

Continue Probes, U.S. Juries Told

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U.S. District Court Judge

John J. Sirica summoned the two grand juries probing the Watergate scandal before him yesterday and in front of a packed courtroom praised them and exhorted them to "steadily and deliberately pursue your investigations."

The judge had scheduled the special meeting on Monday in the aftermath of the firing of special Watergate Prosecutor Archibald Cox, who had been directing the grand juries, and the resignations of Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson and his deputy, William French Smith.

After the judge's statement, one of the grand juries, appointed in August, 1973, then heard several hours of testimony from former White House aide H. R. Haldeman. The second—appointed in June, 1972—met briefly after being called to Judge Sirica's courtroom for his statement yesterday morning, and is scheduled to hear an unidentified witness today.

Judge Sirica told the combined grand juries in open court that he wanted to "alleviate some of the anxiety . . . that you may be experiencing regarding your role as grand jurors and the role of the grand juries themselves."

In a direct reference to President Nixon's firing of Cox, who had been directing the grand juries for the court, Sirica urged the grand jurors to be "patient while the various problems surrounding your investigations are resolved."

For the meantime, at least, the grand juries are continuing to be directed by members of Cox' staff who are being transferred to the criminal division of the Justice Department.

Judge Sirica still has the option of appointing a special counsel to the grand

jury if he feels it is necessary for any of their future proceedings. His office said yesterday that no final decision had been reached or whether such an appointment would be made.

But Sirica made it clear yesterday that the grand juries' first allegiances were to the court and the public.

"The court and the country are grateful to you," Judge Sirica told the grand jurors in front of a courtroom filled with standing room only by observers that included lawyers, law clerks, newsmen, courthouse personnel and members of the public.

"In due course, the questions which now plague us will be answered, and you may rely on the court to safeguard your rights and to preserve the integrity of your proceedings. Meanwhile, you must steadily and deliberately pursue your investigations," the judge said.

He reminded the grand jurors of their oaths of office in which they swore to "diligently, fully and impartially inquire into . . . all offenses which shall come into your knowledge" and told them they should be especially careful at this time to fully and strictly adhere to that oath.

He told them they "are not dismissed and will not be dismissed except as provided by law upon the completion of your work or the conclusion of your term."

In two other U.S. District Court developments yesterday:

- Judge Sirica rejected an attempt by George Washington University law Prof. John F. Banzhaf III to intervene in the tapes controversy by asking the judge to appoint a new attorney as special prosecutor to replace Cox. "If the court feels it is necessary (to make such an appointment)," Sirica told Banzhaf, "it needs no help."

- Consumer activist Ralph Nader filed a suit questioning the authority of Acting Attorney General Robert H. Bork to fire Cox. Bork fired Cox Saturday night at the President's request and direction.

Nader specifically asked that the court declare that Cox validly holds the office of special prosecutor, and asked also that the court block any attempts by Bork to abolish the office of the special prosecutor.