Presidents."

To the \$10 million in fixed expenditures already widely reported, the report adds \$7.1 million over five years for "personnel permanently assigned" to the California and Florida homes. The government is currently spending \$1.6 million a year for Secret Service agents and protective officers, and personnel in the General Services Administration, Coast Guard and White House Communications Agency.

The report labels the \$7.1 million personnel cost "an extravagant expenditure for a facility used only a few days each year."

It also concludes, "a sizable amount of the [\$10 million] expenditures at both San Clemente and Key Biscayne can only be characterized as 'gold plating,'" and adds, "contrary to the position taken by the administrator of GSA during the subcommittee's hearings, the committee does not agree that these expenditures did not add to the value of the property."

A House Government Operations subcommittee yesterday adopted the report — not yet made public but made available to The Washington Post — by a 6-to-4 party line vote. The Republicans objected loudly that they had no chance to take part in drafting the report and were not given sufficient time to study it.

Ranking subcommittee Republican John Buchanan of Alabama said he "would be hard pressed to refute allegations" that the report was being rushed out so that it could be used by the Judiciary Committee looking into impeachment.

Subcommittee Chairman Jack Brooks (D-Tex.), who also serves on the Judiciary Committee, refused comment on whether the report makes any charges that could constitute an impeachable offense.

The report concludes that there was "an alarming increase in the amount of public funds being diverted to the benefit of private property," and adds, "The primary cause of such an increase is the absence of any self-restraint on the part of the current administration."

"A President should be cognizant of the effect his individual actions may have in imposing burdens on the taxpayers of the nation. Maintaining three private residences for use a few days each year imposes an unreasonable burden on the public treasury." (The third residence referred to is the home of presidential companion Robert Abplanalp in the Bahamas.)

The report states, "The committee is not concerned with whether or not the President may have incidentally been enriched by legitimate security expenditures," but wants to determine "whether public funds have been misused."

The report charges that in several cases "items were procured by the GSA without the benefit of a Secret Service request . . . (But) if some security link could be established subsequent to their procurement, the Secret Service, with proper urging, would generate an after-the-fact request in an effort to legitimize the expenditure."

In one case, the President's personal lawyer, Herbert Kalmbach, ordered a \$388.78 exhaust fan for the fireplace at San Clemente, then decided GSA should pay the bill. GSA said it needed some indication from the Secret Service that the fan was needed for security, and verification was obtained three months after the fan was installed, when Kalmbach's secretary said she talked the Secret Service into it, the report says, remarking:

As an example of "gold plating," the report cites a \$65,000 fence built around the Key Biscayne compound. The report says a \$5,000 to \$10,000 cyclone fence was "not acceptable to the property owner." Instead "a replica of the fence around the White House was specially manufactured of solid aluminum bars and installed on the Florida property." The extra \$50,000 cost "clearly exceeded the limits of esthetic compatibility."

The report says, "It is evident that the purchaser of the property at San Clemente intended at the time of purchase to replace the heating system," and concludes that converting to the electric furnace requested by the Secret Service should have cost \$1,700, instead of the \$13,500 that a complete new heating system cost the public treasury.