

White House Concedes 'Uphill Struggle'

By Carroll Kilpatrick
Washington Post Staff Writer

A presidential spokesman conceded for the first time yesterday that President Nixon "faces an uphill struggle" in his battle to avoid impeachment in the House of Representatives.

Deputy press secretary Gerald L. Warren, who made the comment in what appeared to be carefully chosen words, also said that if one had to make odds "you would have to put the President in the role of the underdog."

But Warren said the contest in the House is "a political struggle" and "history has told us that any time you are occupied with a political situation or political struggle you have a chance to win."

The White House spokesman emphasized that he was commenting only about the situation in the House, where the fight is now joined, and was not predicting what the situation might be in the Senate if impeachment is voted in the House.

Warren's comment came

amid increasing signs of uncertainty at the White House and as the President appeared to be approaching one of the most critical decisions of his career.

However, one presidential aide scoffed at reports that Mr. Nixon may be on the point of resigning, and said that the President's silence and isolation this week were the result of "the cruel and unusual punishment" he is undergoing in listening to tapes that must be delivered to U.S. District Court Judge John J. Sirica.

Warren maintained as usual that Mr. Nixon will not resign but will carry the fight through the House and through the Senate if necessary.

"Rumors of resignation are self-generating," one official said, adding that the President "is a stubborn one," particularly on that issue.

The question was raised in the minds of observers, however, when it was learned that the President

See PRESIDENT, A11, Col. 7

PRESIDENT, From A1

invited his intimate friend and Florida neighbor C. G. (Bebe) Rebozo to be his guest at the White House this week. Shortly after Rebozo arrived here Thursday he and the President lined alone on the presidential yacht Sequoia.

Earlier in the day, the President had sent Alexander M. Haig Jr., White House staff chief, to confer with Vice President Ford, again raising resignation speculation. Warren said Haig gave Ford a briefing on the President's defense strategy.

At the same time, however, the President canceled a meeting he had scheduled Thursday with his chief economic advisers, and it was not rescheduled yesterday.

The meeting was originally announced for Thursday morning, rescheduled for Thursday afternoon, then postponed again because of "scheduling problems," Warren said.

The President has spent almost all his time this week secluded in his Executive Office Building office, and Warren acknowledged that much of the President's time was spent listening to tapes of conversations the Supreme Court ordered him to turn over to Judge Sirica.

Mr. Nixon's only announced appointment of the week was Tuesday with Secretary of the Treasury William E. Simon, who reported on his recent visit to the Middle East.

Warren said the President had not met with any members of Congress to discuss impeachment proceedings and, as far as he knew, had not talked to any by tele-

phone. Except for the meeting with Simon, the President has met during the week only with a few staff members and Rebozo.

Warren insisted that the White House was not attempting to make any head count of impeachment and anti-impeachment votes, and

he repeated a statement he made Thursday that the President's defense strategy will become obvious as events unfold.

Some White House aides said there would be no indication of White House strategy before early in the week, and others openly expressed doubt that there was a strategy.

The White House staff will speak out in the President's defense, and the congressional liaison staff will be in touch with members of the House, Warren said. He added that he was not trying to suggest that a campaign or offensive was under way, but was saying that "we will not be hesitant to speak out."