

I WAS EXPENDABLE, SAMBOR LEARNED AFTER MOVE FIASCO

By **SCOTT J. HIGHAM, The Morning Call**

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In the wake of the May 13 MOVE confrontation, Gregore J. Sambor learned from an official in Mayor W. Wilson Goode's administration and other sources that he would be "gone by the end of the year" as Philadelphia's police commissioner.

"I found out from several sources, one of which was a member of the administration, that it would be better for me to leave," the former commissioner told reporters last night after speaking before security and law enforcement officials at the Holiday Inn West.

Sambor's comments marked a departure from those he made last November when he submitted his resignation. At that time, Sambor, a supervisor of the MOVE assault, denied he was being forced from the department.

Both the public and members of the press were barred from his presentation to 150 members of the American Society for Industrial Security.

"I also received information from other sources that the mayor had said I would be gone by the end of the year," Sambor said. He did not reveal their names.

Sambor called the Goode administration's decision to remove him "politically expedient" because he was an "expendable" city official. When asked whether he had been made a scapegoat by Goode, Sambor said, "I can only be guided by his actions and statements, which differ from time to time. It's difficult to know where he stands."

Sambor called the word scapegoat too strong, suggesting instead that he had been made a "surrogate" by Goode.

"It would have only satisfied my ego to stay and fight," said the 35-year veteran of the police force as he stood at the dais in a conference room at the hotel. "But it would not have done my family, the force or the city any good."

According to those attending the conference, Sambor's 75-minute speech centered on the MOVE confrontation, in which 11 members of the radical group, including five children, were killed. Sixty-one houses were destroyed. He also discussed the 1978 confrontation between MOVE and Philadelphia's police department and media coverage of both events.

While last night's speaking engagement - the first Sambor has made in Pennsylvania since the MOVE hearings - was not part of a lecture tour, he suggested that police officers and security officers could "learn from the lessons" of the incident. He refused, however, to say what those lessons are, citing litigation and other city proceedings.

Whether Sambor resigned under pressure is a question receiving close attention from the Philadelphia chapter of the Fraternal Order of Police, the union representing police officers.

When Sambor resigned last November, he insisted that he had not been forced from office. "There will be many who will second-guess this decision, and many who will deny that it is mine," he said in a prepared statement issued to high-ranking police officials. "But the simple truth of the matter is that it is time."

Three months later, Sambor had a different explanation for his resignation. "I was given a choice . . . to retire or be fired," he said during a conference in Florida last month, according to the Orlando Sentinel newspaper.

In the wake of the MOVE confrontation, Sambor said he was made a scapegoat, the newspaper reported. He added that Goode, who had strongly supported Sambor in the past, "extricated himself from a rather precarious position" by shifting responsibility for the MOVE incident elsewhere, the newspaper reported.

"We read that statement too," Richard B. Costello, a spokesman for Lodge 5 of the Fraternal Order of Police, said yesterday. Costello said Sambor was told through an intermediary, not by Goode, to either resign or retire.

"If we find that he (Sambor) was forced out of office, we'll return the favor when Goode comes up for re-election," Costello said. While Sambor would not say who told him to leave the 7,000-member force, Costello promised that the FOP would pursue the issue. "We're going to ask him directly," Costello said.

Police union officials have charged Goode with refusing to accept responsibility for the MOVE confrontation by assigning blame to those outside his office. In addition to the MOVE incident, Costello charged the mayor with deflecting attention from his office on several fronts, including the controversy surrounding delays on the Osage Avenue construction project.

"Harry Truman used to have a sign on his desk that read, 'The buck stops here,' " Costello said. "Wilson Goode has a doormat that says, 'The buck keeps going.' "

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