Watergate Burglar Arrested on Charge of Coercion

By DAVID BIRD

Frank A. Sturgis, one of the five burglars caught in the Watergate break-in, has been arrested by the New York City police on charges of threatening a woman to prevent her from testifying before the House Committee on Assassinations.

Mr. Sturgis was arrested late Monday night at the apartment of Marita Lorenz, 512 East 88th Street, after she told the police that he had threatened her by telephone.

Mr. Sturgis, who had been living in Miami after serving his prison term for his part in the break-in at the Democratic national headquarters in Washington on June 17, 1972, was held here on charges of aggravated harassment and coercion for "instilling fear in the complainant to refrain from testifying before a legally constituted authority."

Although the police department's intelligence division, which arrested Mr. Sturgis, refused to elaborate officially on the charge, there were reports that Miss Lorenz had told committee investigators that Mr. Sturgis had links to Lee Harvey Oswald, identified by the Warren Commission as the man who killed President Kennedy.

Miss Lorenz reportedly said that she accompanied Mr. Oswald and Mr. Sturgis and others on a drive from Miami to Dallas on Nov. 19, 1963, three days before President Kennedy was assassinated there.

Both Miss Lorenz and Mr. St Urgis reportedly have strong ties with the anti-Castro forces based in Miami.

There was earlier speculation that linked Mr. Sturgis to the Kennedy assassination but it was discounted after investigation. In 1975, the Rockefeller Commission investigated charges that Mr. Sturgis might have been part of a group of anti-Castro Cubans employed by the Central Intelligence Agency to assassinate the President.

But the commission said that it had received no credible evidence that the agency had been involved or that Mr. Oswald was not the lone assassin.

Speculation Discounted

Sources close to the assassination committee have also discounted the current speculation about Mr. Sturgis.

Mr. Sturgis, who is 53 years old, is a former marine who fought alongside Fidel Castro but later broke with him because he felt that the Cuban leader was turning too much to the Communists.

Mr. Sturgis then became involved in the anti-Castro movement. He was recruited for the Watergate break-in, he said, when he was told that it was a mission that was essential to the nation's security.

Mr Sturgis pleaded guilty to the break-in in 1973 and was sentenced to a prison term of one to four years. He was released on Jan. 18, 1974.

Earlier this year, Mr. Sturgis and four others involved in the break-in agreed to an out-of-court settlement and former President Richard M. Nixon's 1972 campaign fund.

They hd sued the Committee for the Re-elction of the President and a number of its officers for $2 million, charging that they had been misled into believing they were acting with Government sanction raher than just on behalf of the relection campaign organization.

After the settlement the lawyer for Mr. Stugis and for three others caught in the break-in said: "We feel this proves we were right in saying the men were tricked into taking part in the break-in."

The four had charged that E. Howard Hunt Jr., a former C.I.A. aide who was also jailed for his involvement in Watergate, had led them to believe that the break-in was another C.I.A. operation like the ill-fated Bay of Pigs invasion, which attempted to overthrow the Castro Government.

C.B.S. News

Marita Lorenz

Associated Press

Frank Sturgis