

Secret Service To Continue Agnew Guard

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The Secret Service said yesterday it cannot obey a demand by the comptroller general to stop providing protection for former Vice President Spiro T. Agnew unless it receives authority from President Nixon.

Comptroller General Elmer B. Staats told the Treasury Department Friday that any further Secret Service protection of Agnew would be illegal, and that he would cut off federal funds for that purpose as of Monday.

A Secret Service spokesman said the protective agency could not remove the Agnew detail "until the President orders the Secretary of the Treasury to order the Secret Service to stop. We have not received any such orders."

A spokesman for President Nixon, vacationing in Key Biscayne, Fla., refused comment on the situation, and referred queries to the Treasury Department and the Secret Service.

A Treasury spokesman said only that the Agnew matter was under discussion.

A spokesman for Staats' General Accounting Office said the administration could force a showdown in court if it wished simply by continuing to use federal funds to pay for Agnew's protection. Although the certifying officer for such an expenditure would be held personally liable for paying the bills.

Agnew has had full Secret Service protection since he resigned Oct. 10 before pleading no contest to a federal income-tax evasion charge. The GAO estimated the detail cost taxpayers nearly \$90,000 for a two-month period alone.

Staats is an official of Congress, not the Executive Branch, but has authority to halt use of federal funds for any purpose he determines is illegal.