

He Denies Receiving Kickbacks

Washington

Vice President Spiro T. Agnew denounced a set of "damned lies" yesterday reports that he took kickbacks from government contractors in Maryland.

In a televised news conference just 40 hours after he announced he was under federal investigation, Agnew said he has "no expectation of being indicted" and no intention of resigning from office.

He was formally notified last Thursday, Agnew said, that he was under investigation for possible criminal violations, including bribery, extortion, tax fraud and conspiracy — charges he dismissed all together as "false, scurrilous and malicious."

On the immediate question of cooperating with the federal prosecutor in Baltimore, Agnew said he had not yet decided whether he would turn over the personal financial papers that have been requested — or whether he will appear, if asked, before a grand jury.

LAWYERS

On such matters, he said, he will defer to expert legal opinion — including, he suggested, that of the White House lawyers who are now arguing that President Nixon would have to be impeached before he could be prosecuted on any criminal charge.

The broader impression of Agnew's half-hour appearance was an apparently self-conscious contrast with Mr. Nixon's sustained isolation from the press since the Watergate scandal broke around the White House.

After what seemed a momentary nervousness in his opening statement, delivered sternly, without notes, Agnew stood relaxed through a 31-minute exchange with about 200 reporters in the fourth-floor auditorium of the Executive

Back Page Col. 8

From Page 1

Office Building, next door to the White House.

His hands thrust into his pockets, he looked confident and volunteered several small jokes.

"I have nothing to hide," he said twice. He did not rule out more press conferences on the case.

SUPPORT

Agnew said he had had a "far-reaching" conversation with President Nixon in an hour and three-quarters meeting Tuesday, during which he said the President "unequivocally" affirmed his support.

He added, however, "it really isn't that important what the President says. I'm not spending my time looking around to see who's supporting me. I'm defending myself."

Agnew also said:

"The accusations that are being made, if they do come from people who are also

More Agnew news on Page 6

under investigation, must be looked at as accusations that are coming from those who have found themselves in very deep trouble and are looking to extricate themselves from this trouble and are flirting with the idea that they can obtain immunity or reduced charges . . . by doing so."

He did not name the others, however, and he declined to say whether one of them may be Jerome B. Wolff, who was the head of the Maryland roads commission in 1967 and 1968, when Agnew was governor, and who later served on the vice president's staff.

PAYMENT

According to a newspaper report yesterday, Wolff has told prosecutors that Agnew received \$1000 a week as governor from state contractors and took a \$50,000 lump payment in 1969, after he became vice president.

Asked yesterday whether he had ever had a personal

"slush fund," Agnew said, "Never."

Pressed as to whether he had ever received money from contractors or businessmen for his personal use, he replied crisply, "Absolutely not."

One questioner asked Agnew whether anyone had "threatened to drag you into this unless you helped to kill the investigation." Agnew said he would not respond to that now, though he said no such threat had been made directly to him.

"I'm not going to foreclose the possibility that such things may have happened," he added, "but I'm not going to assert at this moment that they did." He said that no one had asked him to kill the investigation.

Agnew said he heard the first rumors last February of an investigation that could involve him.

Early in April, he said, he retained a Washington lawyer, Judah Best, to represent him to George Beall, the U.S. Attorney in Baltimore, and also to assure the prosecutor that "I would in no way attempt to impede the investigation."

New York Times