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Watergate Special Prosecutor Cox: "I am not looking for a confrontation . . ."

Cox Draws Showdown Lines

What Will Happen to Him—After Richardson?

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The political drama of the Watergate tapes centered yesterday on the suspenseful question: are they going to fire the sheriff?

Cast in the role of sheriff was Watergate Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox, who went before the bar of public opinion in an extraordinary news conference to restate his determination to surface the disputed White House tape recordings.

The 60-year-old Harvard University law professor acted in the face of a direct presidential injunction not to pursue his efforts in the

courts to obtain the recordings.

Cox drew the line of confrontation clearly between himself and President Nixon on the tapes issue.

Not only did he insist that he would "go about my duties on the terms on which I assumed them," but he went on to pronounce the President to be out of

compliance with the order of the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals week before last. The court rejected the President's claim of privilege for the tapes and upheld Cox's contention that the grand jury is entitled to the evidence.

The confrontation raised the specter of further dis-

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array and unraveling within the Nixon administration, which has already been severely battered by the revelations of the Watergate scandals.

Speculation turned inevitably, in the aftermath of the Cox news conference, to Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson—the man who hired the Watergate special prosecutor and gave him his sweeping mandate to investigate the scandal as well as the subsequent cover-up conspiracy untrammelled by political interference.

Richardson was deep in

conference yesterday with White House officials. And then he took a walk.

Although the draft of the White House settlement plan bore Richardson's initials, the actual negotiations with Cox were carried to their final point of disagreement by White House legal adviser Charles Alan Wright.

"It is my conclusion," Wright wrote Cox late Friday afternoon, "... that further discussions between us seeking to resolve this matter by compromise would be futile, and that we will be forced to take the actions that the President deems appropriate in these circum-

Cox took pains at the news conference yesterday to pay tribute to Richardson, for whom he professed "admiration, respect and affection." The two men are friends and long-standing professional associates, and this must have served to heighten the pain of Richardson's dilemma as the

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Richardson, Ruckelshaus Out In Dispute With Nixon on Tapes