

A Coverup Trial Delay Of 3 Weeks

Washington

The Watergate coverup trial of some of former President Richard M. Nixon's chief lieutenants was postponed for three weeks yesterday to allow lawyers on both sides more time to prepare their cases.

U.S. District Judge John J. Sirica, at the suggestion of the U.S. Court of Appeals, said he was resetting the opening trial date from September 9 to September 30.

Less than two hours earlier the appeals court, while refusing to intervene in Sirica's earlier denial of the continuance, recommended that he give the lawyers three to four more weeks.

The appeals court ruling was not an order but a strong hint that any guilty verdicts in the case might be overruled on appeal if the defense lawyers complained they had been unable to prepare adequately for the trial.

"I have adopted the suggestion of the Court of Appeals and I have decided to continue the trial until September 30," Sirica said.

The appeals court, while appearing to sympathize with the need of more preparation time, seemed to reject a companion plea that the trial be delayed until next year because of Watergate publicity.

Andrew Hall, attorney for former White House chief domestic adviser John D. Ehrlichman, said he plans to appeal to the Supreme Court on the pretrial publicity question.

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