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Tale of tape: Sturgis is supported

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NEW YORK — Marita Lorenz, a former CIA agent, told Watergate burglar Frank Sturgis that she would retract her charges that he was involved in the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, according to a tape recording that Sturgis says he made of a telephone conversation between them.

The tape, played for The Inquirer yesterday by Sturgis' wife, Janet, from her home in Miami, seemed to back up Sturgis' claim that Miss Lorenz had invited him to visit her in New York.

Sturgis was arrested at Miss Lorenz' apartment Monday night and charged with harassment and coercion. Police here said that Sturgis was trying to frighten Miss Lorenz, who claims to have been Cuban Premier Fidel Castro's mistress, to prevent her from giving information to investigators for the House Select Committee on Assassinations.

Sturgis, free on $10,000 bail after two nights in jail, repeated his claims of innocence yesterday during a jammed news conference at the office of his lawyer.

But unlike his lawyer, who had labeled Miss Lorenz a "psychotic" during court arguments Tuesday night, Sturgis maintained yesterday that Miss Lorenz made her allegations because of threats and pressure from "agents."

He said he was unable to name the agents or governments responsible for pressuring Miss Lorenz. "But she

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was receiving a great deal of pressure," he said. "She was paranoid about certain pressure she is getting at this time."

Sturgis broadly hinted that Miss Lorenz was still involved in clandestine activities for the CIA, FBI, and possibly other governments.

The tape of his conversation with Miss Lorenz indicates that she believed her life was in danger last week.

"I'm sorry this whole (thing) happened," she said to Sturgis in a telephone conversation, which was sprinkled with obscenities. "I got in over my head and I got nothing for it but threats."

According to the tape, Miss Lorenz also promised Sturgis that she would recant her testimony that she, Sturgis, Lee Harvey Oswald and four anti-Castro Cubans traveled from Miami to Dallas on Nov. 19, 1963, only three days before Kennedy's assassination.

"I'm going to straighten it out," she told Sturgis, according to the tape. "I'm going to retract this (thing)."

The tape also indicated clearly that Miss Lorenz invited Sturgis to visit her and offered to pay his air fare.

As it turned out, Sturgis never met Miss Lorenz in New York, because he was arrested as he entered her East Side Manhattan apartment.

"Oh, yeah, she says come over," Sturgis recalled yesterday. "So I go in, ring the bell, the door swings open and I walk in and find two cannons in my face."

The "cannons" belonged to New York City detectives. Sturgis faces a preliminary hearing on the charges today.

He said that yesterday that he would take a lie-detector test at his own expense to prove that the charges were groundless.

Last night, Miss Lorenz refused to explain her charges against Sturgis and complained in a brief interview:

"You can't help me now. I'm a walking dead person already . . . the press isn't going to keep me alive."

Miss Lorenz also refused to talk about her current or previous spy activities.

"Don't talk to me about foreign countries," she said. "You know this country (dumped) on me and that's it."

Miss Lorenz lives in an apartment in a luxury tower, but reportedly receives welfare assistance. She refused to explain who paid the rent, which exceeds $1,000 a month, for the tower apartment.

Frank Sturgis
. . . free on bail

Sturgis said he recruited Miss Lorenz as a CIA informant while she was Castro's mistress in 1959. She said he later sent her to poison Castro.

Sturgis said the two were friends until Miss Lorenz pressed her legal complaint against him Monday.

The tape-recorded conversation appeared to bear out Sturgis. Miss Lorenz addressed him with various forms of endearment and sympathized in a heartfelt manner as Sturgis complained of an ingrown toenail.

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