

Miami Burglars Of Watergate To Get \$200,000

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The four Miami burglars recruited for the original Watergate burglary and arrested inside the Democratic offices here will be paid \$200,000 by attorneys for former President Richard Nixon's 1972 campaign fund to settle a civil lawsuit, their attorneys announced yesterday.

The four men—Bernard L. Barker, Eugenio Martinez, Virgilio Gonzalez and Frank Sturgis—had claimed in their suit that they were tricked into participating in the burglary by officials of the 1972 Committee to Re-Elect the President. Although not admitting any liability in the settlement, the 1972 Campaign Liquidation Trust that now handles the committee's affairs agreed to make the \$200,000 payment rather than go to trial on the civil charges.

Often referred to as the "foot soldiers" of Watergate, the four men have testified that they believed they were working for a national security agency when they were recruited for the June 19, 1972, break-in at the Democratic National Committee headquarters here.

Each of them served about a year in prison as a result of their guilty pleas before U.S. District Judge John J. Sirica in January, 1973.

All four said they had participated in CIA operations against the Castro government in Cuba, including the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion. Three of them said they were recruited by former White House aide E. Howard Hunt for the 1971 break-in by the White House plumbers of the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist in Beverly Hills, Calif.

Hunt later recruited all four for help in the Watergate burglary, they said.

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Daniel Schultz and Melinda Murray, the attorneys for the Miami burglars, said they felt the four men could "have proved our case in court."

"The only drawback is that people will never know the full story of the Cubans," Schultz said. "For people to really grasp the full reason they believed what they did you have to see the CIA records."

Many of those records are still classified secret. However, in the event of a trial the records probably would have been made public.

Two of the Miami burglars who were indicted for the Ellsberg break-in testified that they thought they were taking part in a legitimate government operation. That argument was rejected by the jury that convicted them, but an appeals court overturned the conviction and ordered a new trial.

Rather than retrying Martinez and Barker in that case, the Watergate special prosecutor's office dismissed charges against them.

The civil suit filed by the four men sought \$2 million in damages, mainly from the former officials of the 1972 Nixon election campaign.

The list of defendants in the case read like a Who's Who of the Watergate scandals that drove Nixon from

office. They included former Attorney General John N. Mitchell, former Commerce Secretary Maurice Stans, and former White House and campaign aides G. Gordon Liddy and Jeb Stuart Magruder.

In settling the case, attorneys for the Miami burglars agreed to drop their claims against the individual defendants. The Campaign Liquidation Trust showed a balance of \$1.2 million in its last filing with the Federal Election Commission.

Much of the \$50,000 awarded to each of the four defendants is expected to go to outstanding legal bills.

"I do not have too much emotion left to say 'let's go celebrate, hurrah,' after this long ordeal," Martinez told a reporter from the Associated Press. "But I feel good. The money settlement is secondary. The importance is a moral victory."

Barker is employed now as a sanitation inspector for the city of Miami. Martinez and Sturgis are salesmen in the Miami area, and Gonzalez is a lock and safe specialist there.

The four men have asked President Carter for pardons, and their attorneys said they felt the settlement would advance that request.

"We believe that the men have been a victim of a fraud and that they were not criminals," Schultz said. "They did not have any criminal motives and they went to jail because somebody has misled them. They've served their time and now they want their records clear."

The trial of the civil suit was scheduled to begin Thursday before U.S. District Judge Charles R. Richey. One of the witnesses was scheduled to be Hunt, who is to be released on parole this week.

When Hunt is released, Liddy will be the only one of the original Watergate defendants still in jail. Also in prison is former White House aide John D. Ehrlichman, who was convicted in the subsequent Watergate cover-up trial.