

Ehrlichman Is Told To Ready Himself For 2 Grand Juries

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Despite defense claims that the government is "persecuting" John D. Ehrlichman, a federal judge yesterday smoothed the way for two Watergate grand juries to quiz the former White House aide next week.

U.S. District Court Chief Judge John J. Sirica, without issuing any formal orders, indicated that Ehrlichman should be prepared to testify before the panels after he is arraigned in Los Angeles on California perjury, conspiracy and burglary charges stemming from the 1971 burglary at the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist.

But Sirica reserved judgment on a plea by Ehrlichman's lawyers that the court forbid the grand juries from questioning Ehrlichman about that burglary.

"This is the most persecuting—and I use the word deliberately—method of procedure I ever heard of," Ehrlichman lawyer John Wilson told Sirica at a one-hour hearing. "They want to whipsaw this man between a state indictment and a federal indictment. . .

"You can stop that, and I beg you to do it, sir."

Wilson said Ehrlichman would be arraigned on the California charges Monday or Tuesday, but declined to tell reporters how his client would plead. Ehrlichman was indicted this week by a Los Angeles County grand jury along with three other men.

Richard Ben-Veniste, appearing on behalf of Watergate Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox, said the original Watergate grand jury wanted to quiz Ehrlichman for a fourth time about the scandal.

He also disclosed that a second grand jury, convened last month to consider related cases, had voted to subpoena Ehrlichman to testify about the doctor's office break-in and about the 1971 settlement of antitrust problems of International Telephone and Telegraph Corp.

Ben-Veniste said the prosecutors had obtained substantial additional inform-

ation" about these cases since Ehrlichman appeared before the Watergate grand jury for three days in May, and that the grand juries wanted to question him in light of what they have learned since.

But Wilson contended that the Subpoena, which calls for Ehrlichman to appear before the original Watergate grand jury Monday, is "unreasonable and oppressive" and should be quashed. At the very least, he said, Sirica should order that Ehrlichman not be questioned about the break-in at the office of Ellsberg's psychiatrist, Dr. Lewis Fielding.

He charged that the Cox team was wielding "the threat of perjury" as a weapon against his client, who resigned April 30 as Mr. Nixon's chief domestic affairs adviser in a major post-Watergate White House staff shakeup.

"The word is being bandied about like a nightstick," Wilson said.

Wilson also asked Sirica to recuse himself from the case, since the two men are old friends and Wilson had once represented Sirica in a suit against the judge in the U.S. Court of Appeals. Sirica declined, saying that their friendship had nothing to do with Ehrlichman's case.

The judge urged Wilson and the Cox team to meet to see if they could settle their differences. They later arranged to meet this morning.