

APR 11 1974

Defendants' Objections To Sirica

SFChronicle
Washington

Four of the defendants in the Watergate coverup case asked U.S. District Court yesterday to disqualify Judge John J. Sirica from conducting the trial because they said he has "generally displayed what can only be called a prosecutorial interest."

The motion asking for an evidentiary hearing in the matter said "Judge Sirica possesses, consciously or unconsciously, a deep-seated and unshakable personal bias in favor of the prosecution."

Sirica presided over the trial of two of the break-in defendants in January, 1973, and has been involved in such subsequent Watergate developments as the White House tapes case, the missing and erased portions of those tapes and in successfully urging some defendants to talk freely with various investigators.

The paper was filed by attorneys for former Attorney General John N. Mitchell and former White House aides John D. Ehrlichman and Charles W. Colson. A separate affidavit was filed by a fourth defendant, former White House aide Gordon Strachan.

The motion alleged that Sirica, who assigned himself the cast in his last days as chief judge of the court, "has a substantial personal interest in the case" because if a conspiracy can be established it "would be viewed as a vindication of his conduct in the 1973 Watergate trial."

The motion called attention to the vast publicity Sirica has received since the break-in trial a year ago, including being named Time magazine's man of the year and a party given for him by members of the press for his 70th birthday.

Associated Press