

Ehrlichman Picks Frates of Miami As New Attorney

By John Field
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Former White House adviser John D. Ehrlichman has retained Miami lawyer William S. Frates as his defense counsel in the forthcoming Watergate cover-up trials.

Frates, a well-known Miami trial lawyer who is associated with the local bicentennial commission and has represented Nixon friend C. G. (Bebe) Rebozo, replaces Washington attorney John J. Wilson on Ehrlichman's defense team.

Ehrlichman decided to replace Wilson because of a potential conflict of interest with former White House chief of staff H. R. (Bob) Haldeman, who is also being represented by Wilson in the same case.

Wilson has insisted that no conflict of interest had come up, saying last month that "the sensitivity—I'll call it that—hasn't arisen yet, but when it does, you can be sure I'll be careful." But sources said the potential problems posed by Wilson's representation of the

two prominent Watergate defendants had been under discussion for some time.

Meanwhile, Newsweek magazine reports in this week's edition that Haldeman has also been considering replacing Wilson, concerned that he might not be "as effective in court," as another lawyer, according to insiders.

Wilson, however, said Saturday that he would continue to represent Haldeman, and yesterday said he expected to withdraw immediately from Ehrlichman's defense.

Both Ehrlichman and Haldeman were indicted by the Watergate grand jury last month for conspiring to block the government's investigation of the 1972 break-in and bugging of Democratic National Committee headquarters in the Watergate office complex here. Each was accused of five felonies, including obstruction of justice and perjury.

Ehrlichman has been charged with five other fed-

eral offenses stemming from the 1971 White House-sponsored break-in at the offices of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist in California. He also faces trial in Los Angeles next month on a state charge of perjury.

Joseph A. Ball, Ehrlichman's chief West Coast attorney, will continue to represent him in the Los Angeles case, while Frates is expected to take over all of the cases pending in U.S. District Court here.

Frates, senior partner in Frates, Floyd, Pearson, Stewart, Proenza & Richman, a major trial-practice firm in Miami, heads the Miami-area bicentennial committee.

A former member of Frates' firm, Peter T. Fay, was appointed U.S. District Court judge for the Southern District of Florida by President Nixon in 1970. Until his appointment, Fay had been counsel to Rebozo's Key Biscayne Bank.

Frates now reportedly handles much of Rebozo's legal work. Last November Frates signed the complaint as counsel in a \$10 million libel suit brought by Rebozo against The Washington Post.

Frates, 67, is a 1941 graduate of the University of Florida's law school, past president of the Miami Trial Lawyers Association and a member of the board of directors of the International Academy of Trial Lawyers.

Frates was not available for comment on the case, and Ehrlichman, who had been in Washington, D.C., last week, was not expected to return to his home in Seattle before Tuesday, his wife said.