

U.S. Embassy in Beirut Refused Request by Agnew for Car, Driver

By Richard M. Cohen
Washington Post Staff Writer

The State Department said yesterday that it did not act on all of former Vice President Spiro T. Agnew's travel requests when his business trip to the Middle East last May was abruptly cancelled by his wife's illness.

A department spokesman said the American Embassy in Beirut, Lebanon, did not meet Agnew's plane with a car and a driver, as the former vice president had requested and found that reservations had already been made for the hotel room he said he wanted.

Agnew's requests were contained in a cable from the American Embassy in Kuwait to embassies in Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Jordan. The cable asked that Agnew's business appointments in these countries—one of which was with King Faisal of Saudi Arabia—be cancelled and that a car and a driver be sent to

meet him when he arrived in Beirut.

The cable also said Agnew requested that a room be booked for him at the Phoenicia Hotel in Beirut.

"We did not supply him with a car and a driver," the State Department spokesman said. "He was picked up by a business associate." As for the hotel room, the spokesman said, "reservations had already been made."

The State Department said Monday it was not unusual for U.S. embassies to assist American businessmen abroad in cancelling appointments, especially when an emergency arises. Agnew, according to the cable, learned May 25 that his wife, Judy, had been readmitted to the hospital after a hysterectomy earlier in the month.

Since resigning last October as vice president, Agnew has been trying to establish himself as a middleman between American business interests

and foreign governments. Apparently in that capacity, he notified the State Department last April that he would be traveling to 12 nations.

The department, in turn, alerted its embassies but said Agnew should receive nothing more than "appropriate courtesies." A department spokesman said a car and driver would not be included in the phrase "appropriate courtesies."

Agnew pleaded no contest last October to an income tax evasion charge and resigned as vice president. At the same time, the Justice Department made public allegations against Agnew that included charges he had accepted kickbacks from Maryland contractors while he was executive of Baltimore County, governor of Maryland and vice president. Agnew has denied the allegations.

He has been disbarred in Maryland and can no longer practice law.