STURGIS' EXCLUSIVE STORY: MARITA PRESSURED BY REDS

By STEVE DUNLEAVY

Watergate burglar Frank Sturgis says he believes that his former partner in spying, Marita Lorenz, has been pressured by Communist agents into accusing him of being involved in the Kennedy assassination.

Sturgis, 52, in an exclusive two-hour inetrview with The Post after being released on $10,000 bail from Rikers Island, on charges of threatening Mrs. Lorenz added to the intrigue of the cloak-and-dagger saga with some remarkable revelations.

"I feel in my heart she is not doing this as a person. I believe that Communist agents are putting pressure on her. There is something behind this mess. Somebody has told her to make those statements."

CODE KEYS

Sturgis said that less than one year ago, Miss Lorenz, 37, handed over to him documents revealing the keys to Communist country codes which she had obtained. He said he then turned the material over to Sen. Howard Baker's House Committee on Intelligence.

Sturgis thinks she is now afraid of reprisals by the communists and thus willing to do their bidding.

"As is my custom when I turn material over to the authorities, I get a receipt from the committee. I also handed over two hours of tape recordings which I made with Marita."

In the taped conversations — which he says are now with the Baker Committee —Miss Lorenz told Sturgis she had broken into a communist mission in New York, had dated a KGB agent who she named and was in mortal fear of her life.

"She said she was being blackmailed and threatened by a man . . . who she claimed had told her he was going to throw her out of her 18th story apartment window," said Sturgis.

PROTECTIVENESE

Strugis, a onetime comrade of Fidel Castro, said he had always felt protective of Miss Lorenz, the former mistress of Castro, over since he recruited her to assassinate the Cuban dictator.

"I flew to Washington and told Howard Liebengood who works for Senator Baker, that this woman was scared for her life and feared for the safety of her children and in her many trips to Washington to give evidence at the various committees, I even arranged for her to see Liebengood."

Puffing on a long, thin cigaret, Sturgis said he believed that Miss Lorenz regretted giving up the information — particularly the code documents—to the Senate Intelligence Committee. This is when Sturgis believes Communist agents could have got to her.

The first hint of Miss Lorenz betraying her long friendship with Sturgis came a little more than two weeks ago when she claimed that she, Sturgis, anti-Castroite Pedro Diaz Lanz, Lee Harvey Oswald and three other Cubans traveled by car from Miami to Dallas before the JFK assassination.

Sturgis has also been accused of being "the man on the grassy knoll" the day President Kennedy was shot.

QUIZZED 3 TIMES

Soon after the accusations, Sturgis was questioned three times by Gaeton Fonzi, Miami head of the Washington Assassination committee "I denied any link and suggested to Gaeton, who I know, that I should take a lie detector test or a sodium pentathol test."

Sturgis says Fonzi suggested that he called Miss Lorenz to ask what was behind her sudden accusation.

"I just told her I was calling to ask about the statements that I was involved in the assassination. At first she thought I would be mad at her. I told her I wasn't, said that it wasn't like her to say things like that and pointed out she had involved herself," said Sturgis.

He continued; 'She just told me: 'Frank I've been under a lot of pressure.'

When I probed her further she told me she could not talk over the telephone. I hung up and told Fonzi that she sounded scared and concerned."

Last Friday Sturgis called Marita again. This time he

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said he tape recorded the conversation.

"She told me that she was in turmoil and that a black Cadillac with two men in it had been parked outside her apartment. She then asked me to come up to New York because she couldn't discuss anything on the telephone. I told her I was low on cash, broke.

"She offered to send me money which I refused. Then she said she would send me a return ticket on Eastern.

"I left on Monday, flight 892 at eight o'clock in the morning arriving at 10:37 on a ticket prepared by her. I had arrange dto see her in the afternoon, but she didn't answer the ttelephone."

That afternoon Sturgis called columnist Jack Anderson and this reporter.

He met up with a friend, Frank Nelson, an anti-Castro agent who planned an abortive invasion of Cuba in 1959 launched from the Dominican Republic. They lunched, later had dinner and at 10:30 Sturgis called Marita again.

"This time she answered and she asked me to come over. I couldn't even remember the address," said Sturgiis.

"I went to apartment 18 E, knocked on the door and then rang the buzzer." That is when Sturgis says he got the shock of his life.

"The door opened and there were these two guys pointing cannons right at me. One I noticed was wearing a police badge. One said: 'Who are you?' I told them my name. One of them asked: 'Are you carrying a piece [gun]?' I told them 'no.'

"They brought me into the apartment Marita was nowhere to be seen. One covered me while the other one searched me, I emptied out my pockets, took off my jacket. They were very businesslike.

"I was bewildered. I asked them: 'What's going on?' One of them answered: 'I'll tell you what's going on. We have just saved your life. Marita's 15-year-old daughter bought shotgun to kill you.'"

Sturgis points out that, despite published reports that Miss Lorenz's daughter bought a pistol, the detective said "shotgun."

From the 23d Precinct where he was booked, Sturgis talked to Gaeton Fonzi in Miami, telling him that he had been booked for threatening Marita Lorenz.

"It all seemed impossible. I couldn't believe Marita would do a thing like this. We've always been great friends. I have never tried to keep her from talking to any committees. I have even encouraged her."

At Rikers Island, Sturgis said the prisoners treated him like "a mini-celebrity." He said: "I was still signing autographs when I left."

Sturgis acknowledges that he has been under suspicion of being "one of the three tramps" photographed at the scene of the Kennedy assassination.

"Myself and E. Howard Hount were supposed to be there. I have had to show investigators pictures of me at various times of my age to convince them that it wasn't me. The day the President was assassinated, I was in my home asleep. My mother-in-law, Mrs. Elizabeth Hunt, woke meup to tell me about it. Her son, James Hunt, a lawyer, was also there."

VOTED FOR JFK

Sturgis said he voted for President Kennedy but admittedly was turned off by him after the Bay of Pigs.

"But I actually arranged introducing the former president of Cuba, Carlos Prio, to President Kennedy at the Fountainbleau Hotel in Miami. I have shaken the President's hand. "I didn't necessarily agree with the politics of Henry Kissinger but I uncovered a plot that people intended to cause him bodily harm on a South American tour. That report was processed through Washington FBI agent Frank Gibbons."

Sturgis said that right now he is perfectly willing to take a lie detector test to show he had nothing to do with the Kennedy assassination or with threatening his former comrade in arms, Marita Lorenz.

Sturgis admitted that up until recently he had acted as a go-between for a group in Miami who were trying to get international recognition for a "Free Cuba in Exile" government.

ANGOLA ERRAND

"I have traveled to Angola and met people who are fighting against communism. People who need food and supplies."

Sturgis, who says he is still a dedicated anti-Communist, added, however: "On December 9, I will be 53. I think I will sit down and mind my own business. I'm tired of being accused of things.