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Move to Delay Ervin Hearings

Washington

The Senate Watergate Committee will be asked to suspend public hearings indefinitely to allow more time for investigation, the committee's chief counsel said yesterday.

Chief counsel Samuel Dash attributed the proposed delay to failure of the White House to produce documents and the reluctance of some key officials of the Hughes Tool Co. to cooperate.

A source close to the committee's Republican minority sharply disputed Dash's explanation and said:

"The fact is that Dash and the staff are just not ready to proceed.

"What they've ended up with is a bunch of hearsay. They're trying to blame everyone else for their own failure."

Dash's statement was issued in the names of chairman Sam J. Ervin Jr. (Dem.-N.C.) and vice chairman Howard H. Baker Jr. (Rep.-Tenn.). It said the two Senators would tell the five other panel members in executive session this morning of the decision to adjourn "subject to the call of the chair."

But a spokesman for Baker

said the senator was not consulted about the statement in advance and is making no recommendation.

"If the staff is not ready to go on, I am sure the senator will approve of the delay," said the spokesman. "But if they are ready, he, of course, wants to proceed."

"We'll wait to hear what Dash and the staff have to say," the Baker spokesman said.

Dash's statement said the committee is seeking White House documents relating to large contributions made to the 1972 Nixon re-election

campaign of representatives of the nation's dairy industry.

Also, some executives of the Hughes Tool Co. have been subpoenaed to testify on a \$100,000 payment which was made by billionaire Howard Hughes to C. G. (Bebe) Rebozo, Mr. Nixon's closest personal friend.

Dash's statement said the committee's probe is in no way considered closed.

"A number of matters are pending and it is felt that the final phase of the committee's investigation is the most important phase and a thorough probe is called

for," Dash's statement said. The committee has been in recess since before the Thanksgiving holiday.

A number of Watergate committee members have been anxious to conclude hearings by Christmas. The committee is scheduled to write a final report no later than February 28.

Associated Press