

Cox Requests Senate to Halt Bug Hearings

By Lawrence R. Meyer
Washington Post Staff Writer

Special Watergate prosecutor Archibald Cox has asked the Senate select committee investigating the Watergate affair to stop holding all hearings on the grounds that the hearings are jeopardizing future trials, according to Senate sources.

Cox's request, reportedly communicated to chief committee counsel Samuel Dash during a meeting between Cox and Dash Wednesday, was immediately turned down by Dash, the sources said. Dash reportedly told Cox in response to the request, "That would be impossible."

Neither Dash nor Cox could be reached for comment.

According to one of the two Senate sources, "It was suggested (by Cox) in most emphatic terms that we drop it (the hearings) completely." Asked if Cox was requesting the committee to suspend its hearings, the source said, "No, drop it completely."

In addition, Cox is said to have told Dash that if the committee did not agree to drop the hearings, Cox would consider court action to have them stopped.

Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr. (D-N.C.), chairman of the committee, told a reporter in Winston-Salem, N.C. last night that he knew Dash and Cox had met Wednesday but did not know what was discussed.

Addressing himself to possible court action by Cox to stop the hearings, Ervin said, "The committee has the same powers under the Constitution to conduct the hearings that the courts have to institute prosecution. The courts cannot force the U.S. Senate to halt the hearings."

Even before Cox was named special prosecutor by Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson on May 18, the prosecution team has complained privately that the Senate hearings were damag-

ing the grand jury investigation. Legal observers noted that the hearings, with their attendant publicity, could provide the grounds for appeal by convicted defendants on the basis that the publicity had made it impossible for them to obtain a fair trial.