

By Robert Boyd
Knight-News Service

WASHINGTON — As the Senate Watergate hearings begin to fade this fall, the new Special Prosecutor's Office will be launching a series of dramatic indictments and trials that could run into 1976 and beyond.

Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox, aided by a small army of 90 lawyers and investigators, is gearing up to expose wrongdoing by the Nixon administration on a level of detail and legal precision that the Senate committee cannot hope to match.

Tug-of-War

A spectacular open break between Cox's Army and President Nixon is likely before many months pass.

Already there is tension between Cox and the White House, which is resisting his requests for presidential papers. A further tug-of-war is beginning over tapes of Nixon's phone calls and conversations.

A high White House official said Nixon is opposed to outsiders "playing around with Presidential papers." But Cox takes the position that his charter means no less than what it says — that he has the right to review "all documentary evidence available from any source."

Home Probe

A crew-cut, supremely self-confident senior Harvard law professor, Cox is jealously guarding his independence from the White House and the Justice Department, although his outfit is legally a part of the Justice Department.

Cox has already expressed his concern to Attorney General Elliot Richardson over a telephone call from Richardson questioning Cox's operations.

Richardson placed the call at Nixon's request after Nixon exploded over a report that Cox was going to investigate the financing of his lavish homes in San Clemente and Key Biscayne.

As it turned out, the report was premature. Cox is collecting information on Nixon's houses, but has not de-

ecided to order a full-scale probe.

The White House, for its part, regards Cox's Army with deep distrust and suspicion.

The President consented to the idea of a special prosecutor with great reluctance, and only after he was backed into a corner. His associates now feel they have created a Frankenstein's monster, and are appalled at what they consider the anti-Nixon bias of the staff.

Brain Trust

Cox himself was one of the leaders of John F. Kennedy's "brain trust" during his 1960 presidential campaign against Nixon. Eight of the top ten staff men have been associated with John, Robert or Teddy Kennedy. Only one of the top ten is a Republican.

At 63, Cox has nothing to lose and everything to gain by pressing his investigation to the limit. He sees it as the capstone of his career — a demonstration that the American judicial system can be made to work even when the President of the United States may be involved.

No one, including the President, is to be spared from Cox's probing, he insists.

Assuming Nixon does not resign and is not impeached, the special prosecutor intends to issue a solemn "finding of fact" spelling out in detail what he considers Nixon's responsibility for the Watergate and related scandals.

To Prison

Cox is also going to be doing his best to send a dozen or more of Nixon's closest associates to prison.

In his first three months on the job, Cox has operated with extreme discretion from his tightly guarded headquarters on K Street, a half mile from the White House and nearly a mile from the Justice Department.

He has made one public deal — permitting former White House aide Fred LaRue to plead guilty to one count of obstructing justice in return for his full testimony about the role of others.

He has accepted a confes-

sion from American Airlines that it made an illegal campaign contribution to Nixon's personal lawyer, Herbert Kalmbach, and appealed to other businessmen who may have done the same to confess also.

He has rejected in open court Watergate burglar James McCord's argument that the break-in at Democratic National Headquarters was justified on "national security" grounds.

This is highly significant because the President has taken the position that a number of illegal White House activities, such as the burglary of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office and the wiretapping of newsmen were the result of his concern for national security.

The President has also admitted that he tried to restrict the Watergate investigation for fear of uncovering national security operations — an argument that Cox is apparently unwilling to swallow.

So far, Cox is holding back his big gun — a public blast accusing the White House of non-cooperation. Publicity is Cox's "P-bomb," the ultimate weapon he can use to force out what he wants by inflicting terrible damage on Nixon's already battered reputation.

Cox is eager to remind everybody that he walked out once before on a President. That was back in 1952, when Harry Truman overruled his recommendation to reduce a wage increase for John L. Lewis's coal-miners. Cox quit as head of Truman's Wage Stabilization Board and went back to Harvard.

This 21 year old incident is spelled out in the press kit issued by Cox's office. The implication is that he is prepared to walk out on Nixon, if he doesn't get the cooperation he wants.

Cox takes a very broad interpretation of his charter. It was signed by Richardson on May 31 after delicate negotiations between the White House and Congress, which wanted a totally independent prosecutor outside the Executive Branch.

The special prosecutor is free to investigate virtually any charge involving the President, members of the White House staff or presidential appointees. He is by no means limited to the Watergate break-in or its cover-up.

Cox already has assembled 32 lawyers in five task forces.

The first task force is digging into the main Watergate case, including both the break-in and the cover-up, which is seen as a massive conspiracy to obstruct justice. It is headed by James Neal, 43, a Tennessee lawyer who was a special assistant to Robert F. Kennedy when he was attorney general. Neal was the prosecutor who sent Teamster President James R. Hoffa to jail.