

Report on Agnew's Talk of Resigning

He Won't Comment On Stories

By David S. Broder
Washington Post

Washington

Vice President Agnew has held lengthy discussions in the past few days on the advisability of resigning voluntarily from his position, the Washington Post learned last night.

At least one Republican party leader who has conferred with Agnew came away convinced he will resign — “probably this week.”

Agnew refused last night to comment on the reported decision, saying he would not respond to stories from unnamed sources.

Staff members and political supporters expressed strong and uniform skepticism that he would, in fact, resign.

OPINION

Nonetheless, a senior Republican figure, strongly in Agnew's corner, said last night that he is “99½ per cent certain he will resign — and probably this week.”

This man said he had spent two hours late last week attempting to argue Agnew out of the decision. A subsequent, shorter conversation left him convinced that he had failed and that Agnew is headed toward resignation.

Word of these discussions — obviously shielded from all but a handful of persons — came as federal prosecutors in Baltimore prepared

to begin presenting to a grand jury evidence of allegedly illegal payments to Agnew from Maryland businessmen.

“It sounds to me like something he might discuss,” said one friend of Agnew's since his early days in

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Maryland politics, “but I don't see him doing it.”

A White House source who says he is “tangentially involved” in Agnew's deliberations, said:

“A story that goes beyond saying that he is considering and discussing it (resignation) may be beyond the facts. It would complicate things. I can't say this story isn't true — as one option. Various options are being explored.”

This source also said that any story predicting Agnew's imminent resignation is “speculative... obviously off the mark... not correct.”

The high-ranking Republican who disclosed the conversations said Agnew is determined to prove his innocence of the charges of bribery, extortion and tax law violations that have been under investigation in Baltimore.

REASONS

But, according to this source, the vice president gave two reasons for believing he should resign from office before being called upon to mount a full-scale legal defense of the propriety of his past actions.

One is the “terrific tension and pressure” placed upon members of his family by his present effort to maintain and preserve his office and perform its public du-

ties while simultaneously preparing for what could be a protracted legal battle.

The second, according to this source, is the plain indication that the White House — and apparently the President himself — wants Agnew out.

There was ample support for both these views — and particularly the reports of White House pressure — from members of the Agnew staff and political supporters interviewed yesterday.

But, almost to a man, they agreed that he would resist the pressure, calling the resignation “unthinkable” or worse.

“I would be shocked... flabbergasted,” one associate said.

PAST

In the past, Agnew and his aides have repeatedly discounted any possibility of a resignation. On August 8, two days after it was disclosed that he was under investigation, Agnew was asked “if the investigation should progress and get more serious, even though you would feel yourself innocent, might you consider stepping down to protect public confidence?”

The vice president replied: “Let me say right now, I have no expectation of being indicted. And I'm not going to face any contingent thinking in that respect at this time.”

On August 31, when announcement of a Nixon-Agnew meeting the next day stirred rumors of a possible resignation, the vice president's press secretary, J. Marsh Thomson, said: “he has no intention of resigning and they (the White House) have said the president has no intention of asking for it.”

The statements were reaf-

firmed on both sides after the two-hour meeting.

Yesterday, Agnew refused repeated requests from the post for either an interview or a direct comment on his reported discussions of resignation. Thomson, who was informed of the substance of the Post's information and conveyed the information to Agnew, said, “the vice president has not responded to ‘source’ stories in the past and he does not intend to now.” A “source” story refers to one in which the person providing the information is not named.

Deputy White House Press Secretary Gerald L. Warren said last night, “I don't know anything about it at all,” and referred queries to the vice president's office.