

Nixon Resignation Seen Near Decision Expected To Be Announced In Next Few Days

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President Nixon was reported yesterday to be nearing a decision to resign, but there was no official confirmation from the White House.

Three White House sources said that the question now was only one of timing. One informed source said that the announcement would come within two or three days. Another thought it might come today.

"It could be one day, it could be five days," said one presidential assistant. "He could change his mind tomorrow and say, 'To hell with it, I'm going to fight it.'"

There were other signs that the end of the Nixon presidency may be near.

The President met for a half hour yesterday with Senate Minority Leader Hugh Scott, House Minority Leader John Rhodes and Sen. Barry Goldwater. He was told that he had about 15 votes against conviction in the Senate and perhaps only 10 votes against impeachment in the House.

Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger canceled without explanation an appearance before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee where he had been scheduled to open a national debate on detente.

Kissinger later met with Mr. Nixon at the White House but State Department officials declined to say what was discussed.

Vice President Ford was reliably reported to be making contingency plans for taking over when President Nixon steps down.

And Rabbi Baruch Korff, who has led a nationwide anti-impeachment campaign, said that unless "millions of Americans" urge the President to remain in office he "may resign for the national interest."

Despite these indications, Rose Mary Woods, the President's long-time personal secretary, told staff members at mid-afternoon yesterday he would not quit.

According to one person who heard her, Miss Woods said, "The President is not going to resign; he is going to fight it out." The source described her as "very forceful" in her comments.

The three Republican congressional leaders insisted after their meeting with the President that no decision had been reached on resignation.

"The decision would be made entirely in the national interest," Scott said. "The President is entirely in control of himself. He was serene and most amiable."

Later, Scott said that the report given Mr. Nixon was "gloomy" and "distressing." He said the President, listening with his feet up on his desk, seemed to understand that the situation was serious but did not indicate his future plans.

Scott said that Mr. Nixon said he didn't want to go into "collateral considerations," which Scott took to mean immunity or loss of pension. The Senate Minority Leader said he thought the President will make up his mind "in a few days."

Goldwater said that the President did not indicate when he would make up his mind about resignation.

When a reporter asked if Mr. Nixon said he was determined to stay on the job, Rhodes replied that "he didn't say anything like that." He added that there was no time element discussed regarding the President's final decision.

The situation in the House regarding impeachment is "a foregone conclusion," Rhodes said.

Goldwater, however, said that he had not made up his mind how to vote in a Senate trial and that "most senators" also were reserving judgment.

All these developments occurred in an atmosphere of recurrent rumors that enveloped the capital throughout the day.

There were rumors that a moving van had backed up to the White House to remove the Nixons' furniture. There was a rumor that the President had asked for air time to announce his resignation at 4 p.m., then another rumor that he had made the same request for two hours later.

One Cabinet officer, after a day of such reports, said "I don't see how this can go on much longer."

There also was a flurry of speculation at the White House that a decision to resign was imminent when it was disclosed that Edward Cox, the Nixons' son-in-law, had arrived from New York and had gone with his wife Tricia to the President's office.

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David and Julie Eisenhower also were at the White House and had lunch there with Edward and Tricia Cox. Mrs. Nixon, who was working on her mail, lunched alone. The President spent most of the day secluded in his Executive Office Building office but went to the Oval Office in the White House for the meeting with the three congressional leaders.

Earlier in the day, deputy press secretary Gerald L. Warren dodged questions about a possible resignation by declaring that there was no reason for him to add anything to what he had said the day before.

In the past, he has stated emphatically that Mr. Nixon would not resign.

Warren said that Mr. Nixon was fully aware of expressions of members of the House and Senate.

Alexander M. Haig Jr., White House staff chief, conferred for an hour in the morning with Ford. Warren said the meeting was at the President's direction.

Warren criticized a Washington Post report which quoted a White House source as saying the President was out of touch with reality.

"Anyone who is telling reporters that the President is not aware of the situation has reached the point of unreality," Warren asserted.

When asked if the President would address the nation, Warren said he knew of no speeches or statements planned.

In his statement about Mr. Nixon's predicament, Rabbi Korff called for Americans to send letters to the White House in support of the President.

"Unless there is an immediate outpouring of support addressed to the White House . . ." said Korff, "the President, whose patriotism is unchallenged, may resign for the national interest."