

Ford Said To Ask FAA Chief to Quit

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President Ford has asked for the resignation of Federal Aviation Administrator Alexander P. Butterfield as part of a general shake-up directed at all prominent Nixon holdovers, according to high-ranking White House sources.

But these sources said that Butterfield, the man who revealed the existence of the secret White House tape system which helped push Richard M. Nixon from the presidency, will be given a chance to present the case for his retention in a meeting with White House chief of staff Donald H. Rumsfeld, probably later this week.

Butterfield is known to feel that he has been the victim of unfair criticism from departing Transportation Secretary Claude S. Brinegar.

Brinegar, who will leave the administration on Feb. 1, has long been a foe of Butterfield, and the two men have clashed privately on aviation safety issues. The FAA came under fire last month in a report by a House committee which said that the agency had failed to take action on many potential aviation hazards.

From the FAA point of view, Brinegar bears much of this responsibility. The Transportation Secretary is held responsible by Butterfield for delaying for more than six months an FAA recommendation to create an aviation safety board.

According to administration sources, Brinegar called Butterfield into his office on Dec. 19 and told him that President Ford wanted his resignation.

These sources said Butterfield told Brinegar he would wait until he "received a signal" from the White House.

But the President left for Vail, Colo., two days afterward, and Butterfield was un-

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successful in his attempt to present his case before Mr. Ford or Rumsfeld.

Since the President's return, the word has been quietly passed to Butterfield that Mr. Ford still wants him to resign.

Butterfield, though desiring to stay on as FAA administrator, is known to believe that Mr. Ford has every right to put his own imprint on the administration by obtaining the resignations of holdover appointees. He is concerned, however, about attacks on his safety record.

There also is some concern within the administration that the departure of Butterfield would be viewed as retaliation for his crucial role in reveal-

ing the existence of the Nixon taping system.

White House sources insist that the move is not retaliatory. They say that most of the Cabinet holdovers from the Nixon administration will resign in the next few months.

One White House source indicated that while the 48-year-old FAA administrator will be asked to resign, there will be no haste in getting him off the job. The source said that the actual resignation might not occur for another two months. He added, however, that Butterfield definitely would be going.

According to one source, it is possible that Butterfield will be offered another position.

President Ford is using this tactic in the case of Labor Secretary Peter J. Brennan, who has been offered the ambassadorship of Ireland. But nothing has been offered Butterfield at this point.

Butterfield told the Senate Watergate committee on July 16, 1973, that President Nixon had been taping White House conversations.

The disclosure led to a historic court fight which ended in disclosure of the tapes, resignation of the President and conviction of his top aides.