

FAA Chief Visits S.F., Tells Why He's Quitting

By Jack Viets

The outgoing chief of the Federal Aviation Administration said here yesterday that he is leaving because the President wants to put the "Ford stamp" on the key officials serving his administration.

"I go back to another administration," said Alexander Butterfield, the former Nixon aide whose dramatic testimony before the Senate Watergate Committee disclosed the existence of the secret White House recording system — and the tapes that later led to President Nixon's resignation.

Butterfield, who resigned from the Air Force — thus forfeiting his right to retirement pay — to accept the FAA post, told newsmen it is "well known" that his departure from the Ford administration has been in the planning stage since last fall.

"I really shouldn't comment on the details of my resignation."

He didn't, in a speech about the FAA before the Commonwealth Club of California.

"I am so damned proud" of the FAA, he said, reminding the club that the U.S. air traffic control system "is the safest and most operationally efficient in exist-

ence. It is the world standard."

"Where air traffic control, design and manufacture of aircraft, airport engineering, and pilot professionalism are concerned," he said, "it is common knowledge throughout the world of aviation that this country — these United States leads all others."

In a ringing defense against recent charges that the FAA has been dragging its feet on safety matters and failing to use its statutory power to make aircraft manufacturers fix any safety deficiencies found in their planes, Butterfield said he signed a rule last spring that makes the correction of all known safety-related aircraft discrepancies mandatory.

"As administrator, I have pressed relentlessly and from the outset for innovation in the safety area, for long overdue, not always popular, but certainly remedial changes which I knew would result in increased safety and security for our air travelers."

Then — in a sentence which seemed to indicate he is not happy about having to leave what he has started — he noted:

"Perhaps some day, the FAA administrator, the federal regulator for safety, will serve for a fixed term rather than at the pleasure of the president."