

West Sider Is Accused of Paying a Man \$1,000 to Kill the President

By ARNOLD H. LUBASCH

A 27-year-old Manhattan man was arrested in Central Park yesterday after he allegedly paid \$1,000 to an undercover agent to kill President Nixon.

The suspect was identified as Andrew B. Topping of 411 West End Avenue, who said that he was self-employed in the investment field and that he could provide for bail as high as \$100,000.

Mr. Topping was held in lieu of \$500,000 bail after a hearing in Federal Court here on charges of threatening the life of the President and paying someone to carry out an assassination attempt.

The charges were presented at the bail hearing by William B. Gray, an assistant United States attorney, who said a Secret Service investigation began about a week after Mr.

Topping told an unidentified Government agency that he wanted to see the President.

A friend of Mr. Topping, John W. Sweeney, then went to the Secret Service to report that the suspect had asked him to help find someone who could assassinate President Nixon, according to Mr. Gray.

As a result of this information, he continued, a special agent of the Secret Service posed as a hired assassin when he went to a midtown meeting Thursday night with Mr. Topping and the friend.

They met again yesterday afternoon near the boathouse in Central Park, where Mr. Topping was alleged to have paid the agent \$1,000 to attempt the assassination next week, Mr. Gray said in his description of the arrest.

"We don't know very much about the personal life of this defendant," Mr. Gray noted in his account to Magistrate Martin D. Jacobs at the bail hearing.

"He appears to be a young man of substantial means," the Federal prosecutor added, "and he's obviously well dressed."

Wears Combat Boots

Mr. Topping, a medium-sized man with wavy brown hair, wore a heavy-weight olive plaid suit, vest and tie, with black Army-style combat boots showing beneath his trouser cuffs.

As the charges against him were outlined, he listened without displaying any emotion and answered a few questions in a firm voice, although his face seemed strained.

Larry Greenberg, a legal aid lawyer representing him at the

hearing, said that Mr. Topping had told him that he lived in the West End Avenue apartment with his mother, Sophie, and his 5-year-old son.

Mr. Gray interjected that the defendant's wife had died recently "under mysterious circumstances" and that the police had arrested him afterward on a charge of possessing weapons.

A police spokesman said later that Mr. Topping's wife, Abigail, committed suicide on July 6, two days after returning from the hospital with a newborn baby, and that the defendant had been charged with possessing four handguns and a rifle with a telescopic sight. The police said he had not had permits for the weapons.