

Six Watergate Defendants May Ask For Postponement

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WASHINGTON (AP) — Attorneys for the six defendants in the Watergate cover-up case are assessing the impact on the forthcoming trial of the new presidential transcripts and the chances that President Nixon will resign.

At the least, one of the attorneys said, some defendants are likely to ask for a postponement of the trial now scheduled to begin Sept. 9.

One lawyer, who asked not to be named, went so far as to declare that U.S. District Judge John J. Sirica may free some of the defendants.

At the heart of the lawyers' argument for dismissal is the crescendo of publicity surrounding Nixon's release of three transcripts of taped conversations between the President and former White House chief of staff H. R. Haldeman on June 23, 1972, six days after

the original Watergate break-in.

The lawyers said public awareness of those tapes, plus additional presidential transcripts to come and a possible Senate impeachment trial, will make it impossible to find an impartial jury anywhere in the country.

Besides Haldeman, the other defendants in the case are former Atty. Gen. John N. Mitchell, former White House assistant John D. Ehrlichman, former White House aide Gordon Strachan, former Asst. Atty. Gen. Robert C. Mardian and Kenneth W. Parkinson, an attorney for the Committee for the Re-election of the President.

In the newest transcript, Nixon ordered Haldeman to tell the Central Intelligence Agency to warn the FBI away from a full investigation of the June 17,

1972, break-in at Democratic National headquarters.

Haldeman also told Nixon he believed that Mitchell, then head of the re-election committee, was aware in advance of the break-in.

Lawyers for Haldeman declined comment, but one other attorney familiar with the case speculated on the likelihood of Haldeman pleading guilty.

Another element in the case is that if Nixon resigns, he is almost sure to appear as a witness at the trial. Even if Nixon stands trial in the Senate, defense lawyers said Nixon is such a vital witness for the criminal trial that the trial should be delayed until it's clear how long he'll remain in office.

If Nixon should remain in the presidency, it is unlikely he would appear at the cover-up trial.