

Audit Made by GAO

Nixon Legal Expenses

Washington

President Nixon's legal expenses arising from the Watergate scandals cost U.S. taxpayer \$382,474 as of March 24, government auditors have estimated.

The cost estimates were made by the General Accounting Office, the auditing arm of Congress, and were released yesterday by Representative Edward R. Roybal (Dem - L.A.).

Roybal, who requested the audit, plans to pursue the matter further today when Roy L. Ash, director of the White House Office of Management and Budget, testifies before the House Appropriations Committee on new White House money requests.

In its report to Roybal, the GAO said its figures were estimates because "the White House does not maintain accounting or other records which would permit us to obtain precise information on the costs incurred on Watergate."

Thus, the GAO said it had to compute the estimates from those records and vouchers that were available and from interviews with White House personnel.

Last December, in an emergency appropriation bill, Congress gave the White House an extra \$1.5 million to provide Mr. Nixon with additional legal support for his Watergate defense.

However, as of March 24, a considerable portion of the President's legal expenses was being paid by other departments and agencies of government, which detailed lawyers and staff people to the White House but continued paying their salaries.

The GAO audit is expected to raise new questions in Congress because it discloses that until last October, some \$24,000 of the legal costs were paid from the now-defunct White House Special Projects fund, which was intended only for special studies.

Administration officials denied last year that Special Projects money was being used for Mr. Nixon's Watergate legal expenses.

In arriving at its cost estimate, the GAO included fees paid to legal consultants, the salaries of lawyers on the White House payroll and

those on other payrolls, salaries of clerks and secretaries, and costs of paper

and other supplies plus machine rentals.

The GAO study did not at-

tempt to project what the eventual cost might be.

Los Angeles Times