

Friedheim Being Considered For White House Press Post

By Michael Getler
Washington Post Staff Writer

Pentagon spokesman Jerry W. Friedheim, who is in the process of resigning from his Defense Department post to become a vice president of Amtrak, is now also under consideration for the job of press secretary to President Ford.

Administration sources say Friedheim's name is on a list of candidates for the White House job that was hastily put together after the abrupt resignation on Sunday of Mr. Ford's first press chief, J.F. terHorst, who quit over Mr. Ford's pardoning of former President Nixon.

There is no indication that Friedheim is the frontrunner for the White House post. But sources believe the 39-year-old Friedheim is undoubtedly a favorite of some of Mr. Ford's friends, including former Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird, and other former Pentagon officials on the President's staff, including special assistant William Baroody and counselor John O. Marsh.

Before Friedheim went to work for Laird at the Pentagon in 1969, he was a top aide to Sen. John Tower (R-Tex.), an influential figure in congressional and Republican Party affairs.

Friedheim's intention to leave his \$38,000-a-year Pentagon post to take a \$50,000-plus job as vice president for public and government affairs at Amtrak was made known in a letter to the White House last week. Thus far, the resignation letter has not been answered.

Among those under consideration to take over as the



JERRY W. FRIEDHEIM
... leaving Pentagon

Pentagon's chief spokesman are Friedheim's current deputy, former New York Times newsman William Beecher; Mr. Nixon's deputy White House spokesman, Gerald R. Warren, and the assistant director for public affairs of the President's Office of Management and Budget, Joseph Laitin. Laitin is a close friend of Defense Secretary James R. Schlesinger.

At Amtrak, Friedheim would also be among former colleagues.

The Pentagon's former comptroller, Robert C. Moot, is also a vice president of the quasi-governmental corporation that runs most of the nation's rail passenger service. Moot's former deputy, Don R. Brazier, is also Amtrak's treasurer, and a handful of other ex-Pentagon officials have also moved over to the rail company.

Throughout much of Friedheim's 5½ years at the Pentagon, it was his job to deal publicly with reporter's questions on many controversial issues, particularly Nixon administration war policy in Vietnam. Even as a deputy for four years to Laird's top press aide, Daniel Henkin, it was Friedheim who was sent into the daily press briefings to face the newsmen.

Ironically, even at Amtrak, Friedheim apparently will not escape some of the Pentagon's most persistent challengers. The General Accounting Office, the congressional investigative agency, and Pentagon critic Rep. Les Aspin (D-Wis.), have just said that Amtrak officials spend more money traveling by air than on their own trains when going between points served by the rail network.

A native of Joplin, Mo., Friedheim holds a master's degree in journalism from the University of Missouri. He worked for a short time as a reporter for three papers in his home state and also put in a stint with United Press International and The Associated Press. He came to Washington in 1962 on a fellowship from the American Political Science Association.

Though generally low-key and not well-known for a time, the boyish-looking spokesman suddenly showed up as a virtual regular on TV screens around the country every night during the controversial December, 1972, bombing around Hanoi and Haiphong when the Pentagon was being pressed for an explanation of what was going on.