

# Separate Trial for Strachan

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U.S. District Court Judge John J. Sirica yesterday ordered a separate trial for former White House aide Gordon C. Strachan on Watergate cover-up charges.

The ruling leaves five of former President Nixon's aides and campaign advisers as defendants in the conspiracy trial, which is expected to start on schedule at the U.S. courthouse today at 9:30 a.m.

Sirica said he has decided that complications involving Strachan's indictment "would most fairly be resolved at a pre-trial rather than a post-trial hearing."

"Since the time remaining before trial cannot accommodate such a hearing, defendant Strachan's case must therefore be severed," the judge said.

Strachan had protested that the case against him would be tainted by the government's reliance on evidence that Strachan himself supplied after being promised that it would not be used against him in any way.

Judge Sirica had ruled after secret hearings this summer that the dispute was serious enough to warrant further exploration, but he said this could be done after trial. In a 5-to-1 ruling last month, the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals refused to upset that decision, but at the same time expressed reservations about it.

As a result, Watergate Special Prosecutor Leon Jaworski asked Sirica last week to grant Strachan a separate trial with the understanding that he would first be granted a full and final hearing to resolve his complaints.

The five defendants still facing trial together are former White House chief of staff H. R. (Bob) Haldeman; former White House domestic adviser John D. Ehrlichman; former Attorney General John N. Mitchell; former Assistant Attorney General Robert C. Mardian; and Nixon re-elec-



Associated Press

John Bray, attorney for Strachan, talks with newsmen.

tion campaign lawyer Kenneth Wells Parkinson.

All have been accused of conspiring to block the original Watergate investigation in an effort to prevent the disclosure of high-level responsibility for the 1972 bugging and break-in and to keep other illegal and improper activities involving the Nixon White House from coming to light.

The trial, which is expected to last from three to five months, will open this morning in the ceremonial courtroom on the sixth floor of the U.S. courthouse, but most of it will be held downstairs in Sirica's smaller courtroom on the second floor.

See COVERUP, A6, Col. 4

## COVER-UP, From A1

ca's smaller courtroom on the second floor.

Seats will be tightly rationed. Sirica yesterday cut back on those tentatively allocated for reporters, and said he wanted roughly half of the

courtroom reserved for public spectators.

Efforts to select a jury, which are expected to take a week or more, will be the first order of business. Defense lawyers maintain that their clients cannot get a fair trial

in the District of Columbia because of the Watergate publicity here over the past 2 1/4 years.

In clearing the decks for trial, Sirica held a secret hearing yesterday on whether to permit the use of government

transcripts of 33 White House tapes that Watergate prosecutors had planned to use as evidence. The session lasted into the evening, with both prosecutors and defense lawyers under strict orders from Sirica to make no comment.