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Court Orders Bribery Probe In Hoffa Case

(Special to the States-Item)

NASHVILLE — A special grand jury has been ordered to probe charges that conspirators in three states offered bribes to witnesses, including Baton Rouge Teamsters head Edward Grady Partin, whose testimony helped send Teamsters boss James R. Hoffa to jail.

U.S. District Court Judges Frank Gray Jr. and William E. Miller ordered the investigation yesterday as a result of testimony by Walter Sheridan, a former Justice Department investigator.

PARTIN HAS SAID on several occasions he was offered \$1 million to change his testimony in the jury-tampering trial of Hoffa.

Sheridan, who was with the Justice Department when the late Sen. Robert F. Kennedy was attorney general, testified last month that efforts have been made to bribe Partin and Robert Vick, a former Nashville policeman.

Sheridan said he had been

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offered \$1 million to change statements he made while investigating the Hoffa case. Sheridan did much of the investigative work which led to Hoffa's 1964 jury-tampering conviction in Chattanooga.

HOFFA, WHO IS serving an eight-year term at the federal prison in Lewisburg, Pa., was found guilty of tampering with the jury which tried him on a conspiracy charge in Nashville in 1962. The first trial, in which Hoffa was accused of conspiring to divert union funds, ended with a deadlocked jury.

Judges Miller and Gray also ordered the U.S. attorney's office and other federal agencies to launch an investigation into statements made by Sheridan and Earl Wingo, a former official of Nashville Teamsters Local 327 who also testified against Hoffa.

SHERIDAN'S TESTIMONY

of a bribe offer came last month during a hearing on a motion to overturn the 3½-year prison sentence of Z. T. Osborn Jr., Hoffa's Nashville lawyer, who also was convicted of jury tampering.

Sheridan testified that since Hoffa's 1962 trial, there has been "a concerted, intensive effort to intimidate, bribe and corrupt government witnesses and others . . . which continues to this day."

He added: "They actually did bribe several government

witnesses in Chattanooga."

WINGO TESTIFIED James Harding, identified as a Washington associate of the Teamsters president, said Hoffa had authorized him to offer Vick \$25,000 if Vick would stipulate he was paid to testify.

Osborn lost his attempt to have his conviction overturned. U.S. District Court Judge Marion Boyd of Memphis said he found no evidence Vick had been paid for his testimony.

During the Osborn hearing, Sheridan said he once had been given \$3,000 by Stephen Smith, a brother-in-law of Kennedy, to lend to Vick. But the investigator said he returned the money to Smith after questioning the wisdom of such a loan.

Vick, whose testimony was credited with gaining the conviction of Osborn, said the Justice Department had given him money for expenses incurred in the investigation, but had paid him no fee.