

Watergate Break-In Figure Retracts Guilty Plea

By Timothy S. Robinson
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Watergate defendant Frank Sturgis has said that he participated in the break-in at Democratic National Headquarters and pleaded guilty to that burglary because it was "secretly sponsored by a government intelligence agency."

The circumstances that led to that belief were spelled out by Sturgis in a six-page affidavit filed in U.S. District Court Tuesday in support of his attempts to change his guilty plea to innocent.

Martinez, Barker and Virgilio Gonzalez were scheduled to file their affidavits yesterday, but the documents were refused at the court because they were not notarized. Officials said they probably would be filed to-day.

In the affidavit, Sturgis told how he was recruited for the operation by codefendant Bernard L. Barker, and followed the directions of Barker, and codefendants E. Howard Hunt Jr. and James W. McCord at various stages of the Watergate scandal before, during and after his arrest.

Sturgis said he had known Barker since the Bay of Pigs invasion and knew Hunt was connected with that invasion, but had not met Hunt until 1972.

"Either in early 1972 or late 1971, Mr. Barker told me he was 'operational again,'" and was working with Hunt, Sturgis said.

"Mr. Barker told me that he was anticipating that there would be renewed efforts with respect to the liberation of Cuba and I recall one occasion at which I was present in Mr. Barker's office when he made a telephone call to the White House," he continued.

Sturgis told how he informed Mr. Barker about a recently exiled Cuban who had worked with the Castro family, and told him she might have information that would be interesting to the U.S. Barker allegedly then arranged a meeting between the woman and a person that he claimed was a U.S. government official.

"The actual operations I participated in at the request of Mr. Barker consisted of attending the demonstration in connection with the funeral services of (FBI director) J. Edgar Hoover and the two entries at the Watergate Democratic Headquarters," Sturgis said.

Before that Hoover demonstration, Sturgis claims, Barker asked him if he would assist in some operations that "involved national security." No details were given, but Barker said that Sturgis' participation would have to be "cleared" with someone else.

"At some later point, Mr. Barker advised me that I had been cleared," Sturgis said.

It was around this time that Sturgis claimed he learned of the participation in these events of Eugenio

R. Martinez, whose participation bolstered his beliefs that the covert operation may be a Central Intelligence Agency plan.

"It was my belief based upon my own observations during the years following the Bay of Pigs invasion that Mr. Martinez was working for and being directly financed by the Central Intelligence Agency as opposed to my own situation which involved the agency's knowledge and approval of my operations and their indirect financing of them," Sturgis said in his affidavit.

Sturgis said he was told by Barker that he was needed at the Hoover funeral because demonstrators were planning to desecrate Mr. Hoover's casket, and that he should "offer resistance if such an attempt was made."

His arrest after a scuffle with a demonstrator and his subsequent release indicated the plan was government approved, he said.

Sturgis admitted in the affidavit that he had the "assigned role . . . of look-out" at the Watergate break-in. He said he knew nothing about the purpose of the break-in other than claims by participants that they were attempting to find and photograph documents that "pertained to Cuban communist money going into the Democratic campaign."

Upon their arrest, McCord assumed the role of their leader and ordered them not to talk. "Particularly," Stur-

gis said, "he instructed us not to say anything to any agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation."

He said the subsequent appearance of attorneys who did not request fees and periodic payments to him by Barker indicated the operation was still covert.

The guilty plea of Hunt confirmed his belief that the operation was government-approved, Sturgis said.

"I accepted his decision to plead guilty as part of a plan and believed that we were to follow suit," he said. Meanwhile Tuesday,

Watergate Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox opposed attempts by Hunt and the four Miami defendants in the Watergate case to be released on bond pending final sentencing.

"Each defendant . . . has a prior history that indicates the repeated use of aliases, false identifications and false documents," Cox said in papers filed here. "The defendants would continue to have access to such phony credentials or could obtain new ones, thereby 'increasing immeasurably the risk of flight,'" he said.