

'Agnew Tried to Influence Probe'

Baltimore

Federal prosecutors considered filing obstruction of justice charges against Spiro T. Agnew after they were told attempts were made to influence the testimony of witnesses in the probe that led to the Vice President's resignation, U.S. Attorney George Beall said yesterday.

But Agnew was not charged because of the agreement that led to his resignation and no contest plea on tax evasion charges, Beall said, and because of doubts they could make the charge stick.

Beall confirmed a report in the Washington Post that former U.S. Attorney General Richard Kleindienst called him twice last February after Agnew complained to Kleindienst that the investigation by a federal grand jury in Baltimore might embarrass him.

According to Beall's notes of a conversation with Kleindienst, Agnew demonstrated "a real worry that the investigation was politically motivated."

"Other witnesses and other persons interviewed in February indicated they had contacts with the vice pres-

ident or his representatives and there were attempts to influence their testimony," Beall said.

Beall said the accusation of obstructing justice was not included in the government's 40-page exposition of evidence against Agnew, made public the day of his resignation, because "it was soft information as compared to the hard information that the document contained," Beall said.

"The full exposition of charges included those bits of evidentiary information that the government thought was beyond question," Beall said.

The summary covered extortion and bribery schemes allegedly employed by Agnew and others when he was governor of Maryland and until December, 1972, when he was vice president.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Russell T. Baker said Agnew's calls to Kleindienst were attempts to stop the investigation and created obstruction of justice in fact on the part of the former vice president. But Baker said the calls by Agnew were probably not prosecutable.

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