

# U.S. Probe Of Agnew Underway

## Washington

Vice President Spiro T. Agnew and two of his Maryland political associates are under federal investigation for possible violation of bribery, conspiracy and tax laws in connection with an alleged kickback scheme, the Washington Post learned last night.

(The Wall Street Journal reported in its editions today that the investigation also included a possible charge of extortion.)

In a statement issued by his office late last night, Agnew confirmed that he was under investigation and proclaimed his innocence. The statement said:

"I have been informed that I am under investigation for possible violations of the criminal statutes. I will make no further comment until the investigation has been completed, other than to say that I am innocent of any wrong-doing, that I have confidence in the criminal justice system of the United States and that I am equally confident my innocence will be confirmed."

The Vice President has retained legal counsel in the matter.

### LETTER

Agnew, sources said, was informed of the investigation last week in a hand-delivered letter from the U.S. Attorney for Maryland, George Beall.

The investigation, sources said, involves alleged kickbacks to political figures in Baltimore county and other Maryland areas from engineering and architectural firms who have done business with the county. Baltimore county surrounds Baltimore city on three sides and is where Agnew began his political career.

Other targets of the investigation, according to reliable sources, are two of Ag-

new's long-standing friends and important fund raisers — J. Walter Jones, an Annapolis banker, and I. H. (Bud) Hammerman, a Baltimore investment banker. Hammerman and Jones served as Agnew fund raisers when he ran for country executive in 1962 and for governor in 1966. Neither could be reached for comment last night.

Deputy presidential press secretary Gerald Warren  
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said there would be no White House comment at this point. Similarly, Attorney General Elliot Richardson said through a spokesman last night that there would be no Justice Department comment at this time.

Both the President and Richardson were informed of the probe, but, according to informed sources, have taken a hands-off approach to the investigation.

(The Wall Street Journal story said Agnew sought an audience with Mr. Nixon yesterday. It was presumed he discussed his situation with the President.)

Agnew, a Republican, was county executive of predominantly Democratic Baltimore county from 1962 to 1966. He was governor of Maryland from 1966 to January, 1969, when he became Vice President.

The targets of the grand jury investigation in Baltimore county up to now have been the county's present executive, Dale W. Anderson, a Democrat, who succeeded Agnew in 1966. Other targets, according to sources, are a number of executives for engineering and architectural firms, and Anderson's former administrative officer, William E. Forno, who has pleaded guilty to a minor tax charge in return for his cooperation with the prosecutors.

The grand jury also has been investigating Lester Matz, a consulting engineer who also has long been associated with Agnew.

Another target, sources say, is Jerome B. Wolff, 55, president of Greiner Environmental Systems Inc. Wolff, from 1959 to February

1963, was a senior official in the Baltimore county Public Works Department. In 1967, when Agnew was governor, Wolff was named by Agnew as chairman of the Old State Roads Commission. In 1970, Wolff moved to Agnew's vice presidential staff as an assistant for science and technology.

### IMMUNITY

Both Wolff and Matz, according to sources, have been hinting to investigators that in return for immunity or reduced charges, they would be willing to supply information on Agnew. Whether federal prosecutors opened their investigation of Agnew as a result of information received from Matz and Wolff could not be ascertained last night. Matz and Wolff also could not be reached for comment.

Federal investigators also refused to comment on the investigation. Other sources said, however, that the federal prosecutors are investigating the possibility that tax laws were violated by Agnew, Jones and Hammerman.

One Justice Department source said last night that the legal immunity of an incumbent Vice President is not clear. As an officer of the Senate, the source said, the Vice President enjoys certain constitutional immunities but it is not clear whether these immunities would cover alleged crimes committed before becoming Vice President.

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