

WXPost DEC 7 1973

Early Parole Bid Dies for Watergate 4

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The possibility that three of the original Watergate defendants could be out of jail before Christmas apparently no longer exists.

The reason for the delay is the notoriety of their case, which puts it in a special category of the U.S. Parole Board.

Frank Sturgis, Virgilio Gonzalez and Eugenio Martinez have all become eligible for parole this month after serving one year of sentences of one-to-four years imposed by U.S. Chief District Judge John J. Sirica. They had entered guilty pleas in the break-in of the Democratic National Headquarters office at Watergate in June, 1972.

Maurice Sigler, head of the parole board, said yesterday in a telephone interview that a hearing had been conducted by a parole examiner in Eglin, Fla., where the men have been confined since their sentence last month. They had been jailed under conditional sentences for 10 months pending that final sentence.

However, since the Watergate case is a "public interest" case, the full parole board will have to hold a hearing on whether the men will be released.

The next such hearing is scheduled for Jan. 7, and another is scheduled later that month, Sigler said.

Sigler said a public-interest case is defined by the parole board as one involving national security, organized crime, major violence, long-term sentences and other cases of national interest.

Daniel Schultz, attorney for the three men, said their families were disappointed they would not be home for Christmas. "They will celebrate Christmas late," Schultz added.

Schultz is also attorney for Bernard L. Barker, who also pleaded guilty to the break-in but is not eligible for parole until next summer.

Coconspirator E. Howard Hunt, who also entered a guilty plea, is eligible for parole in 1975.

James W. McCord, who was convicted after a month-long trial, was sentenced to a term of one to five years, and has been free pending appeal. G. Gordon Liddy, who also was convicted in the case, is serving a minimum of six years and eight months in jail.