

Colson Takes The 5th on Watergate

Washington

Former special presidential counsel Charles W. Colson invoked the Fifth Amendment yesterday and declined to testify before the Senate Watergate committee after the panel refused to grant him immunity from the consequences of his testimony.

Colson met with the seven members of the committee in a closed-door session in which his lawyer was refused a postponement of his client's interrogation.

Committee members said they have not abandoned hope that testimony eventually can be obtained from Colson, who has become a target of a federal grand jury investigation.

RECESS

Colson, once a free-wheeling power in the White House and now an attorney in private practice, reportedly has been eager to testify before the committee began its summer recess in August.

He had denied publicly allegations against him and President Nixon, including

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accusations that Mr. Nixon knew of the Watergate cover-up.

Since that time, Colson has been informed by special Watergate prosecutor Archibald Cox that he is under investigation in connection with the burglary in Los Angeles of the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist.

Senator Sam J. Ervin, Jr. (Dem-N.C.), the committee chairman, said that when questions were put to Colson, "he pleaded the Fifth Amendment, stating, however, that he was not guilty of any wrongdoing."

IMMUNITY

Ervin said Colson's lawyer then asked that his client be granted immunity from prosecution for his answers.

That request was rejected unanimously, Ervin said.

Ervin and vice chairman Howard H. Baker, Jr. (Rep-Tenn.), said Colson will not be called as a witness as long as he is a target of a grand jury investigation.

"His attorney indicated that, if the situation changes, he would not only be willing but anxious to return and testify freely," Baker said.

Baker said such a change in situation might occur if Colson were indicated.

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