

G.A.O. Backs Funds for Agnew For Office Space and Services

WASHINGTON, March 15 (AP)—The General Accounting Office says that using Government funds to provide office space and services for former Vice President Agnew is legally proper but it has questioned the use of a Presidential fund to pay the salaries of his staff.

In a letter released today by Representative John E. Moss, Democrat of California, Comptroller General Elmer B. Staats recommended that Congress in the future state more clearly exactly what a Vice President who resigns is entitled to in Government services.

At issue is the money spent for Mr. Agnew's staff and office space since he resigned Oct. 10 after pleading no contest to a charge of income-tax evasion.

The staff is helping Mr. Agnew sort through his Vice-Presidential papers.

No Clear Understanding

Mr. Staats said that since "we cannot say that the use of Mr. Agnew's staff is not to some degree official in purpose, we must conclude that the expenditures for office space and government services are legally proper."

But he questioned the payment of salaries of Mr. Agnew's remaining staff from a discretionary fund established for President Nixon by Congress.

Mr. Staats said that Congress had not stated clearly what the discretionary fund was to be

used for but added, "We doubt that the Congress intended that the appropriation would be available for the purpose of continuing staff assistance during the period of time here involved."

Mr. Staats said, however, that he could not rule one way or the other on the use of the Presidential fund because of a "lack of any clear legislative history" on the subject.

Ruling Sought by Moss

Mr. Moss had asked Mr. Staats to rule on the legality of using Government funds to staff a transitional office for Mr. Agnew.

Mr. Staats said "it is expected" that the staff services and facilities provided for Mr. Agnew "will not be continued beyond the first part of April, 1974.

"We recommend that the Congress remove all doubt for the future by enacting appropriate legislation concerning the use of appropriations made for 'special assistance to the President' and for use of space by a former Vice President and his prior staff following his resignation during his term of office," Mr. Staats said.

Mr. Agnew lost his Secret Service protection Feb. 17, after Mr. Moss questioned the legality of providing such protection and Mr. Staats said that he could find no legal justification for it.