

SFChronicle

# Watergate Office to Close

Washington

The Watergate special prosecution force announced yesterday it will break up next month after four years of dealing with the scandals that drove Richard Nixon from the White House and sent some of his top aides to jail.

Charles Ruff, the fourth man to serve as chief prosecutor, said his final major case was wrapped up Monday when the Supreme Court refused to hear the appeals of convicted Watergate coverup conspirators John Mitchell, H.R. Haldeman and John Ehrlichman.

"Though some investigations and prosecutions . . . remain," Ruff said in a statement, "the attorney general and I have agreed that these responsibilities do not require the continued existence of this office.

"Accordingly, before the middle of June we will close the special prosecution force. All remaining matters will be referred to the Justice Department for disposition and the files will be placed in the National Archives."

Ruff said he is preparing a final report on the office's operations during the 20 months since its last report was issued in October, 1975. He said it will be published before the office closes.

The force, created May 25, 1973, has prosecuted an array of Nixon administration officials and others on coverup charges, conspiracy and making illegal campaign contributions.

One unfinished case involves Claude Wild, former Gulf Oil Co. executive who is to be tried on charges of making an illegal \$2500 campaign contribution. Ruff may be used as a "special consultant" in that case.

Ruff's last publicized action was his decision to investigate accusations of campaign law violations against President Gerald Ford during the 1976 presidential campaign. He made an announcement clearing Ford of wrongdoing.

There have been proposals to make the office permanent in the event of any new scandal of Watergate proportions. Congress instead is considering a bill calling for a court-appointed temporary special prosecutor in such a case.

United Press