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Ex-Astronaut Studied for F.A.A. Job

By RICHARD WITKIN

The White House decided this week to name a former astronaut, Charles Conrad Jr., to head the Federal Aviation Administration, according to Government sources, but is reconsidering because of issues raised in a Senate vote against reinstating the last F.A.A. chief as a retired colonel.

These sources said that the vote reflected strong opposition to naming another retired military man, and that there was considerable doubt whether Mr. Conrad could be confirmed.

The onetime Navy captain was commander of the Apollo 12 flight and the third man to walk on the moon. Since his retirement from the Navy and the astronaut corps a year and a half ago, he has been vice president for operations of a successful cable television company with headquarters in Denver.

The origins of the developing debate can be traced to the 1958 act creating the F.A.A. and to subsequent legislative actions relating to some of the men who have since headed the agency.

Civilian Status Ordered

The act specified that the agency's administrator, at the time of his nomination, had to be a civilian. He could not be on the active or even the retired list of any of the armed forces.

The record indicates that the primary reasons for the restriction were that the new agency was amalgamating what had been separate systems for controlling civilian and military air traffic, and that Congress wanted to guard against any undue military influence.

However, there have been two Congressional actions that modified the strictest compliance with this provision. And



NASA

Charles Conrad Jr.

vision that the nominee to the F.A.A. job had to be a civilian.

Mr. Butterfield, a retired Air Force colonel, followed the path of General Quesada by resigning his commission when he was named by President Nixon to head the F.A.A. He had previously been serving in the White House and was the man who disclosed the White House tape-recording system.

it was largely to reinforce the original philosophy that the Senate took its significant action Tuesday. This action ruled out restoration of military retirement benefits for Alexander P. Butterfield, who left office March 31. (20 MAY)

The first F.A.A. chief, Elwood R. Quesada, had to resign his commission as a lieutenant general in the Air Force when he was nominated in January, 1959.

But the following Fall, while he was still running the F.A.A., Congress authorized the President to restore him to his status as a retired general, effective at the end of his F.A.A. service.

The other case involved a four-star retired Air Force general, William F. McKee, who declined to take the job if he would lose his military status and the pay and other benefits that went with it. So, in June, 1965, Congress passed a bill that in effect, waived the pro-