

Three Watergate Burglars Are Granted Parole by U.S.

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Three of the original Watergate conspirators, who have been in jail for almost a year, were granted paroles by the United States Parole Board yesterday effective March 7.

The three men — Frank A. Sturgis, Eugenio R. Martinez and Virgilio R. Gonzalez — all of whom were captured inside the Democratic National Committee's Watergate headquarters with two other men on June 17, 1972, are the first of the seven original Watergate conspirators to have been granted parole.

They were sentenced to prison terms of one to four years last Nov. 9 by Chief U.S. District Judge John J. Sirica, with credit given for time already served.

The three men and Bernard L. Barker, all of whom are from Miami, pleaded guilty to charges of conspiracy, burglary, illegal wiretapping and eavesdropping on Jan. 15, 1973, after firing their lawyer, Henry Rothblatt, for refusing to change their plea from innocent to guilty.

Barker, who recruited the other three men, received a sentence of 18 months to six years from Sirica. Barker was freed on personal bond last Friday by the U.S. Court of Appeals here pending the outcome of his appeal, which seeks to withdraw his guilty plea. Sturgis, Gonzalez and Martinez, who also have filed similar appeals, have been in jail since Jan. 15.

Besides these four men, often referred to as the "men from Miami," two more of the original seven Watergate defendants are free on bond pending the outcome of their appeals. They are E. Howard Hunt Jr., who was sentenced by Sirica to 30 months to eight years and fined \$10,000 after he pleaded guilty last January, and James W. McCord Jr., who was convicted on charges of conspiracy, burglary, illegal wiretapping and eavesdropping along with G. Gordon Liddy after a four-week trial.

Liddy is still in prison, serving a sentence of six years and eight months to 20 years in addition to a \$40,000 fine.

Sturgis, Gonzalez and Martinez, who are being held at a federal prison camp at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., are scheduled to be released on March 7. After that, they will be required to observe normal parole conditions, including reporting to a parole officer once a month in Miami, according to a Justice Department spokesman. The period of their parole extends until January, 1976.

Although Sturgis, Gonzalez and Martinez were interviewed by the Senate select Watergate committee in private session, none of them has told his story publicly. The committee relied on the testimony of Barker to explain their role in the Watergate break-in. Chief committee counsel Samuel

Dash said yesterday that the three men had cooperated with the committee in answering questions.

At the time they pleaded guilty last January, none of the four men from Miami provided any details about their involvement in the Watergate break-in despite an attempt by Sirica to elicit information from them.

During his public testimony before the committee on May 24, Barker insisted that no pressure had been exerted on the four Miami men to induce their guilty pleas. Barker said that he had participated in the Watergate break-in and recruited the others at the request of Hunt, with whom Barker had worked during the 1961 Bay of Pigs operation. Barker testified that the four men believed that their participation would aid the cause of Cuban "liberation."

Sturgis, 49, was born in

Norfolk, Va., and is a soldier of fortune who has been associated with the CIA and has participated in activities hostile to the government of Cuban Premier Fidel Castro. Sturgis faces federal charges in Florida of burglary and illegally transporting stolen cars across the Mexican border. He has pleaded innocent to the charges.

Gonzalez, 47, was employed as a locksmith in Miami before his arrest in connection with the Watergate break-in.

Martinez, 51, who was on the CIA payroll as an informant at the time of the break-in according to testimony before the committee, was associated with Barker as a real estate agent in Miami. Martinez, according to Barker's testimony, also participated in the September, 1971, break-in at the offices of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist in Los Angeles.