

Watergate Special Prosecution Force Will Disband Next Month

NYTimes

MAY 26 1977

WASHINGTON, May 25 (UPI)—The Watergate special prosecution force announced today that it would cease operations next month after four years of dealing with the scandals that drove Richard M. Nixon from the White House and sent some of his top aides to jail.

Charles F. Ruff, the fourth man to serve as chief prosecutor, said that his final major case was concluded Monday when the Supreme Court refused to hear the appeals of John N. Mitchell, H. R. Halde- man and John D. Ehrlichman, convicted conspirators in the Watergate cover-up.

"Though some investigations and prosecutions remain," Mr. Ruff said in a statement, "the Attorney General and I have agreed that these responsibilities do not require the continued existence of this office."

"Accordingly, before the middle of June we will close the special prosecution force. All remaining matters will be referred to the Justice Department for disposition and the files will be placed in the National Archives."

Report to Be Published

Mr. Ruff said that he was preparing a final report on the office's operations for the 20 months since its last report was issued in October 1975. He said it would be published before the office closed.

The force, created May 25, 1973, has prosecuted an array of Nixon Administra- tion officials and others on cover-up charges, conspiracy and of making illegal campaign contributions.

One unfinished case involves Claude Wild, former Gulf Oil Company executive who is to be tried on charges of making an illegal \$2,500 campaign contribution. Mr. Ruff may be used as a "special consultant" in that case.

Mr. Ruff's last publicized action was his decision to investigate accusations of campaign law violations against Presi- dent Ford during the 1976 Presidential campaign, and his announcement clearing Mr. Ford of wrongdoing.

In 1973 the prosecution force became the center of a political storm when Mr. Nixon, seeking to dominate the Water- gate investigations, demanded that the Justice Department dismiss Archibald Cox, the first special prosecutor.

The dismissal touched off the resigna- tions of Attorney General Elliot L. Rich- ardson and his deputy, William Ruckel- shaus, who refused to carry out Mr. Nixon's order. Solicitor General Robert H. Bork then ordered the dismissal, say- ing that he wanted to avert total collapse of the Justice Department command, and became acting Attorney General.

Mr. Cox was followed in the job by

Leon Jaworski, Charles Ruth, then Mr. Ruff.

There have been proposals to make the office permanent in the event of any new scandal of Watergate proportions. Con- gress instead is considering a bill calling for a court-appointed temporary special prosecutor in such a case.