

Funds Cut For Agnew Protection

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Comptroller General Elmer B. Staats informed the Treasury Department yesterday he would not allow any further use of federal funds to provide Secret Service protection for former Vice President Spiro T. Agnew.

Staats, an officer of Congress, has the power to halt expenditure of any funds he considers illegal.

Staats told Treasury Secretary George P. Shultz in a letter that further Secret Service protection for Agnew would be illegal, and "future payments made for such purposes will be disallowed by my office."

Staats said the cutoff will begin for payments starting Monday. As of that day, Agnew will no longer be entitled to have Secret Service protection.

Agnew resigned as Vice President Oct. 10 before pleading no contest to a federal charge of income tax evasion.

The General Accounting Office headed by Staats estimated that Agnew's Secret Service protection from Oct. 10 to Dec. 15 has cost the taxpayers nearly \$90,000.

Agnew recently flew to the West Coast for a vacation as guest of entertainer Frank Sinatra, and was accompanied by Secret Service agents, prompting Attorney General William B. Saxbe to question the former Vice President's continuing protection.

Under repeated challenges by the GAO and Rep. John E. Moss (D-Calif.), the Treasury Department has said President Nixon's decision to provide round-the-clock protection for Agnew was "presumptively valid and lawful."

Treasury officials noted that Hubert H. Humphrey received Secret Service protection for six months after he left the vice presidency in 1969.

A GAO spokesman said he knew of no way anyone could appeal Staats' ruling disallowing financing of Agnew's protection, although the government could force the issue into court simply by continuing to pay for it.

Normally, the spokesman said, a disallowal letter is obeyed because certifying officers stand in danger of being hit with personal bills for thousands or millions of dollars if they do not comply.