

Jet crash 5/25/13 probe calls CON Skolnick

By Phillip J. O'Connor

The National Transportation Safety Board, at the urging of United Air Lines, will give Sherman Skolnick the opportunity to tell what he knows about a United jetliner crash here last Dec. 8.

The board, at a meeting Thursday in Washington, directed its investigators to try to confer with Skolnick and obtain any evidence he may have on the crash.

Skolnick has repeatedly charged that the Central Intelligence Agency sabotaged the jet to kill four persons aboard, including the wife of E. Howard Hunt, convicted Watergate bugging figure.

Forty-three persons aboard the jet, including Mrs. Hunt, were killed in the crash near Midway Airport, along with 2 other persons on the ground.

"I DON'T know what form the meeting with Skolnick will take, or even if he will agree to meet with our people," said Edward E. Slattery Jr., a spokesman for the NTSB.

Slattery said that often such statements are given at public deposition hearings, which are open to the press. Slattery said the board has subpoena power.

E. O. Fennell, United secretary and senior vice president-law, made the request that the board hear Skolnick in a letter to the NTSB.

Fennell said Skolnick has repeatedly espoused in the news media theories "which not only appear unfounded, but which are not substantiated, or are directly refuted, by the actual evidence developed during the continuing investigation of the accident."

SKOLNICK'S statements have "no factual basis" and he has made no attempt to support his position "other than rhetoric," Fennell added.

United has been reluctant to respond to Skolnick's charges because the board has not issued its formal report on the crash, Fennell said, adding:

"Therefore, United requests that the board grant Mr. Skolnick the opportunity to present to it any evidence, which might be of aid in determining the cause of the accident or, in the alternative, require Mr. Skolnick to present any such evidence."

In March, the NTSB held a week of public hearings in Chicago on the crash.

AMONG MRS. Hunt's effects were found 100 new \$100 bills bound with a rubber band.

James W. McCord Jr., one of seven men convicted in the Watergate scandal, told federal investigators Mrs. Hunt was a courier of payoffs to Watergate defendants in return for their silence.