

Nixon Still Troubled by Phlebitis in His Left Leg

Brussels

President Nixon is still suffering from a mild attack of phlebitis, an inflammation of the veins in his left leg, but he is in no danger of a blood clot, his personal physician said yesterday.

Major General Walter Tkach said that Mr. Nixon kept his leg elevated during most of the transatlantic flight to Belgium, but he is taking no medication.

"He's in no pain, and the swelling has gone down," Tkach said.

"I'm feeling good, I'm feeling fine," White House press secretary Ronald Ziegler quoted Mr. Nixon as saying.

There was no sign of a limp or other discomfort when Mr. Nixon walked down the red carpet on his review of the honor guard after his arrival here.

The President first observed the swelling in his left leg on the weekend before he departed for his Middle East trip. He did not inform his doctors until his arrival in Salzburg, Austria, on June 9.

Told of the diagnosis, Mr. Nixon then flatly refused recommendations of his

physicians for medical treatment and ordered that his ailment be kept secret so there would be no delay in his travel plans.

"He would not allow any of our suggestions to be carried out," said Tkach. "The only thing I could do is to advise him. He's the President."

Tkach and his assistant, Rear Admiral William Lukahf, then both began administering "hot packs" and saw to it that he keeps his leg elevated as much as possible.

His doctors feared that a blood clot would break off from an inflamed area and become lodged in the lungs or brain, an extremely serious condition. The dan-

ger was explained to Mr. Nixon, Tkach said, "but the President didn't want anything to interfere with his

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trip to the Middle East."

Mr. Nixon's illness was confirmed by a White House spokesman after CBS commentator Dan Rather broadcast the news Monday evening. Even then, deputy press secretary Gerald L. Warren would only say that Mr. Nixon had suffered a "mild case of phlebitis" and that it "had resolved itself." He declined to give any details.

Tkach said he did not know what caused the inflammation. Mr. Nixon had



AP Wirephoto

President Nixon rested his legs while conferring with Henry Kissinger on the flight to Brussels

a similar problem in 1964 when he traveled to Japan. According to Tkach, phlebitis usually occurs after surgery or an injury.

He said swelling in the leg will never completely disappear and there is no cure for it.

Physicians not involved in Mr. Nixon's case were critical of the President's decision to go abroad while suffering from an active case of phlebitis. These doctors said in interviews that flying is not advisable for patients during or just after an attack of phlebitis.

A New York doctor said that for legal reasons if one

of his patients decided to fly with a bout of phlebitis, he would make that patient sign a statement that he was doing so "against medical advice."

Phlebitis, which is derived from Greek words for inflammation of a vein, can occur anywhere in the body. The legs are the most common site because when people sit for long uninterrupted periods in an airplane, automobile or at a desk with their knees bent, blood tends to pool. Under such circumstances, a clot often forms in a leg vein, and through a mechanism that doctors do not precisely understand, an inflammatory reaction develops in the vein. That condition then is called thrombophlebitis.

The physicians interviewed said that under ordinary circumstances — with the President in Washington — a mild case of phlebitis would cause less concern than when the President was flying abroad.

Customary treatment for active cases of phlebitis includes bed rest, propping a leg on a pillow, and injections of anticoagulant and other drugs.

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Chron says.