Sturgis Charged In Threat, Held On $25,000 Bail

NEW YORK (UPI) — Convicted Watergate burglar Frank Sturgis has been charged with threatening a government witness who reportedly told a congressional committee she went with Sturgis and Lee Harvey Oswald to Dallas three days before President Kennedy's assassination.

Sturgis, 52, was arraigned in Manhattan Criminal Court last night on charges of attempted coercion and aggravated harassment of a government witness. Judge Milton Samorodin set bail at $25,000 and scheduled a hearing for Friday.

If convicted, Sturgis could be sentenced to a maximum of four years in prison.

STURGIS, A CUBAN with ties to the CIA and anti-Castro groups, was arrested shortly before midnight Monday on a complaint sworn out against him by Marita Lorenz, who reportedly was involved in a botched CIA plot to assassinate Fidel Castro.

In her complaint, Lorenz alleged that Sturgis "instilled in her a fear that she would be killed."

Police said Sturgis telephoned threats to Lorenz in an attempt to frighten her from testifying before the House Committee on Assassinations.

Assistant District Attorney Alan Broomer had asked for bail of $100,000, saying that Sturgis is a resident of Miami, has a previous felony conviction and there was a threat that he might flee.

Broomer said in the past eight months Sturgis had been in "many diverse places, including London and Paris, and he had the means of carrying out his threat" against Lorenz.

Sturgis gave his occupation as "New York lecturer," but Broomer said that occupation could not be verified at this time. He quoted Sturgis as saying, "I don't know," when he was asked the name of his agency.

Defense lawyer Ronald Goldfarb told the court that Sturgis has never missed a court appearance anywhere.

"There is no corroboration to the charges against him," Goldfarb said, adding that the charges were made by "someone who has a great deal to gain" by the publicity.

Another defense attorney, Henry Rothblatt, argued that the allegations against Sturgis were based "a hearsay statement by a psychotic woman who is interested only in selling her book."

Lorenz was Castro's lover in the 1950s and later allegedly was involved in a plot to poison the Cuban leader.

HOWEVER, SHE bungled the job when she put the poison in a jar of cold cream and it melted before it could be used to kill the Cuban president, congressional sources said.