

Superintendent Conlisk quits

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pg. 1

Superintendent Conlisk quits

By Edward Schreiber

MAYOR DALEY announced yesterday the resignation of Police Supt. James B. Conlisk Jr., and asked the Chicago Police Board to select three candidates from which the mayor could pick a successor.

The resignation, effective Nov. 1, was dated Oct. 10, five days after 19 Chicago policemen were convicted of tavern extortion in Federal Court. Scores of

others face trials on extortion charges, and editorial demands for Conlisk's departure had been increasing.

But, Daley said in reading Conlisk's letter of resignation, Conlisk's decision to resign was for personal reasons and not because the department has been tainted by several scandals during his six-year reign.

A spokesman for Daley said Conlisk was resigning only as superintendent

but would retain his civil service rank as captain. As superintendent he was paid \$33,500 a year. As captain he would earn \$22,000 per year.

DALEY, DISPLAYING sadness for an old family friend, praised Conlisk, 55, for serving "with honor and outstanding professionalism."

The resignation came as a surprise. Only 90 minutes before Daley read Con-

lisk's letter of resignation, Conlisk was telling 400 civic and business leaders of his plans for the future of the department, and flatly told a Tribune reporter he was not resigning, emotionally blurt-ing out his answers.

Conlisk was not present when Daley summoned reporters to his office and read the letter of resignation.

CONLISK DESCRIBED his six-year

term as a "period of ever increasing professionalization of police service" and of "great challenges." He thanked Daley and the citizens of Chicago for their support, saying of Daley, "No police department has ever operated with a more devoted public official."

Daley said Conlisk's administration spanned a period in which "law enforcement agencies throught the country have

Continued on page 7, col. 4



James B. Conlisk Jr.

Conlisk quits as superintendent

Continued from page one

been confronted with many serious problems."

Daley said the resignation was not the result of last Friday's 19 police convictions, and he does not consider the department tainted by the tavern extortion scandal.

"YOU ARE talking of individuals and then someone talks about the department," Daley said. "The department includes 13,000 men and women and not all of them are tainted. I think we have a fine department, a good department, thanks in part to Jim Conlisk and the late Police Supt. O. W. Wilson."

Wilson, the college professor summoned to Chicago to reform the Chicago Police Department after eight Chicago policemen were convicted of conspiracy to commit burglary in the Summerdale District scandal of 1969, recommended Conlisk as his successor when he left in 1967.

Daley said he and Conlisk had discussed his resignation prior to Tuesday afternoon, "when he came in and told me he was going to resign."

DALEY WAS ASKED if he tried to dissuade Conlisk.

"I told him to think it over, but he said he had made up his mind," Daley said.

Daley said he has asked the Police Board to move as quickly as possible in screening candidates for the office. He said it is up to the board to decide whether they will seek a successor to Conlisk from outside the department and outside the city.

"I have asked them to get the best man for the job and



Mayor Daley announcing resignation of police Supt. James Conlisk.

talk to everyone and anyone."

MARLIN W. JOHNSON, Police Board president and former agent in charge of the Chicago Federal Bureau of Investigation office, refused comment on the resignation. He said that under the department's chain of command, Deputy Supt. James Rochford would assume control of the department if Conlisk decides to take vacation time before the effective date of his resignation.

Dan K. Webb, head of the federal team which prosecuted the 19 policemen, said:

"I've always felt Conlisk personally was above reproach but lacked independence. I've always been afraid Conlisk would become a sacrificial lamb as a result of these proceedings."

"It is not enough to change superintendents. A superintendent must be appointed with enough independence to make changes on the district commander level. If you can pro-

note based on ability rather than on political clout, then corruption in the department would be eliminated."

SAM SKINNER, head of the special investigations division under United States Atty. James Thompson, said:

"It was a courageous thing for Conlisk to do. In the five years I've known Conlisk, I've never heard anyone say anything derogatory about his integrity."

Lee Schooler, president of the Chicago Crime Commission, said:

"This gives the mayor an opportunity to provide new leadership for the Police Department. In essence, this should not be merely a new face but a new future. The appointment of the new superintendent should be most carefully considered."

State's Atty. Bernard Carey called Conlisk's resignation "inevitable and necessary. He was the unfortunate victim of the Chicago system of tolerated corruption. All is not solved by the usual resignation under pressure."

Renault Robinson, executive director of the Afro-American patrolmen's League, hailed the resignation, pointing out that the league had sought Conlisk's removal for two years. Robinson urged a nationwide search for a new superintendent with top consideration given to a black.