

Minutemen's Leader Is Sentenced to Four Years

DePugh and Two Top Aides Jailed on Arms Charge

By DONALD JANSON
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KANSAS CITY, Mo., Jan. 17 — Robert Bolivar DePugh, national coordinator of the right-wing Minutemen organization, and two of his top lieutenants were sentenced to prison today on charges of violating the Federal Firearms Act.

United States District Judge Elmo B. Hunter sentenced the 43-year-old leader of the underground group to a term of four years to be followed by five years' probation.

Troy Houghton, 33, of San Diego, the West Coast coordinator, was sentenced to three years in prison. Walter P. Peyton, 24, who lives with DePugh at Norborne, Mo., received two years in jail and three on probation.

All were convicted here on Nov. 14 of conspiracy to violate the firearms act after a cache of machine guns was seized in rural Missouri. DePugh, a manufacturer of veterinary medicine in Norborne, and Peyton also were convicted of possession of unregistered automatic weapons or silencers and failure to pay Federal taxes on them.

Tax Is Required

The act was passed 30 years ago to control the sale of such weapons. It requires payment of a registration and ownership transfer tax.

The Minutemen is an eight-year-old super patriotic paramilitary group organized in small bands throughout the country to oppose Communism. Memberships are secret.

The group's literature asserts that a Communist takeover of the United States can be expected soon. The Minutemen train with small arms to resist it and to fight rear-guard actions with guerrilla tactics after it occurs.

DePugh acknowledged in the most recent Minutemen monthly bulletin last month that 16 men indicted in New York on Dec. 14 were Minutemen. They were accused of a plot to burn and blow up three camps the group considered leftist-oriented.

In that case, authorities said they had confiscated more than a ton of machine guns, rifles, mortars, grenade launchers and ammunition in raids Oct. 30.



United Press International Telephoto
Robert Bolivar DePugh as he left the courthouse.

Convicted After Seizure of Cache of Machine Guns

heads the new Patriotic party, political arm of the Minutemen.

Judge Hunter said before pronouncing sentence that "no one was on trial because of any political philosophy or personal or economic beliefs; no one has contended it is unlawful or wrong to be either a conservative or a liberal."

"The sole question," he said, "was did these men by their personal conduct violate specific valid Federal criminal statutes as charged."

United States Attorney Russell Millen said the trio had acquired "a variety of deadly armaments . . . designed for one purpose — to murder humanity."

During their period of probation, Judge Hunter ordered, the convicted Minutemen may belong to no organization using weapons illegally. Should they belong to any military type of organization at all, he said, they must tell their probation officer about it and provide him with the names of its officers. The judge did not say whether he was alluding to membership in the Minutemen organization itself.

The bulletin called the camps, in Connecticut, New Jersey and New York, Communist and pacifist training grounds. Fifteen pleaded not guilty and their cases were continued to Feb. 6.

Conspiracy Charged

After the sentencing today, DePugh said the trial was the result of "a massive effort by Government agents who were politically inspired to convict us by any means necessary."

He said a "liberal-Communist-Socialist" conspiracy controlled the United States Government today, prompting "the unfair and unconstitutional investigative procedures that brought this to court." DePugh, a founder of the Minutemen, also