

G.A.O. to Halt Funds for Agnew's Guard

NYTimes FEB 16 1974

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Feb. 15—

The General Accounting Office notified the Treasury Department today that payments to Secret Service agents assigned to former Vice President Spiro T. Agnew would be cut off after Sunday. 17 FEB

Elmer B. Staats, the Controller General, said in a letter to Secretary of the Treasury George P. Shultz that there was no legal authority for the assigning of agents to Mr. Agnew.

There was no immediate comment from the Treasury or the Secret Service, which is an agency within that department.

The G.A.O., which is the investigative arm of Congress, has the authority to determine

whether money appropriated by Congress is being legally spent and to order disbursements withheld if that is not the case.

In his letter to Mr. Shultz, Mr. Staats, who is head of the accounting office, said that if payments to the agents who are protecting Mr. Agnew continued after Sunday, the disbursing officers in the Treasury would be held legally accountable.

On Oct. 10, the day Mr. Agnew resigned after pleading no contest to a charge of tax evasion, President Nixon ordered Secret Service protection of him to continue "for a reasonable period of time."

The former Vice President is in California this weekend to attend Jack Benny's 80th birthday party and to spend time at Frank Sinatra's estate.

Mr. Staats said that he was allowing the protection of Mr. Agnew to continue through Sunday because of "the administrative problems involved."

Representative John E. Moss, Democrat of California, who initially ordered the G.A.O. investigation of whether agents should be assigned to Mr. Agnew, has estimated that from

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12 to 21 agents are accompanying the former Vice President in California.

Between Oct. 10 and Dec. 15 Mr. Agnew was given round-the-clock protection at a cost to the Government of \$89,222, according to the Treasury. There was no estimate of costs after Dec. 15.

Although Mr. Moss first raised his questions about the protection last fall, it was the former Vice President's trip to California this week that especially annoyed the California Representative. He called the trip "an affront to every taxpayer in America."

The Treasury has defended its decision to provide Mr. Agnew with protection, limousines and drivers. In a letter this week to Mr. Moss, Edward C. Schmults, general counsel of the department, said the department was carrying out a valid Presidential command.

Mr. Schmults noted that, without specific Congressional authority, Secret Service agents were assigned to Senator Hubert H. Humphrey for six months after he left the Vice-Presidency.

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