

INQUIRY GOES ON UNDER PETERSEN

Assistant Attorney General
in Charge Until Senate
Confirms Richardson

5/1/73
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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 30—

The Government's investigation of the Watergate affair will remain in the hands of Assistant Attorney General Henry E. Petersen until Elliot L. Richardson is confirmed as Attorney General, a Justice Department spokesman said today.

In a statement this morning announcing the resignation of Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst, President Nixon said that he had asked Mr. Richardson, the present Defense Secretary, to "involve himself immediately in the investigative process surrounding the Watergate matter."

The spokesman said that, pending Mr. Richardson's confirmation, his involvement would take the form of briefings by Justice Department officials on the complex case, and that, in the meantime, Mr. Petersen would continue reporting directly to Mr. Nixon.

Two weeks ago, the President announced that "major developments" in the burgeoning political-espionage and sabotage case had led him to undertake, with Mr. Petersen's assistance, a personal investigation of the matter.

Associates Cited

Mr. Kleindienst subsequently withdrew as head of the Justice Department's Watergate investigation, citing evidence that individuals with whom he had had personal and professional associations might be implicated in the scandal. His withdrawal left Mr. Petersen, who heads the department's Criminal Division, in charge of the investigation.

The Justice Department said today that Mr. Kleindienst would remain as Attorney General until his successor was confirmed. Mr. Nixon said in his statement that he planned to submit Mr. Richardson's appointment to the Senate "immediately," but a White House spokesman said this afternoon

that the submission had not yet been made.

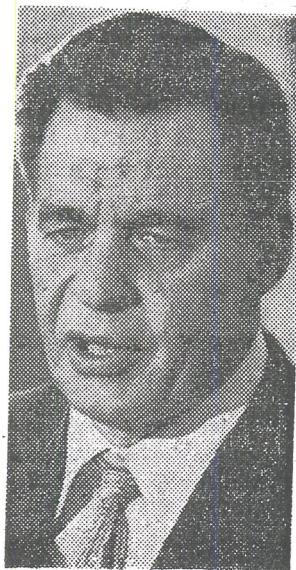
As allegations of the involvement of officials and former officials of the Nixon Administration in the Watergate case have mounted in recent days, there has been increasing pressure on the President from Congress and elsewhere to appoint a special prosecutor in the matter.

No Link With Case

However, Justice Department sources noted that Mr. Richardson had not been publicly linked to any aspect of Watergate, and they speculated that his nomination as Attorney General had been intended to obviate the need for a special prosecutor.

In another development, William M. Byrne Jr., United States District judge in Los Angeles who is presiding over the Pentagon papers trial, disclosed in court today that he had met with President Nixon and one of the President's top aides in California about a month ago.

Judge Byrne said that his conversation with John D. Ehrlichman, Mr. Nixon's adviser for domestic affairs, had had "absolutely nothing to do, even remotely," with the trial of two men accused of stealing



Associated Press
Henry E. Petersen

and copying the secret Defense Department study of the Vietnam war.

The subject, he said, had been "a possible future assignment in Government." The judge added that he had told Mr. Ehrlichman that he "could not and would not give consideration to any other case until this case is concluded."

Question Confirmed

White House sources confirmed today that Judge Byrne had been asked by Mr. Ehrlichman about his availability to be director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The bureau's new Acting Director, William D. Ruckelshaus, spent his first day on the job undergoing briefings by aides. A bureau spokesman said that Mr. Ruckelshaus had summoned the heads of all 59 of the F.B.I.'s field offices to Washington for a meeting on Wednesday.

Senator Sam J. Ervin Jr., Democrat of North Carolina, who heads the select Senate committee investigating the Watergate affair, today called Mr. Ruckelshaus "a mighty good man" and predicted that his leadership would "restore confidence in the F.B.I."

Senator Ervin, who left this afternoon for North Carolina, said through a spokesman before he departed that his committee's investigation was proceeding and that he expected public hearings to begin about May 15.

Senator Howard H. Baker Jr., of Tennessee, the committee's ranking Republican member, confirmed Mr. Ervin's estimate of a tentative starting date and added, "the sooner we get it over with the better."

Senator Baker speculated that, in addition to focusing on the break-in-and-bugging of the Democratic party's Watergate headquarters last June, the hearings might cover four aspects of the case—the bugging, allegations of a cover-up of White House involvement, a reported campaign of espionage and sabotage against Democratic Presidential aspirants and the sources of financing for illegal activities.