

Nixon Reveals Thoughts on Quitting -- "Won't Do It"

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Nixon says he has given long thought to the possibility of resignation but has decided he will not quit the nation's highest office under any circumstances.

His strongest vow to date came in an interview with conservative columnist James Kilpatrick, published in today's Washington Star-News.

It was the President's first direct response to calls for his resignation since he released edited transcripts of private Watergate conversations two weeks ago.

Kilpatrick said Nixon's conversations "tend to run off on tangents" and that he talks in broken sentences. But the

columnist added, "The President plainly is in command of his situation."

Nixon told Kilpatrick he would not surrender his office even temporarily to Vice President Ford under the 25th Amendment.

If the House votes impeachment, Nixon said he would accept the verdict with good grace and then defend himself before the Senate.

The House Judiciary Committee began hearing evidence on possible impeachment last Thursday.

The committee eventually will submit its recommen-

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dations to the full House, which then will decide by majority vote whether Nixon should be impeached.

If the House votes for impeachment, the Senate would then conduct a trial, with a two-thirds vote needed for conviction and removal from office.

Kilpatrick said he spent one hour and 20 minutes with the President in his Oval Office Tuesday in a session he described as more of a monologue than an interview.

Besides pledging not to resign, Nixon made these disclosures:

- During his 1968 campaign for the White House, "there was not only surveillance by the FBI, but bugging by the FBI, and J. Edgar Hoover told me that my plane in the last two weeks was bugged."

- All of his Cabinet members except one — then Treasury Secretary John Connally — opposed his "loneliest de-

cision of all" to resume bombing of the Hanoi-Haiphong areas of North Vietnam in December 1972.

- He believes "we had no choice" but to make public the edited transcripts, and said he sees no reason to permit technicians to examine the tapes because "we've already done that."

Several times in the 3000 word article Kilpatrick quoted Nixon as rejecting calls for him to step down rather than face impeachment process.

"I would have to rule out resignation. And I would have to rule out the rather fatuous suggestion that I take the 25th Amendment and just step out and have Vice President Ford step in for a while," Nixon said.

"If the House should vote an impeachment, and we go to trial by the Senate, of course I would follow that course," Nixon was quoted as saying.

"It would be immensely time-consuming, but I could do it and I would do it for reasons that are not—what do you call it — those of a toreador in the ring, trying to prove himself, but I would do it because I have given long thought to what is best for the country, our system of government and the constitutional process."

In giving the reasons for his decision, Nixon said that to resign would fatally weaken future presidents.

"The United States holds the key as to whether peace survives and to whether freedom survives," Nixon said.

"The demands a strong United States—strong militarily, strong economically, and strong in the character of its people, a people with a sense of vision, not turning inward and tearing each other apart and not becoming soft as they become rich.

"But it also requires, whoever may be in this office, a strong president. I will never leave this office in a way which resigning would be, or failing to fight impeachment would be, that would make it more difficult for future presidents to make the tough decisions.

"I am not guilty of any offense under the Constitution that is called an impeachable offense."