

Doctor Rules Out Nixon Testimony for 1 to 3 Months

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By LAWRENCE K. ALTMAN

LONG BEACH, Calif., Sept. 30—Former President Richard M. Nixon will not be medically fit to travel to Washington for one to three months to testify in the Watergate cover-up trial, Mr. Nixon's doctors said here today. Mr. Nixon is expected to be discharged from Memorial Hospital Medical Center next weekend.

Dr. John C. Lungren, Mr. Nixon's personal physician, said at a news conference that perhaps his patient could give a written deposition in about three weeks after a normal course of convalescence from his phlebitis and pulmonary embolus.

That course is not fully planned yet, Dr. Lungren said, because Mr. Nixon is scheduled to undergo a series of diagnostic tests this week. Dr. Lungren also said he needed time to evaluate how well Mr. Nixon responds to anticoagulant, or blood thinning, treatment.

"It's my feeling that he is improving," Dr. Lungren said.

Mr. Nixon has been subpoenaed by both the prosecution and the defense in the Watergate cover-up trial that is scheduled to begin tomorrow. But Mr. Nixon is not expected to be called as a witness for several weeks.

In answer to a question whether Mr. Nixon was in sufficiently good physical condition to withstand the strain of deposition in his hospital room, Dr. Lungren said, "At this time, I don't think he is."

Then, when asked how much longer he expected it would be before Mr. Nixon could provide such testimony, Dr. Lungren responded: "A written deposition—perhaps within a period of two to three weeks, certainly."

Dr. Lungren said that Mr. Nixon would have to avoid protracted periods of sitting, standing or riding in a car, plane or bus for "at least a month—maybe three months."

When pressed for a more precise estimate, he said: "In all honesty, I don't know." He added, "I can't pinpoint the time. I can't do that."

Gain for the Doctor

Dr. Lungren went on that if Mr. Nixon chose to testify, "I can't stop him. That's his decision, not mine." But he continued: "I'd be derelict in my duty to him if I suggested that he not observe this restricted activity for at least the next three weeks and a lot longer."

Mr. Nixon's first bout of phlebitis occurred on a trip to Japan 10 years ago. Then, earlier this year, while in the Middle East, Mr. Nixon reported symptoms of swelling and leg pain to his doctors. The symptoms reportedly began before Mr. Nixon left Washington on the trip.

Mr. Nixon also went to the Soviet Union though the symptoms lingered. Mr. Nixon's doctors have said that he went on the trip against their advice. Doctors at the time said it was not a good idea for Mr. Nixon to travel with a phlebitis con-

dition because of the risk of developing a pulmonary embolus.

Mr. Nixon also declined hospitalization when Dr. Lungren said he first recommended it for a flare-up of the phlebitis earlier this month.

At the news conference, Dr. Lungren said: "I think he's finally adopted the decision that he'd follow everything I told him to do."

Earlier in the day, Dr. Lungren issued a medical bulletin stating that Mr. Nixon was out of his hospital bed and sitting in a reclining chair with his left leg elevated for portions of the day, though he "continues to have marked physical exhaustion."

Dr. Lungren said that Mr.

Nixon's "treatment is proceeding satisfactorily" and that he had stopped his intravenous heparin while continuing to prescribe Coumadin blood-thinning pills.

"He will continue to receive Coumadin for anticoagulation for a yet indeterminate period of time," Dr. Lungren said. He also said that Mr. Nixon was wearing a full-length support stocking on his left leg.

"He's mentally sharp but physically extremely fatigued," Dr. Lungren said. When asked to explain his definition of physical fatigue, Dr. Lungren said that Mr. Nixon had gone 27

years without a vacation, had spent the last five and a half years in the roughest job in the world, had recurrences of phlebitis since June and was undergoing his longest stay in a hospital.

Dr. Lungren has repeatedly stressed that his bulletins and the gist of his remarks were approved by Mr. Nixon in accordance with the principles of the confidentiality of the doctor-patient relationship.

The Long Beach specialist in internal medicine said that he was resuming the battery of diagnostic tests that had been suspended while Mr. Nixon was

treated with heparin last week.

"I am hopeful that all the tests will be performed and that the preliminary findings will permit finalization of his future treatment schedule by the first of next week," Dr. Lungren said.

He said that he planned to repeat ventilation-perfusion lung scans that discovered the embolus in Mr. Nixon's right lung. Dr. Lungren confirmed a report last week that pictures from the two tests combined to show "a small, definite defect in the right lung—the extent is approximately 5 percent of the total lung tissue."