

Ehrlichman Is Guilty Of Conspiracy, Perjury

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WASHINGTON (AP) — John D. Ehrlichman, once one of the ranking members of President Nixon's White House staff, was convicted Friday of conspiracy and perjury in the Ellsberg break-in case.

Ehrlichman, 49, Nixon's chief domestic adviser until he resigned in April 1973 amid rising Watergate scandals, said after the verdict he had doubted all along he could get a fair trial in

Washington and said he would appeal.

The verdict made Ehrlichman one of the most powerful government officials ever convicted of a crime. Interior Secretary Albert B. Fall went to jail for a year in 1931 in the Teapot Dome scandals.

Others of such high rank have been charged in the past but never convicted, including Nixon's former attorney general and re-election campaign

manager, John N. Mitchell, and former Commerce secretary and campaign fund-raiser Maurice Stans, who were acquitted by a jury in the Robert. Vesco case in March.

Former Atty. Gen. Richard G. Kleindienst pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor for his testimony in the ITT case but was given a suspended sentence.

The jury convicted Ehrlichman, G. Gordon Liddy, Bernard L. Barker and Eugenio R.

Martinez of a civil rights charge of conspiring to enter the Beverly Hills, Calif., office of Dr. Lewis Fielding and examine his files on Daniel Ellsberg, the man who leaked the Pentagon Papers.

This count carries a maximum prison sentence of 10 years. Ehrlichman also was convicted of three other counts, carrying a potential five years each, and was cleared of the fifth.

This leaves Ehrlichman subject to a possible total sentence of 25 years, although he is expected to receive somewhat less than that when U.S. District Judge Gerhard Gesell passes sentence, set for July 31. The defendants remain free pending sentencing.

Ehrlichman still faces trial in September in the Watergate cover-up case, along with Mitchell, former White House chief of staff H.R. Haldeman, former Asst. Atty. Gen. Robert Mar-dian and two others.

Liddy, Barker and Martinez, who were convicted last year in connection with the 1972 break-in at Democratic Party headquarters in Washington's Watergate complex, were charged only in the conspiracy count.

Ehrlichman, however, also was convicted of one count of lying to the FBI and two counts of committing perjury before the Watergate grand jury.

Outside the courthouse following the verdict, Ehrlichman said he had met with his lawyers and instructed them to prepare and file an appeal.

"As you know, we have been.

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concerned from the very beginning about our ability to obtain a fair trial in this district," Ehrlichman said.

In pretrial motions, Ehrlichman had asked that the trial be moved to another city on grounds that Washington's preoccupation with Watergate and the heavily black and Democratic population of Washington would make a fair trial here impossible. The jury which convicted him was composed of nine blacks and three whites.

"Also a great deal of the substance and background of this case was excluded from the evidence by rulings of this case," Ehrlichman said. "And this also will be a part of our appeal."

Ehrlichman, embracing his wife Jean outside the courtroom, said, "I have had for many years an abiding confidence in the American judicial system.

"Nothing that has happened here today has in any way shaken my confidence in that process."

The jury's verdict was returned about an hour after president Nixon left Andrews Air Force Base near Washington en route to California and a two-week working vacation at his San Clemente home.

Word of Ehrlichman's conviction was radioed to the President's jetliner, sources said, but there was no immediate comment from Nixon or White House spokesmen.

All four defendants were convicted of a civil rights charge that they conspired to enter

Fielding's office and search his files against his will. That count carries a maximum penalty of 10 years' imprisonment.

Ehrlichman also was convicted of lying to the FBI in an interview on May 1, 1973, in which he said he had not seen any records on the White House investigation of the Pentagon Papers leak for over a year. The government said he had actually seen the files less than two months earlier and removed some documents from them.

The two perjury counts on which Ehrlichman was convicted charged that he lied to a Watergate grand jury on May 14, 1973, that he learned after the break-in that White House plumbers unit was seeking material to draw a psychological profile of Ellsberg and that he also did not know until after the break-in that an effort had been made to obtain information from both Ellsberg and Fielding.

The government introduced documents from White House files which it said Ehrlichman did know these things before the Sept. 3, 1971, break-in date.

The jury cleared Ehrlichman of a fifth count alleging that he lied to the grand jury when he said his former assistant Egil Krogh had the Plumbers files but failed to mention that another aide, David Young, and Ehrlichman himself had some files.