

# Nixon Trip Hurt, Ford Aides Say

Washington

Officials of President Ford's election campaign suggested last night that former President Nixon's China trip cost Mr. Ford votes in the New Hampshire primary.

Deputy campaign director Stuart Spencer told a reporter, "if President Ford loses in New Hampshire, Richard Nixon will be the reason."

Campaign director Howard Callaway said, "I wouldn't go that far," but added, "we do have some very rough evidence that the momentum we had going stopped" at the same time Mr. Nixon was leaving for China last weekend.

"The image to some people of having the former President over there could give the appearance that the former President is still in charge of foreign policy," Callaway said.

He said the thought the impact would have been greatest on moderate Republicans who planned to vote for Mr. Ford but decided not

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to vote at all because of the Nixon trip.

Reagan, however, scoffed at that assertion.

Hugh Gregg, Reagan's New Hampshire campaign coordinator, said: "It never came up in the campaign. They're just looking for an excuse." On election eve, Gregg said New Hampshire voters might well be thinking about Mr. Nixon although they weren't talking about him.

In a strongly worded statement, Senator Richard S. Schwick-

er, (Rep-Pa.), who is not connected with the Ford campaign, said Mr. Nixon "deliberately sabotaged President Ford's re-election effort by scheduling a headline grabbing trip to China to coincide with the closing days of the key New Hampshire primary.

"I strongly suspect his motive was quite simply to advance the candidacy of former Texas Governor John Connally."

The comments came at a time when early returns showed Reagan leading Mr. Ford by a narrow and diminishing margin.

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