

Judge Orders Affidavits On Bid to Change Pleas

U.S. District Chief Judge John J. Sirica has ordered five Watergate defendants to file detailed affidavits to support their request to change their guilty pleas to innocent.

The affidavits, in which the men are ordered to spell out the reasons they should be allowed to withdraw their initial pleas, are due later this week.

Co-conspirator E. Howard Hunt asked permission last week to change his plea because he thought the break-in into Democratic National Headquarters was lawful and performed with White House approval, and that

even if it wasn't legal, he thought it was.

Hunt asked as well that charges be dropped against him.

Four Miamians—Frank Sturgis, Bernard L. Barker, Eugenio R. Martinez and Virgilio Gonzalez — had asked that they be allowed to change their guilty pleas to innocent because they contend they were coerced into pleading guilty.

In an initial response to the requests by the five defendants, Special Watergate Prosecutor Archibald Cox had suggested that the men file affidavits such as the ones ordered by Sirica.