

Richardson Steps Into His New Job

Washington

Although Watergate has created "a kind of sleaziness" infecting the government, newly confirmed Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson said yesterday he believes law enforcement agencies probably have a better chance than any other part of government to help restore public confidence.

"The whole Watergate and other related matters have created a situation . . . a kind of sleaziness (that) has infected the ways in which things have been done," Richardson said, "and this has touched agencies concerned with law and law enforcement, almost inevitably, as part of government."

Meeting with reporters at the Pentagon at the end of his 90-day tenure as secretary of defense, Richardson said, "One of the ways in which people perceive government, one of the ways in which it touches them the most, is through the law enforcement process.

"To a large extent," he went on, "their respect for government is affected by the fairness and integrity of the law enforcement process. So I think there is an opportunity to restore confidence through finding ways in which the law enforcement process can be made to be, and perceived to be, scrupulous in the ways in which it carries out its job."

Because of this, the new attorney general, who is to be sworn in today, said that he thought it was through the processes of law enforcement, "perhaps to a degree greater than is open to any other part of government," that opportunities lie for clearing the "atmosphere."

He had praise for the FBI as always "highly professional" in its investigative techniques and respect for the process of law. When asked about the indictment of former Attorney General John Mitchell, Richardson said that indictment was "not in a matter involving

the performance of his role as attorney general."

Richardson said his view that the Justice Department has a potentially great role in restoring confidence in government did not mean any "house cleaning" was planned for the department, though there would be some changes as a result of his switch from the Pentagon.

He conceded that he had accomplished "not a hell of a lot" at the Pentagon in 90 days, though he felt that his emphasis on trying to make the Pentagon's planning process "open, communicable and intelligible" would survive. *Washington Post Service*