

SAMPSON OUSTER IS REPORTED NEAR

White House Called Ready to
Replace Head of G.S.A.

The Washington Star

WASHINGTON, July 16—Preparing to sever another tie with the Nixon Administration, the Ford White House appears ready to oust Arthur F. Sampson as head of the General Services Administration, according to informed sources.

Considered most likely to replace Mr. Sampson, the sources said, is Nicholas A. Panuzio, the 39-year-old Republican Mayor of Bridgeport, Conn. A White House nomination was reported near.

Spokesmen for the White House and Mr. Sampson declined to comment on the report. In a telephone interview Mr. Panuzio acknowledged that he had met with White House officials in recent months and he was being considered for the G.S.A. post. He declined further comment.

One informed source, speaking of Mr. Sampson's expected departure from the huge Federal landlord and housekeeping agency he has headed for three years, said, "He's had it. They [White House] want him out fast, but he's still fighting it."

It was understood that about a month ago Mr. Sampson was summoned to the White House and told that he would soon be replaced.

"Sampson appealed for a few more weeks and got it," one source said. "He's now looking for a job."

For some months, the Administration has been seeking to separate itself from Mr. Sampson, 48 years old, who is considered a Nixon loyalist.

Since 1972, when he was appointed by President Nixon to head G.S.A., Mr. Sampson has often been at the center of controversy. Under his guidance, the agency was accused by the Civil Service Commission of politically influenced hiring, and there have been allegations that contracts and leases may have been awarded to those with Republican con-

nections over others.

The Federal grand jury in Baltimore that is investigating political corruption in Maryland subpoenaed three of Mr. Sampson's top aides five months ago to testify about the awarding of contracts and leases to certain businessmen in the state, and the agency's records involving some of these transactions are being scrutinized by Federal prosecutors.

The most heated criticism of Mr. Sampson came last year over G.S.A.'s expenditure of \$3.7-million in improvements to Mr. Nixon's California and Florida compounds, for urging the spending of \$850,000 for Mr. Nixon during his first year out of office, and for having agreed that the former President could retain title to his White House tape recordings and papers.

Mr. Sampson's predecessor was Robert Kunzig, now a Federal judge appointed by President Nixon. Mr. Kunzig was recommended for the post by Senator Hugh Scott, Republican of Pennsylvania, as was Mr. Sampson. Mr. Kunzig was once Mr. Scott's administrative assistant and campaign manager, and both Mr. Sampson and Mr. Kunzig served together in the administration of former Pennsylvania Gov. Raymond P. Shafer.

In a telephone interview yesterday, Mr. Panuzio confirmed that he had had "high level talks" recently at the White House concerning a possible top decision, including the job of G.S.A. administrator. "But I have absolutely no confirmation that I am going to be appointed," the Mayor said. "I'll have to wait for the White House to make some statement."

Mr. Panuzio said that his name was submitted to the White House four or five months ago by Senator Lowell P. Weicker Jr., Republican of Connecticut, and Representative Stewart B. McKinney, also a Republican, who represents Mr. Panuzio's district.

A source in Mr. McKinney's office said yesterday that Mr. Panuzio's nomination was "imminent." Mr. Panuzio, however, was not so optimistic. "There is nothing right now that would cause me to buy a house in Washington or to resign as Mayor," he said.