

Watergate Appeals

Washington

The Watergate special prosecutor asked the U.S. Court of Appeals yesterday to uphold the convictions of the Watergate coverup defendants, saying none of the 14 claims of trial error has any merit.

"The government's evidence of conspiracy and obstruction of justice was overwhelming, and no appellant challenges the sufficiency of that evidence," said outgoing prosecutor Henry Ruth in a 280-page brief.

Former White House aides H. R. Haldeman and John Erlichman, former Attorney General John Mitchell, and Robert Mardian, a 1972 campaign official for then President Nixon, had

claimed they did not receive a fair trial. All were convicted of conspiring to cover up the Watergate affair. All but Mardian were convicted on additional counts.

Mardian was sentenced to a term of ten months to three years, the others to terms of 2½ to eight years. All are free pending outcome of the appeals.

Their principal claim is that they could not receive a fair trial because of the massive publicity that preceded it. The trial in the last three months of 1974 was preceded immediately by the House Judiciary Committee's impeachment vote on Mr. Nixon, his resignation and pardon.

Associated Press