

Hearings on Handling of 1st Probe

Washington

The Senate Judiciary Committee decided yesterday to conduct hearings next week on the Justice Department's handling of the original Watergate investigation and prosecution.

Called as witnesses will be former Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst; Henry E. Petersen, assistant attorney general who heads the department's criminal division; Harold H. Titus Jr., former U.S. attorney here, and Earl J. Silbert, who has been nominated by President Nixon to succeed Titus.

Senator John V. Tunney (Dem-Calif.) said he made his motion for the hearings and said it was approved without dissent.

He said the committee will explore who was in charge of the investigation of the June 17, 1972, break-in at Democratic headquarters in the Watergate and other questions such as why some top White House aides were not called before the grand jury for questioning.

The hearings will be in connection with the consideration of the nomination of Silbert, who was the principal assistant U.S. attorney here at the time and who headed the prosecution staff.

During earlier hearings on Silbert's nomination, Senator Sam J. Erwin Jr. (Dem-N.C.) said that before acting on it the committee should conduct an in-depth investigation of how the Justice Department handled the Watergate break-in and bugging.

Associated Press