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All Coverup

Challenges

Tossed Out

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U.S. District Judge John J. Sirica yesterday denied post-trial protests by the four convicted Watergate coverup defendants and said he will sentence them on Friday.

Sirica fixed the day of reckoning in a nine-page order that rejected all defense motions for a new trial and companion complaints on behalf of the four men — former White House aides H.R. Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman, former Attorney General John N. Mitchell and former assistant attorney general Robert C. Mardian.

All were convicted by a U.S. District Court jury here January 1 after a marathon 64-day trial for conspiring to obstruct justice in the Watergate scandal.

Each faces a maximum five-year prison term for conspiracy. Haldeman, Ehrlichman and Mitchell were also found guilty of obstructing justice and of lying under oath in various forums — with each of these counts carrying potential five-year terms that could be added on to the conspiracy sentence or run concurrently with it.

Sirica said he found no merit in any of the complaints, including Haldeman's and Ehrlichman's assertions that the trial should have been postponed or suspended until former President Nixon was healthy enough to testify.

"None of the defendants have shown that a new trial would be in the interest of justice," Sirica said.

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