

Undisturbed by FBI Probe, Agnew Says

6/18/73
By William Claiborne
Washington Post Staff Writer

Vice President Agnew said yesterday that he was not disturbed that he was investigated by the FBI in 1968, as long as it was for national security purposes and as long as it was authorized by "competent authorities."

Agnew's comment followed two lengthy meetings held Tuesday night and yesterday morning with Acting FBI Director William D. Ruckelshaus, during which the two men discussed disclosures that President Johnson had ordered such an investigation in November, 1968.

FBI sources had revealed that Mr. Johnson had ordered a check of Agnew's long-distance telephone calls after receiving a wiretap report that allegedly linked the then Vice President-elect to a plot to sabotage Vietnamese peace negotiations in Paris.

The purported motive of the plan to undermine the peace talks was to give an assist to Richard M. Nixon's campaign for the presidency.

Agnew denied "categorically" that he was involved at all in any plot to undermine the peace negotiations that led to the Oct. 31 bombing halt ordered by Mr. Johnson.

"The record will show that on many occasions in 1968 I publicly supported President Lyndon B. Johnson's efforts to bring peace to Vietnam," Agnew said yesterday.

The FBI said that, at the request of President Johnson, it "checked out" five telephone calls Agnew made on Nov. 2, 1968, from his campaign airplane and from a pay phone at the Albuquerque, N.M., airport.

FBI sources said Mr. Johnson had ordered the tel-

ephone checks to determine if Agnew had been leaking information about the Vietnam negotiations to a prominent Republican supporter, Anna Chennault.

Mrs. Chennault, the Chinese-born widow of Flying Tigers Gen. Claire Chennault, later was accused of trying to sabotage the peace talks to help Mr. Nixon's candidacy. She has denied the accusation.

FBI officials confirmed that wiretaps were placed on the South Vietnamese Embassy here as a result of Mrs. Chennault's activities, and that Mrs. Chennault had been given the code name of "Little Flower" in an attempt to cover her activities.

The possibility that even Mr. Nixon's telephone may have been tapped during the 1968 campaign was raised before the Senate Watergate committee by John W. Dean III, former White House counsel.

Dean described a March, 1973, meeting with Mr. Nixon in which, he said, the President said he was convinced he had been wiretapped in 1968.

FBI officials yesterday denied any knowledge of a wiretap on Mr. Nixon, and suggested that the only plausible explanation for reports of electronic interception of the President's telephone conversations might stem from the surveillance of the South Vietnamese Embassy.

An account of how the activities of Mrs. Chennault almost became a campaign issue in 1968 is contained in Theodore H. White's book, "The Making of a President 1968," in which Vice President Humphrey is said to have refused to accuse Mr. Nixon of involvement in the alleged plan to thwart the peace talks.