Richardson Confirmed

Cox Takes Watergate Helm

WASHINGTON — (UPI) — The Senate has overwhelmingly confirmed Elliot Richardson as attorney general despite some doubts his nominee for special Watergate prosecutor might not have enough freedom to fully investigate the scandal.

Interrupting special hearings on the Watergate case, the Senate voted 82 to 3 yesterday for Richardson after less than an hour's debate.

The vote came during a three-hour meeting at the Justice Department between Archibald Cox, the Harvard professor appointed by Richardson last week as the Watergate prosecutor, and the current Watergate prosecution team.

Although the vote frees Cox to begin working actively on the investigation, sources said "it's going to be several more weeks before indictments come" because Cox will need time to read the federal grand jury findings. The grand jury has been working on the Watergate case for about 11 months.

The confirmation of Richardson, former defense secretary, also opens the way for President Nixon to nominate CIA Director James P. Schlesinger as defense secretary and move William B. Colby into Schlesinger's job.

Despite the overwhelming confirmation vote, some senators said they still fear Richardson is too close to the administration to have ultimate authority over the Justice Department during its Watergate investigation.

Assistant Senate Democratic Leader Robert C. Byrd, speaking for himself and other liberals on the Senate Judiciary Committee, said he voted for the confirmation with reluctance. The committee approved the nomination unanimously.

Byrd said the appointment in the midst of the Watergate scandal gives "every appearance of the administration investigating itself."

"It goes to the appearance that Mr. Richardson might conceivably participate in a cover-up," he said.

Byrd said he decided to go along with the nomination because "time is of the essence" and the Senate might receive "no better nomination" if Richardson were rejected.