

Report of Squelch Attempt

Washington

One of the Maryland contractors being investigated in the same federal probe as Spiro T. Agnew contacted at least one close associate of Agnew's earlier this year to ask that the Vice President use his influence to stop the inquiry, informed sources said yesterday.

The contractor, Lester Matz, a Baltimore county consulting engineer, told the intermediary that the continuing inquiry was bound to affect Agnew, and that it should be stopped, the sources said. It is not known if the intermediary delivered the message in precisely that form.

The sources said that Matz did not threaten Agnew by saying that unless the probe was aborted, Matz would supply possibly damaging information about Agnew to the federal investigators. Matz reportedly has been negotiating with the prosecutors for leniency in return for his testimony against others under investigation.

Agnew, who discussed this subject obliquely in his press conference yesterday, refused to take any action following Matz's message, according to one source.

Meanwhile yesterday, another target of the federal investigation, Jerome Wolff, a long-time associate of Agnew who served with him from 1962 to 1970, issued a

statement through his lawyer in which he said he was being "compelled to testify as a witness before the grand jury..."

In the statement Wolff's lawyer, Arnold Weiner, said that Wolff "concluded that he had no tenable alternative but to answer truthfully whatever inquiries the government may put to him."

Weiner refused to comment on why Wolff had decided to testify.

However, other sources said that government prosecutors told Wolff that if he did not testify of his own accord, presumably in return for lenient treatment from the government, he would be granted "use immunity," requiring him by law to testify. Use immunity only shields the witness from prosecution arising from the particular statements he himself makes.

The witness can still be prosecuted fully on other ev-

idence gathered against him.

Wolff, according to sources, accepted the offer of "use immunity" and also reportedly received some other consideration from the prosecutors. Nevertheless, his testimony, his lawyer's statement makes plain, is not being voluntarily offered.

Attorney General Elliot Richardson yesterday refused to comment on the case other than to tell a reporter that if Richardson thought that the U.S. Attorney for Maryland, George Beall, had been acting irresponsibly in the Agnew case he would have him fired.

Later yesterday Beall and the three assistant U.S. Attorneys handling the Agnew investigation issued a statement in which they said that their office had not been the source of leaks to the news media.

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