

First lady not worried about hookers' tour of White House

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WARSAW, POLAND

First lady Barbara Bush said yesterday that the Secret Service investigation of a late night White House tour that reportedly included two male prostitutes has not raised security questions the first family is worried about.

Speaking publicly for the first time about the July 3, 1988, tour arranged by former Washington lobbyist Craig J. Spence, Mrs. Bush said she and her husband have no fears of a security breach.

"Not at all," she told reporters on Air Force One shortly after it took off from Andrews Air Force Base en route here for the first leg of a 10-day European trip by President Bush.

Mrs. Bush, noting that she reads all of the stories printed in the Daily Press Summary, a half-inch thick digest of stories in the print and electronic media, said the reports about the scandal uncovered by The Washington Times haven't alarmed her.

"There haven't been a lot of stories in our house about it," she said.

Mrs. Bush added that "I'm not into all of this" and said it was "good" that The Washington Post wasn't following The Times' story.

Ever since The Times first reported the tour on June 29, the White House has avoided comment. Last week, Treasury Secretary Nicholas Brady, who heads the Secret Service, reluctantly confirmed reports of a Secret Service investigation.

Presidential spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said the service hasn't raised security concerns for the White House as a result of the probe.

White House officials have said that the midnight tours such as those arranged for Mr. Spence do not threaten the First Family's security because they are allowed only in office areas and not the residence.

The tours for Mr. Spence, who has been linked to a federal investigation of a Washington homosexual prostitution ring that catered to government, media and business officials, were set up by Reginald A. deGuedre, a uniformed White House officer who moonlighted as the lobbyist's bodyguard.

Mr. Fitzwater said the Secret Service is "looking into the action" of the officer.

White House officials have said any staff member with the proper credentials such as those held by Mr. deGuedre can give private tours, and after-hours tours are encouraged because they don't disturb those working during the day. The tours commonly include a view of the Oval Office.

"I think they've [The Times] overblown the White House angle. No one knows who these guys are," said one administration official, referring to the associates of Mr. Spence named so far in The Times.

But, he added, the White House continues to closely follow the story.