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Hunt to Get Parole If He Pays a Fine

Associated Press

Convicted Watergate conspirator E. Howard Hunt will be released from prison Feb. 25 if he pays a \$10,000 fine pending against him, the U.S. Parole Commission announced yesterday.

The commission granted Hunt's petition for parole from a prison term of 30 months to eight years for his role in planning the June, 1972, break-in at Democratic National headquarters in the Watergate office building.

But the commission approved the parole on the condition that Hunt pay the fine or make other arrangements to dispose of it.

Justice Department spokesman Dean St. Dennis said if Hunt is unable to pay the fine, he could file a financial statement with a federal prosecutor who would refer it to the court. Under this procedure, a federal judge could decide whether to reduce the fine, eliminate it or adopt some arrangement requiring payment by installment.

In Miami, Hunt's attorney, Ellis Rubin, said payment of the fine will be a problem for

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Hunt, "but it will be made." He said Hunt did not have much money but the \$10,000 will be found somewhere. He said Hunt would return to Miami after his release.

Rubin described Hunt as thrilled at the thought of being released. "He wishes to express his gratitude at those who helped him gain his release," Rubin said.

Hunt, 58, has been serving his sentence at the federal prison camp at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida.

He has spent about 2½ years behind bars since he pleaded guilty, Jan. 11, 1973, to charges stemming from the break-in.

He later sought to withdraw the guilty plea, but was unsuccessful.

He was released from prison for about a year while appealing the judge's refusal to let him change his plea.

When the appeal was turned down, he was returned to jail.

The commission made its decision in a private session Tuesday but delayed the announcement for a day so Hunt could be notified first.

The ex-CIA agent became eligible for parole on Jan. 10. The case was considered by some of the commission members last December, but they chose not to make a decision until the full panel could be convened.

In other action, the commission ordered a new hearing on convicted swindler Billy Sol Estes' petition for release from parole supervision.

Estes, 51, was paroled in 1971 from a 15-year sentence stemming from a multimillion-dollar mortgage fraud.

A Texan, he has been under supervised parole for five years and now seeks an end to that supervision.