

Sirica Keeps It

Washington

U.S. District Judge John J. Sirica denied yesterday a request that he disqualify himself from presiding in the Watergate coverup trial.

The disqualification request was made April 10 by four defendants. The trial is scheduled to start September 9.

Sirica, who presided over the original Watergate trial of seven men charged with burglary and bugging of Democratic party headquarters, had assigned the coverup trial to himself before retiring as chief judge of the district court here.

The disqualifying motions were filed for former Attorney General John N. Mitchell and former White House aides John D. Ehrlichman, Charles W. Colson and Gor-

don Strachan.

They claimed Sirica had "generally displayed what can only be called a prosecutorial interest." They also said "Judge Sirica possesses, consciously or unconsciously, a deepseated and unshakable personal bias in favor of the prosecution."

Associated Press