



AP Wirephoto

**HENRY E. PETERSEN**  
Justice Dept. aide

## Key Figure in Watergate Probe Quits

Washington

Henry E. Petersen, who directed the early Watergate investigation, is resigning as assistant attorney general.

Speaking with reporters after his resignation was announced at the White House yesterday, Petersen defended his decision to relay progress reports of the grand jury Watergate probe to former President Nixon.

"If you can't trust the President of the United States you are in trouble, that's all there is to it," he said. "I'm afraid that if I had to do it all over again, I would do it."

Petersen said the controversy affected his ability to work in the Justice Department.

"I feel that my credibility has been affected and I think that's terribly important in a job such as the assistant attorney general," he said.

Petersen, whose most recent assignment has been directing the criminal division, will retire December 31 after 27 years with the department.

White House press secretary Ron Nessen, who announced Petersen's decision, said no replacement has

been chosen.

Petersen, 53, said he has no specific plans for the future but, upon retirement, will "go home, sit down and weigh the offers."

He said he intended to continue to practice law and has no plans to write a book about Watergate.

Petersen said his decision to retire was affected by two factors.

Under the federal pay system, he said, he was earning only \$100 more per month than he would receive in benefits if he retires. Then, referring to the Watergate controversy, he said: "The events of the past couple of years have taken their toll. It's been a very wearing experience."

Petersen refused to comment on his relationship with President Nixon.

"He's an ill man and I'm not disposed to kick him while he's down," Petersen said.

He also supported President Ford's decision to pardon Mr. Nixon and said government leaders should be given the benefit of the doubt.

Attorney General William B. Saxbe praised Petersen's record and regretted his decision to resign.

"We feel a profound gratitude and admiration for his 27 years of dedicated, conscientious service," Saxbe said.

"He is more than any other man the architect of the federal government's highly effective enforcement program against organized crime — an effort that will benefit the nation for years to come," Saxbe said.

Petersen's resignation letter to Mr. Ford was dated Friday and was accepted Monday by Mr. Ford.

The President lauded Petersen for "a record of unique achievement."

Petersen was in charge of the Watergate investigation before the first special prosecutor was appointed in May, 1973. The White House Watergate transcripts released last spring showed that Petersen regularly informed Mr. Nixon about the grand jury proceedings.

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