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**NIXON ROLE DENIED
IN AGNEW'S MOVE**

**White House Says President
Also Did Not Influence
Richardson's Decision**

By R. W. APPLE Jr.

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The White House said today that President Nixon had neither approved nor disapproved Vice President Agnew's decision to ask the House of Representatives to investigate evidence against him or Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson's decision to send the evidence to a grand jury.

Gerald L. Warren, the deputy White House press secretary, made that disclosure in response to questions. He refused to characterize Mr. Nixon's posture in the Agnew case as "hands-off," but that was the expression used by other White House aides.

"The President," said one official, "is in no position to be telling Elliot Richardson what to do. That would just invite more cover-up charges. And he is no position to push Agnew around. The conservatives are already upset enough."

Mr. Warren said that during Mr. Nixon's meeting with Mr. Agnew yesterday morning, the two men had "discussed the options available" to the Vice President. Pressed, he conceded that one of the options mentioned was Mr. Agnew's resignation.

But the spokesman was care-

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Unusual Role Seen

Mr. Warren's comments at the White House depicted a President in what many observers considered to be an unusual posture — attempting to exert no control over either his Vice President or one of his Cabinet members in a situation of great governmental and political sensitivity.

Asked repeatedly how Mr. Nixon could allow himself to take that stance, the spokesman refused to go beyond the declaration that the President "respects the Vice President's right and privilege to handle this matter in his own way."

A lawyer familiar with the White House thinking pointed out, however, that Mr. Nixon had to tread very lightly because he could find himself as the superior both of the prosecutor (ultimately, Mr. Richardson) and the prosecuted (Mr. Agnew).

As for his dealings with Mr.

Richardson, Mr. Warren said that the President's concurrence had not been needed when the Attorney General told him early yesterday morning that he thought the evidence should be sent to the grand jury in Baltimore.

Impropriety Suggested

Several times Mr. Warren said that it would be "highly improper" for the President "to inject himself into this matter or to interfere with the judicial process in any way."

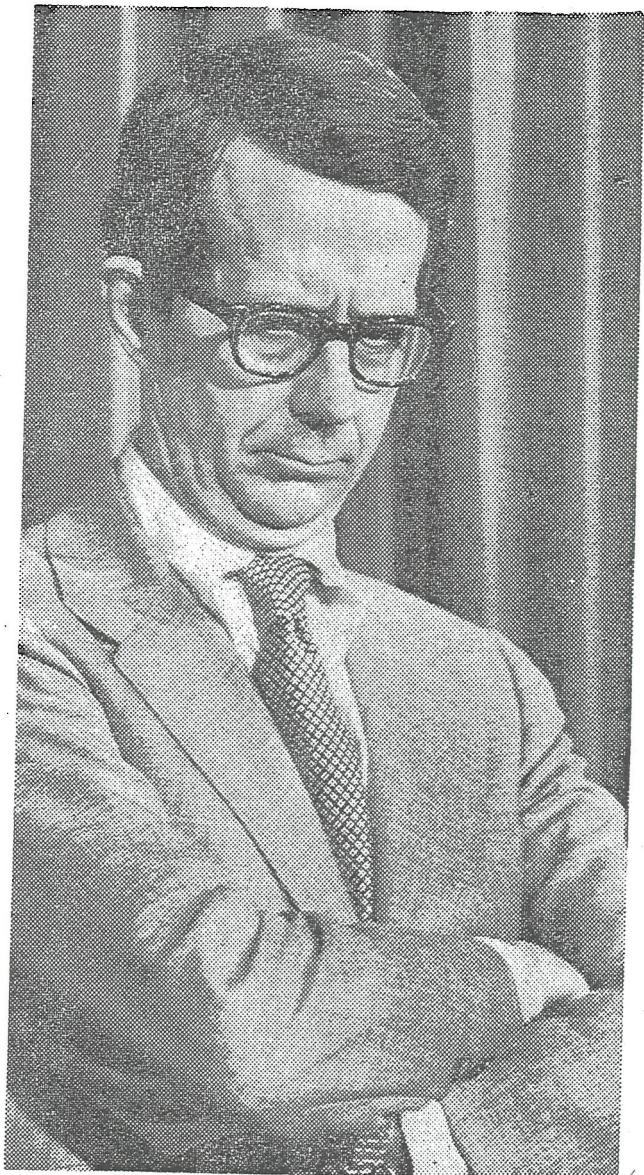
He said that Mr. Richardson had presented to the President "an assessment" of the case, which involves alleged payoffs to Mr. Agnew while he was Governor of Maryland. Then, Mr. Warren reported, Mr. Richardson described the approach he planned to take and "advised the President that as a matter of law" it was appropriate.

Thus the President was left in the position yesterday of permitting, by not raising any objection, two actions that were in complete conflict with each other—Mr. Richardson's, moving the case forward in ordinary judicial channels, and Mr. Agnew's, attempting to steer it into the House of Representatives instead.

Mr. Warren declined to express in any way Mr. Nixon's wishes in regard to the House's response to Mr. Agnew's request. "The entire White House," including the Congressional liaison staff, will abide by the President's wish that Mr. Agnew be allowed to handle the matter himself, the spokesman insisted.

Ordinarily, the liaison staff informs members of Congress, particularly Republicans, of the President's view on controversial matters.

However, Mr. Nixon discussed the situation in some detail with Representative Gerald R. Ford of Michigan, the House minority leader, yesterday afternoon. He also spoke again with Mr. Agnew, who thanked Mr. Nixon for his statement of support.



United Press International

Gerald L. Warren, deputy Presidential press secretary, at briefing yesterday on Vice President Agnew's case.

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ful to draw the distinction between a discussion of resignation as an option and an actual offer by Mr. Agnew to resign or a request from the President that he consider doing so.

"The President," Mr. Warren said, "has taken the position that the Vice President should decide what course he should take in this matter. He has not encouraged or pressed for any particular course at any time."

Later, on Capitol Hill, Mr. Agnew said he had not offered to resign during the meeting and added that he wanted to "make it very clear" that he had no intention of doing so.

The Vice President also denied, during a brief interview with newsmen after meeting with a group of Congressional Republicans, that he or his attorneys had "initiated any plea bargaining." It had been widely reported that Mr. Agnew had sought a deal under which he would resign and the corruption charges against him would be narrowed to one relatively minor count.