

Cut President's Security Role, Says Thompson

By GEORGE ZEPP
Tennessean Staff Correspondent

CLARKSVILLE — Defining matters of national security should no longer be left to the discretion of a president, Senate Watergate committee attorney Fred Thompson said here yesterday.

In remarks at an observance of Law Day on the Austin Peay State University campus, Thompson said the country is "really angered" by abuses of the national security classification made apparent by Watergate investigations in recent months.

"I THINK obviously... that in the future the president is not going to be the sole individual to determine what a matter of national security is," he said.

Thompson suggested the possibility of an executive and legislative committee to take on the task.

Asked about the coming report of the committee which he serves as minority counsel, the Nashville attorney said it will be mostly facts, with few conclusions. Otherwise, he said, the document would "give some defense lawyers very good grounds for dismissal or reversal" in Watergate-related prosecutions.

Thompson dodged a student's question regarding his opinion on the impeachment of President Nixon, but said later he "thought for a while last week" that the President might resign. He said he now takes Nixon's word that he will not.

IN HIS prepared address Thompson said Watergate has not shown America to be weak but rather "a little bit stronger than people have given us credit for."

"A hard thing to justify" was his label for recent statements by Gov. Winfield Dunn and Nashville Mayor Beverly Briley that Nixon should have destroyed the White House tapes.

Questioned by a newsman, Thompson said he thinks such a move would have been "a terrible mistake" on Nixon's part.