

Quick Clearance Seen Aiding Agnew

But 'He's Fighting for His Life'

By Lou Cannon

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Some of Spiro T. Agnew's trusted advisers were saying yesterday that the allegations of wrongdoing against him could turn into a golden political opportunity for the Vice President.

Agnew himself, buoyed by public support for his televised denial of the allegations, flew out to Palm Springs, Calif., for a four-day holiday at the home of entertainer Frank Sinatra.

The vice president was described as "feeling a sense of relief" after bluntly describing charges that he took kickbacks from government contractors as "damned lies."

Agnew is mindful that either successful prosecution or a long delay in resolution of the tax fraud and bribery charges for which he is being investigated could end his political career. But he was described by those close to him as believing that his position will be enhanced if he is quickly cleared.

"He's fighting for his life," said one adviser. "But if he wins, it will be a whole new ball game."

It is the adviser's view that Agnew will have established himself as a political force in his own right and as a rallying point for many who support the Nixon-Agnew ticket last fall if he succeeds in convincing the American people of his innocence.

In an effort to accomplish this, Agnew supporters said, the Vice President intends to turn over to prosecutors the financial records demanded in a letter last week by U.S. Attorney George Beall formally informing the Vice President he was under federal investigation.

Agnew left unresolved in his press conference Wednesday the question of whether he would actually turn over the records. He said he would "make available at the appropriate time and in the appropriate way to the appropriate authorities, as determined after consultation with my counsel, whatever records, my

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own body for interrogation—whatever is needed."

However, Agnew added that there are "certainly high unprecedented constitutional questions that must be considered."

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Despite the belief among Vice President actually intends to turn over the records, his attorneys here declined to comment on what course Agnew will follow. They did ask for and receive an extension of yesterday's deadline ordering that the records be turned over but gave no indication whether the delay was substantive or procedural.

Any long delay would be harmful to Agnew, his supporters believe. One said that only a quick resolution of the charges in Agnew's favor can save the Vice President.

The first responses to Agnew's televised press conference appeared to be overwhelmingly favorable to the Vice President. Of the first 219 telegrams, 214 supported the Vice President.

Western Union in Washington reported the tele-

grams arriving only the overflow at the rate of one a minute Wednesday morning and said this was from the message wire to the Vice President's office on Capitol Hill.

The telephones in Agnew's office were swamped by favorable calls moments after he finished his press conference.

But there was a cooler reaction in the White House.

White House aides were mindful that numerous accounts of the Agnew press conference drew a contrast between the Vice President's prompt denial and President Nixon's long delay in responding to Watergate charges.

Reports circulated at the White House that Mr. Nixon had been sharply critical of Agnew in a meeting between the President and Vice President on Tuesday. On Agnew's side, it was learned that the Vice President entered that meeting, which lasted for an hour and three-quarters, having already decided to hold the

press conference.

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For the third successive day, deputy press secretary Gerald L. Warren was asked to give a White House vote of confidence to Agnew.

Warren again declined to do so in unequivocal terms, but this time he drew attention to Agnew's statement of Wednesday in which he said the President had expressed his confidence.

While dodging a direct expression of the President's own full confidence in Agnew, Warren also declined to discuss constitutional issues raised by the kickback investigation. When reporters asked if Agnew would undermine the President's refusal to furnish tapes and documents in the Watergate case if the Vice President produced his financial records, Warren replied that "it's not a parallel situation."

He said that it was "obviously" why the two situations were not in any way parallel and repeatedly declined to discuss the issue further.

What was "obvious" from the point of view of Agnew supporters was that political contrasts would be drawn between the Vice President and the President if Agnew complied with the prosecutor's request and Mr. Nixon did not. And there was every indication yesterday that the drawing of contrasts was perfectly acceptable to the Vice President.