

Cox Ex-Staff Seen Staying on the Job For Jaworski Probe

By William Claiborne
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The rumored mass resignations of fired Watergate Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox's aggressive task force has not only failed to materialize, but the likelihood of anyone quitting in conflict with Texas corporation attorney Leon Jaworski is becoming more remote as time passes, according to some staff members.

While the prosecuting force's lawyers are too politically savvy to indulge publicly in a mutual admiration exercise so soon after Jaworski's swearing-in as the new special prosecutor on Monday, many of them are expressing in private conversation a sense of relief over Cox's replacement.

"Things are unbelievably on the up," said one staff member. "People are pretty impressed by his attitude, and it looks at the end of four days that we're going to settle in without any changes."

For his part, Jaworski appeared to be equally impressed with the staff of 90 persons, including 37 attorneys, that he inherited from Cox, a Harvard College law professor. Some of the attorneys are regarded skeptically by the Nixon administration because they served under Democratic administrations or campaigned for Democratic candidates.

"I'm happily impressed," Jaworski, a conservative Democrat, said yesterday. "From what I know, they are more at ease than they have been. As far as their willingness to stay, I have heard nothing to the contrary."

Following 1½ hours of testimony before the House Judiciary Committee, during which he repeatedly affirmed his confidence in the staff, Jaworski was asked by a reporter if any of his prosecutors had spelled out to him the conditions under which they would quit, either en masse or individually.

Jaworski appeared startled by the question, and retorted, "No, no. I don't force anything like that. The staff and I have been working together a number of days."

A senior staff member confirmed Jaworski's version, saying, "This is a group of professionals who have worked as individuals. We've never reacted to anything collectively."

The attorney did say that the heads of the various Watergate task groups had asked Jaworski a number of pointed questions about his independence from the White House, and were satisfied, for the present, with the answers.

"From everything that I've seen, what he has said publicly he has done privately. He has shown every indication of complete independence," said a staff member who had been particularly close to Cox in the force's hierarchy.

Publicly, Jaworski has said that he received unqualified clearance from President Nixon — through White House staff chief Alexander M. Haig Jr. — to seek whatever evidence is needed to prosecute, including presidential papers and tape recordings.

"He's pressing on, which is all anybody here wanted to see," said a staff member. "There's an awful good chance everyone will stay. This is a disciplined group anyway, but now I think even more that they will stay on," he added.

If Jaworski comes under White House pressure to get rid of anyone it most likely would be directed at William H. Merrill, a Justice Department official in the

Kennedy and Johnson administrations who unsuccessfully ran for Congress as a Democrat in Michigan in 1966 and who was chairman for the Michigan Citizens for (Robert F.) Kennedy for President in 1968.

Merrill, who heads the "plumbers" investigation, is said to have incurred the wrath of the White House because of the aggressiveness of his lawyers.

Jaworski yesterday brushed aside a suggestion that Merrill would be dropped, saying he had reviewed the "plumbers" file and had no plans for changes in that investigation. "I have no present intention of changing anything in connection with Mr. Merrill," Jaworski said.

In response to a question, the new special prosecutor also said he had no plans of adding to his staff lawyers with whom he worked in Texas. "Some of them have asked about coming up here, but I have no plans like that," Jaworski said.

This kind of talk has touched off in a once-apprehensive staff a belief that the investigation and prosecution will proceed without an interruption, although neither Jaworski nor his assistants would offer even conjecture as to when indictments could be expected.

"In the last three weeks, we've had three bosses. But, dammit, we've had continuity. It looks like we'll continue to have continuity," said a high-ranking staff prosecutor.

Jaworski suggested in his House testimony that the process of indictments, trials and appeals could take as long as two years, although he added, "I'd like to think we could wind it up sooner than that."

Since the "Saturday night massacre" on Oct. 20, when Cox was ordered fired by Mr. Nixon and Elliot L. Richardson resigned as Attorney General, only three special prosecution force lawyers have resigned. The three had been working recently on a part-time consulting basis, spending only several days a month in Washington.

Jaworski appeared to take on a busy schedule immediately after arriving in Washington shortly before noon Monday.

Following an afternoon swearing-in ceremony, he met with the prosecuting staff and told them they could "dismiss rumors" that he planned staff changes. He then met with Deputy Special Prosecutor Henry S. Ruth Jr. and, later, took an armload of papers to his downtown hotel room.

Tuesday, he was briefed at length by the staffs of each of the six task forces, went to the FBI headquarters for identification fingerprinting, made a courtesy call on U.S. District Chief Judge John J. Sirica and met again with the investigating staffs.

Wednesday, he continued to meet with the staff and he questioned some prospective defendants and witnesses in one of the cases, a staff aide said. Yesterday, he spent most of the morning on Capitol Hill and later returned to Houston for the weekend.