

Early Talk of Dumping Cox

Washington

Former Attorney General Elliot Richardson testified yesterday that the White House talked about "getting rid of" special Watergate prosecutor Archibald Cox two months after he started

his investigation.

Richardson, who resigned when Cox was fired October 20, also told the Senate Judiciary Committee that legitimate national security problems could arise in the prosecution of the White House "plumbers" case.

Reading from notes he had

taken during telephone conversations with top White House officials who complained that Cox was overstepping his jurisdiction in the Watergate investigation. Richardson remembered one call from Alexander M. Haig, White House chief of staff, on July 23.

"The President wants a tight line drawn... and no further mistakes... or we'll get rid of Cox," Richardson quoted Haig as telling him.

Richardson had told the committee Tuesday that President Nixon remarked to him last September about "getting rid of Cox."

Richardson later told the senators, "it would be going beyond the evidence as I know it to conclude that there was a determination to get rid of Cox going back to July."

Chairman James Eastland asked: "The White House never tried to pressure you in an improper way?" Richardson replied: "That is correct."

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