

United Air Lines weighing lawsuit

By Larry S. Finley

United Air Lines officials are considering taking legal action against Chicago legal researcher Sherman Skolnick because of his repeated charges that murder, sabotage and robbery were involved in the Dec. 8 crash of a United Air Lines plane. The crash near Midway Airport killed Watergate figure Mrs. Dorothy Hunt and 41 others.

Skolnick testified under oath before the National Transportation Safety Board that officials of United Air Lines played a part in covering up sabotage of the United jet in order to silence persons connected with the Watergate scandal and other alleged political corruption in the Nixon administration.

Richard Street, general counsel for United Air Lines, said Thursday that he would now begin studying the transcripts of the NTSB hearing

to see if any legal action is required."

IN THE belongings of the wife of convicted Watergate conspirator E. Howard Hunt, investigators found \$10,000 in \$100 bills, which has been linked to an alleged Watergate cover-up.

Skolnick contends that the crash was a conspiracy and that nearly \$2 million and incriminating documents were in Mrs. Hunt's possession.

Because of the publicity, United requested the special hearing, which began Wednesday. Other NTSB hearings were held in February and March at which Skolnick was not allowed to testify.

For two days, Street listened as Skolnick told of an elaborate crash plot involving United Air Lines, the FBI, the CIA, the FAA, Columbia Broadcasting System and the Justice department, only to name a few.

THURSDAY, Street tossed question after question at Skolnick designed to pin down his volatile charges and to pave the way for possible legal action.

"It is your position that United Air Lines participated in the sabotage and murder of its passengers and the destruction of its own aircraft?" Street asked.

Skolnick said that unnamed officials of United were "accomplices" in covering up crash details and confiscated part of the alleged \$2 million.

Street continued pressing, trying to entice Skolnick into making charges against specific United officials, including United president Edward Carlson.

Finally, Skolnick named Dwight Chapin, President Nixon's former speechwriter, as being involved. Several weeks after the Midway crash, Chapin was hired by UAL for an

executive job that Skolnick said was a payoff.

"Are you accusing Mr. Chapin of being an accomplice to a murder?" Street pressed on.

"Yes, by way of the cover-up," Skolnick said.

JOINING IN the heated verbal attack on Skolnick was United Capt. John R.

McDonald, spokesman for the Air Lines Pilot's Assn., who pointed out a long list of alleged technical errors in Skolnick's story.

Capt. McDonald and Skolnick continued their fight during a recess.

"Why aren't you sticking up for those pilots (in the crash)?" Skolnick said.

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against Skolnick

"I'm just trying to educate you, Mr. Skolnick," McDonald said.

AMONG SKOLNICK'S witnesses were Alex Bottos and Joseph Zale, who both said they had seen part of the foot they believed to have belonged to Mrs. Hunt. Bottos said he also saw documents linking

former Atty. Gen. John Mitchell with a bribery scandal.

Jean-Pierre Gullmant, former public relations director for the late Rep. George Collins (D-Ill.), testified that CBS reporter Michelle Clark had asked to talk to Collins about the Watergate case. Both Miss Clark and Collins were killed in the Midway crash.