

Nixon Visited Barge Plant

San Diego

Former President Nixon inspected the shipyard where a barge was being built for the Central Intelligence Agency plan to recover a sunken Soviet submarine 11 days before the craft was launched.

However, the President turned down a request to christen it because he was not told what it was to be used for.

During his trip to National Steel and Shipbuilding Co. on Jan. 4, 1972, Mr. Nixon

announced a \$54.6 million contract for three oil tankers.

He also "walked all over here, shaking hands and talking to our workers," said vice president of the shipbuilding firm, John Murphy.

Murphy said he invited the former President to help launch the barge "but he said that if we wouldn't tell him what it was, he was darned if he would have a thing to do with it."

The firm built the 324-foot

barge in 1971, but "had no idea what the barge would be used for, other than mining operations at sea," William Harman, company public relations director, said yesterday.

The entire project was top secret and known only at certain high governmental levels when the barge was christened HMB-1 on Jan. 15, 1972.

Sophisticated salvage equipment was installed on the barge in Redwood City.

United Press