

A Defense of Justice's Probe Of Watergate

Washington

Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson told Justice Department employees yesterday that uncooperative witnesses and a temporarily successful coverup hampered federal investigation of the Watergate scandal.

Richardson, responding to claims in Congress and elsewhere that the inquiry was inadequate, offered a strong defense of the department's efforts to get to the bottom of the break-in and bugging of Democratic headquarters last June.

"Based on what I know the department did conduct a thorough and far reaching investigation, but certain persons chose not to talk," said Richardson, who took over as attorney general two weeks ago.

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