

Nixon, Agnew Confer

Few Details Of Probe Talk Are Disclosed

By George Lardner Jr.
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President Nixon met alone with Vice President Agnew for two hours yesterday for what an aide described as a "thorough discussion" of the government's investigation of an alleged kickback conspiracy involving the Vice President.

A spokesman for Agnew said the Vice President, who requested the meeting, simply wanted to tell Mr. Nixon "what's going on from his standpoint." Lawyers for Agnew have been conducting their own inquiry into the allegations for several weeks.

"Let's face it, the Vice President's got a tremendous fight here," Agnew's press secretary, J. Marsh Thomson, said. "He's determined to prove his innocence."

A federal grand jury in Baltimore is due to consider the allegations this week. Thomson said he could neither confirm nor deny that the Justice Department has told the prosecutors on the case to proceed with the presentation to the panel.

Speaking for the President, White House deputy press secretary Gerald L. Warren told reporters that Mr. Nixon still holds the confidence he expressed for Agnew at an Aug. 22 news conference in San Clemente.

The White House gave out only a few details of yesterday's long meeting in the Oval Office, but emphasized that the possibility of Agnew's resignation was not discussed.

The Vice President, Warren said, simply "wanted to bring the President up to date on the investigation."

According to Warren, the constitutional question of whether impeachment would have to precede indictment, even in the face of solid evi-

dence, was not mentioned.

Agnew, who has denounced the allegations against him as "damned lies," was notified Aug. 2 by George Beall, the U.S. attorney for Maryland, that he was under investigation for possible violation of extortion, bribery, conspiracy and tax laws.

The information compiled by federal prosecutors reportedly involves alleged political payoffs by engineering, architectural and contracting firms in Maryland while Agnew was Baltimore County executive and later governor and, at least in one instance, a purported favor from Agnew after he became Vice President.

Thomson, who saw Agnew after the meeting with Mr.

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Nixon, said "it goes without saying" that the Vice President stood by his denials of any wrongdoing during the conversation.

"The Vice President was as calm and relaxed as I've ever seen him when he returned to his office," Thomson said.

After the meeting with Mr. Nixon, Agnew stopped by his offices at the Executive Office Building, sipped a soft drink, and left a short time later to join his wife and daughter, Susan, for a Labor Day weekend in Ocean City, Md.

An Army helicopter picked up Agnew at the Pentagon to fly him to the home of friends in Ocean City. Agnew is expected back in Washington Monday night.

Mr. Nixon followed up the get-together with meetings

first with presidential assistant Ronald Ziegler and later with aides Alexander M. Haig Jr., Melvin R. Laird and Bryce N. Harlow. The President flew to Camp David, Md., for the holiday weekend with his wife, Pat, daughter, Tricia, and longtime friend Charles G. (Bebe) Rebozo. Mamie Eisenhower was invited to join them for dinner last night along with Julie and David Eisenhower.

Deputy White House press secretary Warren said that Mr. Nixon and Agnew also discussed "domestic priorities and the legislative session coming up" when Congress returns Wednesday.

But he repeatedly refused to discuss any details of their talk about the investigation of Agnew, calling it "a private meeting."

Asked whether Agnew "laid out his defense plans," Warren said, "There was no discussion of that as far as I know, but it was a private meeting."

Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson has also been keeping the President informed of the progress of the investigation, but Warren would not discuss any of those contacts.

Stepping into command of the inquiry two weeks ago, Richardson said he would first have to decide whether the evidence seemed substantial enough for presentation to the grand jury and then whether a grand jury had the power to indict an incumbent Vice President.

Two days later U.S. Attorney Beall indicated that the presentation, if it came, would start after Labor Day. There has been no subsequent announcement from Richardson.

The question of whether impeachment would have to come first was initially raised by Mr. Nixon's lawyers in his fight against a grand jury subpoena for nine tape recordings

of his conversations about the Watergate scandal.

The President's attorneys, however, have emphasized that their claim of immunity on that score extends only to the President and that they have not studied whether the same contention could be applied to Agnew.

Asked yesterday why the White House bothered to announce the Nixon-Agnew meeting a day in advance when it was so sparing with details after the meeting, Warren at first smilingly attributed the disclosure to "our zeal for giving out complete information," but later said the announcement was really prompted by news leaks concerning the session.

"It was a thorough discussion... a good session," Warren said. "In other words, it wasn't intense."

The President and the Vice President had last met on Aug. 7 in the Executive Office Building, five days after Agnew was notified that he was under federal investigation. Some White House aides described that meeting as "acrimonious."

Speaking for the Vice President, Thomson said that Agnew has been "pursuing this on his own," and undoubtedly gave Mr. Nixon information gleaned from "largely the lawyers he talks with regularly."

Agnew's attorneys have talked with engineers, architects and public officials in Maryland in recent weeks. They also say that they have been checking into how federal prosecutors in Baltimore have been conducting their investigation.

"He (Agnew) wants to be sure it is as little an added burden to the President as he can," Thomson said.

Asked whether the two men also discussed the President's "own situation" in the Watergate case, Warren said, "No."