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Richardson Trims Watergate List; Some on It Shun Prosecutor Role

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Attorney General-designate Elliot L. Richardson yesterday narrowed his list of candidates for Watergate special prosecutor to 8 or 10 lawyers.

Richardson, who is trying to find a man who inspires public confidence in a no-holds-barred prosecution of Watergate scandals, telephoned leaders of organized bar groups seeking their views about a dozen potential choices.

The list later was reduced as individuals who learned they were on it indicated they did not want to be considered for the post under any circumstances.

Heads of the three bar groups consulted by Richardson all declined to identify any of the candidates. The organizations are the American Bar Association, the National Bar Association, and the American College of Trial Lawyers, a 2,400 member group of specialists in court litigation.

Richardson, who faces a third day of questioning at Senate Judiciary Committee confirmation hearings on Monday, has said he hopes by then to make his choice and submit it for an FBI check.

It appeared possible that more than one individual will be investigated by the FBI before Richardson makes the final selection.

The nominee, who is still serving as Secretary of Defense, is conducting the search from his Pentagon office with the help of Wilmot R. Hastings, general counsel of the department

of Health, Education and Welfare who worked for Richardson at HEW.

Richardson told the Judiciary Committee he hopes to have the advice of former

Chief Justice Earl Warren on the final list. Warren declined yesterday to discuss whether he would participate in the selection process.