hails from Veneto

Lorenz-Sturgis connect

By ERNEST VOLKMAN
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NEW YORK — On the surface it appeared to be a routine police complaint from a woman who claimed that she had been receiving telephone threats from a man.

But the two people involved were hardly ordinary citizens. The man, Frank Sturgis of Miami, Fla., had been convicted in the Watergate burglary. The woman, Marita Lorenz of Manhattan, had been mixed up in CIA plots to murder Cuban Premier Fidel Castro, according to intelligence sources.

The tangled connection between the pair, which stretches back for more than a decade, has aroused a great deal of interest among investigators. But one government law enforcement official said, "Frankly, it's a mess. We can't get it straightened out, and maybe we never will."

Sturgis was arrested Tuesday on Lorenz' sworn complaint, arraigned on a felony charge of harassment in State Supreme Court and held on $25,000 bail. Henry Rothblatt, Sturgis' attorney, denied the charge and said Sturgis had been summoned to New York by Lorenz.

Here, pieced together from intelligence sources, are some elements of the mystery surrounding the case:

The Sturgis-Lorenz Connection: Lorenz was Castro's lover in Cuba during the 1950s, and was recruited by Sturgis, then a high-ranking Castro aide, to spy for the CIA. According to intelligence sources, in 1959, when she was a secretary to Castro, she and Sturgis fled the island and went to Miami.

In 1961 she allegedly agreed to help out in a CIA-inspired plot to kill Castro. Armed with a jar of cold cream laced with poison, she returned to Cuba and became his lover again. Somehow, she was supposed to put the stuff on Castro. But the cream melted, and the plot was aborted. Lorenz fled back to Miami.

The Lorenz-Jiminez Connection: In 1962 Sturgis became part of a super-secret group within the Cuban exile community called "Operation 40." Trained by the CIA in assassination and other dirty tricks for use against Castro,

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the unit was run by CIA agent E. Howard Hunt.

Intelligence sources say Hunt ordered Sturgis to get Lorenz to become intimate with Marcos Perez Jiminez, exiled dictator of Venezuela, whom the CIA wanted to watch. Lorenz agreed and later had a daughter by Jiminez.

The Sturgis Mystery: Meanwhile, Sturgis became a powerful figure in the Cuban exile community and later joined Hunt's White House "plumbers" operation, which carried out the Watergate break-in in Washington in 1972. He pleaded guilty to Watergate-related charges in 1973, was sentenced to a one-to-four-year term and was released in 1974 following a reduction in his sentence. He returned to Miami and remained active in exile affairs.

The Lorenz Mystery: No one knows for sure if Sturgis kept up his connection with Lorenz, but about a month ago she approached the House committee investigating the assassination of John F. Kennedy and told them an incredible story, claiming that she, Sturgis, Lee Harvey Oswald and two Cuban exiles went to Dallas together shortly before Kennedy's assassination. Her testimony, in executive session, was supposed to be secret, but it leaked out.

For his part, Sturgis says that he had nothing to do with the Kennedy assassination and to the best of his knowledge never met Oswald.

Why Lorenz waited so long to tell her story is unclear. But the mystery extends further. Last July, when Sen. Richard Schweiker, R-Pa., was heading a special Senate investigation into the Kennedy assassination, one of his investigators talked to Lorenz. Shortly thereafter, she told Schweiker, an unidentified assailant broke into her Manhattan apartment and beat her up.

There are other unanswered questions. For one thing, Lorenz divides her time between a one-bedroom apartment and a more luxurious two-bedroom apartment, both in Manhattan.

City officials said that Lorenz is on welfare and receives biweekly checks at the address of the smaller apartment.