Arrested Watergate Burglar Accused of Firing at Kennedy

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Bulletin Wire Services

New York — Convicted Watergate burglar Frank Sturgis has been jailed on charges he threatened ex-spy Marita Lorenz. After Sturgis' arrest, Miss Lorenz allegedly told investigators that Sturgis shot at President John F. Kennedy in Dallas, the New York Daily News reported today.

The News said sources revealed that yesterday, Miss Lorenz broke down under questioning by Robert Blackie, the general counsel to the House Assassination Committee, maintained that she had "documentary and photographic" evidence to prove that Sturgis fired at Kennedy from the grassy knoll near the Texas School Book Depository.

Blackie could not be reached for comment. Sturgis is being held on $25,000 bond after being arraigned last night before Judge Milton Samordin, who scheduled a hearing for Friday. Prosecutors say Sturgis will be called before a grand jury.

One of five men convicted in the break-in at the Democratic National Headquarters in Washington June 17, 1972, Sturgis lived in Philadelphia from 1930, when he was five years old, to 1942, when he dropped out of Germantown High School.

He was arrested late Monday and accused of "instilling fear in the complainant (Miss Lorenz) to refrain from testifying before a legally constituted authority."

There were reports that Miss Lorenz had told committee investigators that Sturgis had links to Lee Harvey Oswald, identified by the Warren Commission as the lone gunman who killed President John F. Kennedy.

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

The woman claimed the members of the group were involved in Operation 40, a guerilla organization formed originally by the CIA in 1960 to prepare for the ill-fated invasion of Cuba. She said the group blamed Kennedy for the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion.

Sturgis has admitted he took part in Operation 40, but denied he made the trip to Dallas with Miss Lorenz. He also said that to the best of his knowledge he had never met Oswald, and said he had nothing to do with the Kennedy assassination.

Police sources said Sturgis' arrest followed the seizure of Miss Lorenz' 15-year-old daughter on charges of carrying a pistol. The girl was quoted as saying she had armed herself to protect her mother against Sturgis.

Both Miss Lorenz and Sturgis reportedly have strong ties with Miami-based forces opposed to Cuban President Fidel Castro. In 1975, the Rockefeller Commission investigated charges that Sturgis might have been part of a group of anti-Castro Cubans employed by the CIA to assassinate Kennedy.

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

In court last night, defense attorney Henry Rothblatt said Miss Lorenz was writing a book and he charged that the case stemmed from "a psychotic woman who is interested in only one thing — selling her book."

"I don't know what this is all about," Sturgis was quoted as saying by his lawyer. "She told me she wanted to see me. She paid my fare up here (to Manhattan) and the next thing I know I was being arrested."

Miss Lorenz claims to have been the one-time lover of Castro, and to have been recruited by Sturgis to kill the Cuban dictator with poison pills.

She claims that her attempt failed when the pills — reportedly given to her by Sturgis — melted in a jar of cold cream, where she was attempting to conceal them. She said Sturgis then helped her flee Cuba.

Sturgis, 53, a former Marine who served as Castro's air force security chief, later broke with Castro — along with Miss Lorenz — because he felt that the Cuban leader was turning too much to the Communists.

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.

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

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

They had sued the Committee for the Reelection 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 rather than on behalf of the campaign organization.