

Richardson Vows Hands Off On Cox Probe of Watergate

— Attorney General Elliot Richardson says he will not “countermand or interfere” with the decisions of special Watergate prosecutor Archibald Cox.

In a three-page directive issued to all Justice Department personnel yesterday, Richardson reiterated his pledge that Cox “will have the greatest degree of independence” in his investigation and prosecution of the Watergate case and “all offenses arising out of the 1972 presidential election . . .”

“Allegations involving the President, members of the White House staff or presidential appointees” come under the order, Richardson said in his directive.

No Interference

“The Attorney General will not countermand or interfere with the special prosecutor’s decisions or actions,” Richardson’s order said.

Richardson also directed

that all reports on “possible offenses within the special prosecutor’s jurisdiction” should be “delivered directly” to Cox. He said Cox would have to be consulted before any “significant decisions” are made.

The office of the Watergate Special prosecution force, the name given to Cox’s staff, has been working temporarily at offices in the Justice Department. Next week, however, Cox and his staff will move into a downtown office building.

James Vorenberg, one of Cox’s assistants, said the new office has undergone a special security check to guard against break-ins, bugging and tapping of phones.

Coordinator

Cox’s office also announced the appointment of former Justice Department prosecutor Thomas F. McBride to coordinate

“Watergate-related investigations and prosecutions.”

McBride, 44, a native of Elgin, Ill., initially will assist in overseeing the prosecution of alleged political saboteur Donald H. Segretti in Florida and the investigation by a federal grand jury in Houston regarding contributions to President Nixon’s re-election campaign, Cox said.

McBride is on leave of absence as staff director of the Police Foundation, a private organization that finances programs to improve law enforcement.