

GAO Finds Keeping Nixon Costly

By Jack Anderson
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Government auditors are still trying to calculate exactly how much of the taxpayers' money was spent to remove Richard M. Nixon from the White House and install him at San Clemente as a presidential pensioner.

The latest confidential General Accounting Office audit, which attempted to straighten out all the gifts the taxpayers have given Nixon, was completed, appropriately, on Christmas Eve. Here are some of the highlights:

—The federal paymasters had to do some fancy financial juggling before they could start paying Nixon his \$5,000 monthly pension. They had no authorized funds, for example, until Congress belatedly voted a separate pension for Nixon. In the meantime, they made the initial payments from pension funds that had been earmarked for the widows of Presidents Truman, Eisenhower and Johnson.

—Before Nixon's tape recordings and documents became tied up in litigation, the General Services Administration

assigned 37 archivists and assistants to sit through his papers. This cost the taxpayers an estimated \$102,000.

—Nixon completed the transition to civilian status, according to the bookkeepers, on Feb. 9, 1975. He then was given a \$45,000 budget to last him until June 30, the end of the fiscal year. According to the confidential audit, he used \$35,000 to pay the salaries of four assistants, and he spent \$7,200 for telephone and travel expenses. The rest went for supplies and equipment rental.

—Nixon's transition budget, which expired Feb. 9, was \$100,000. Of this, \$52,815.95 was spent for stationery, \$12,000 for postage. Apparently, Nixon will have need for all that stationery. He has been snowed under with more than 2 million unanswered letters.

—The former President was never charged for \$265,580 in salaries paid to 54 federal workers who were "detailed" to him after his resignation. Among them were his personal maid, butler, three chauffeurs and a medical corpsman. It cost the taxpayers \$2,600, for example, to pay seven movers and packers to haul the

Nixons' personal belongings out of the White House.

—Nixon also should have paid \$77,470 in rent for his oceanside office space. But GSA waived the rent in August.

—Of course, Nixon is entitled by law to Secret Service protection. This runs the taxpayers \$622,000 a year.

Footnote: The confidential report suggests that GSA at first was concerned that Nixon might not legally be entitled to any funds. But "the Justice Department determined that . . . former President Nixon . . . was entitled to the benefits provided by (two separate) acts," the report says.

Washington Whirl—A few days ago, we told how J. Edgar Hoover had his aides buy him a garbage compactor to block our Great Garbage Caper: our search of Hoover's garbage to burlesque his FBI snooping techniques. Now, we have learned that Hoover's top aides, who'd been hit up for contributions for the device, referred to it as the "anti-Anderson Garbage Smasher."