

New Top-Level Meeting In Agnew Case Probe

Baltimore

The Justice Department's top prosecutor met here yesterday with U.S. attorneys and lawyers for 10 Maryland businessmen who reportedly implicated Vice President Spiro T. Agnew in an alleged bribery and kick-back scheme.

The high-level meeting, the second in two days for Assistant Attorney General

Henry E. Petersen, head of the Justice Department's criminal division, came amid reports that indictments may be returned shortly.

Petersen and his special assistant, Philip White, spent several hours with U.S. Attorney George Beall. Also present in Beall's suite of offices was Lester Matz, a Baltimore engineering consultant, and his co-counsel, Arnold M. Weiner and Jo-

seph H. H. Kaplan.

IMMUNITY

Matz, who has been granted limited immunity in exchange for his testimony, reportedly told prosecutors that he turned illegal kick-backs from contractors over to Agnew, a former Maryland governor.

Beall spoke briefly with newsmen following the meeting but refused to say what was discussed.

Asked if indictments were coming soon, Beall replied: "I know where we are: I don't know where we're going."

However, sources close to the investigation indicated indictments may be handed down shortly.

JURY

A special grand jury hearing testimony in the case met for two hours yesterday and then adjourned. The only witness seen entering the hearing room was an unidentified tax agent who has been working with the prosecutors on the case. Beall

said the jury probably would not come back into session until next Thursday.

The probe began last December as an investigation of Baltimore county officials and of engineering firms doing business with the county and state, but did not involve Agnew until this spring. The vice president was notified August 2 that he is under investigation for possible violations of bribery, extortion, conspiracy and tax laws.

Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson met with Agnew privately August 6 to discuss the status of the investigation. Two days later Agnew said at a news conference that the allegations against him were "damned lies."

CONFIRM

A Justice Department spokesman refused to confirm a New York Times report yesterday that Richardson told Agnew that prosecutors have statements from more than 20 Maryland businessmen who say they gave cash to Agnew associates in return for lucrative government contracts.

At the White House, deputy press secretary Gerald L. Warren refused to say whether President Nixon ordered Richardson to outline the evidence to Agnew.

He said Mr. Nixon met with the attorney general the same day as the Richardson-Agnew meeting, adding that the White House session was "a private meeting and it will remain that way."

Associated Press