

President Reported at Peace With His Decision Not to Quit

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, May 21 — President Nixon returned last night from a long weekend at his Florida retreat reportedly at peace with himself and with his decision to reject all pressures for his resignation.

He was a bone-tired man when he flew to his home in Key Biscayne last Thursday, according to the description of an associate who spent some time with him over the weekend. He reportedly fell asleep on the fairly short helicopter ride to the Grand Cay home of his friend Robert H. Abplanalp last Friday and that evening went to bed at 9:30.

But the President's fatigue was described as entirely physical. He was believed to have spent a relaxed holiday, devoting little time or worry to the impeachment proceedings under way in Congress or to any of his other troubles related to the Watergate scandal.

Burden Seems Lifted

Until a month or two ago, according to the associate, Mr. Nixon was still considering resignation as an alternative to going through the impeachment process. During this period, he was tense and harried, the associate said.

But now the President has reportedly decided to resist all demands for his resignation and has reconciled himself to enduring the impeachment process. That decision was described by the President in an interview last week with James J. Kilpatrick, a columnist.

Reaching the decision has lifted a mental and spiritual burden from Mr. Nixon, judging by recent descriptions by aides and visitors and by the President's own activities.

Almost everyone who has

seen him recently has remarked that he seemed in good health and good spirits. Last winter, he was often described as tense, puffy-faced and exhausted looking.

Certainly, Mr. Nixon did not appear to be an embattled President over the weekend, when he spent nearly five days at Key Biscayne and Grand Cay. The White House press office posted brief notices periodically, saying that the President was reading cables about the Middle East negotiations or meeting with his top aides, Ronald L. Ziegler and Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr. On Monday, he made a brief radio speech on his proposed national health insurance legislation.

But Mr. Nixon apparently devoted the greater part of the long weekend to sunning, swimming, boating and otherwise relaxing. Judging by the meager trickle of information that reached the White House press corps, staying in Miami, Mr. Nixon seemed to be enjoying life.

He made no public appearances. The only view most members of the press corps had him during the five days was when he boarded his jet, the Spirit of '76, to return to Washington last night.

COUNTERATTACKS Resumed

As a concomitant of his decision to face impeachment rather than resign, the President apparently decided to fight back when he could rather than more concessions to placate his critics.

The White House has resumed counterattacking against critics of the President. The director of the White House Office of Communications, Ken W. Clawson, is now putting out fact sheets, for example, to attack or rebut these critics.

Last week after articles were published indicating that the President may have threatened to use the Federal Communications Commission to challenge licenses of television stations owned by The Washington Post, Mr. Clawson put out an advisory suggesting that past Presidents had made the same kind of threats.

As he enjoyed his long weekend in Florida, the President seemed disposed to defy his critics and those calling for his resignation and to await calmly the outcome of the impeachment process.

However, the mood and tactics of President Nixon have shifted rapidly before during his long Watergate ordeal.