

DEATH WEAPON HEARING BEGUN

Ownership of Rifle That
Killed JFK Argued

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DENVER (AP) — Federal court testimony began here Wednesday in a legal controversy over ownership of the rifle that killed President John F. Kennedy.

John F. King, a Denver oil man, claims he owned the rifle when Congress passed a law confiscating it for U.S. archives in 1965.

The government contends King never owned the 6.25-millimeter Manlicher-Carcano Italian military rifle, although King paid \$10,000 on a \$45,000 contract to purchase it from Marina Oswald. She is the widow of Lee Harvey Oswald, who the Warren Commission said was Kennedy's assassin.

King filed suit against the government, seeking compensation for the \$16.25 mail order weapon. A gun collector, King has described the rifle's value as "limitless" and asks \$5 million.

The government contends Oswald abandoned the rifle and a .38-caliber pistol he allegedly used to kill Dallas Patrolman J. D. Tippit. The pistol also is part of the case.

If Oswald abandoned the weapons, the government claims, his widow could not sell them to King. The government also contends that if Mrs. Oswald did obtain the weapons as part of her husband's estate, she gave them to the Warren Commission.

If the government arguments are rejected by the jury, then the panel must decide how much King is to receive for the two weapons.

In this case, the government claims "just compensation" is limited to the intrinsic value of the weapons and not to any value as a historical object or collector's item.

Judge William E. Doyle advised both sides he would not tolerate any "judicial spectacle" in which \$5 million would be awarded. He said the trial would not be turned into a money-making occasion in the event the jury decides King is entitled to payment.

King was expected to be the only witness.