Ruby Revolver Saved From Blast Furnace

Judge Orders Return of Collector's Item

By Molly Sinclair
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A court ruling has saved Jack Ruby's revolver from being melted down in a blast furnace like other guns seized in the District, lawyers and police officials said yesterday.

They said an order issued Wednesday afternoon by D.C. Superior Court Judge Joan Zeldon clears the way for the .38-caliber Colt Cobra, used to kill Lee Harvey Oswald on Nov. 24, 1963, to be returned to Robert Luongo, from whom the gun was seized a month ago on the grounds of the Capitol.

Luongo was accused of violating the District's strict gun-control laws. The weapon has been locked in a safe in U.S. Capitol Police headquarters for nearly a month while the case against Luongo worked its way through the court system.

Charges against Luongo were dismissed this week. Officials said the gun could be returned as early as today although none of them would discuss the negotiations now underway for the transfer of the collector's item.

"I have the court order and I have no doubt the Capitol Police will obey it, but we simply don't know yet when we will get the weapon," said Luongo's attorney, G. Allen Dale.

Capitol Police spokesman Dan Nichols said police "have been ordered to return the gun at a mutually convenient time and we will do so . . . . A mutually convenient time has not been worked out yet."

Police seized the gun March 28 after Luongo, 37, of Ocean Ridge, Fla., brought it to the District for an appearance on the "Larry King Live" television show.

Luongo represents Florida real estate developer Anthony V. Pugliese III and a consortium that bought the weapon for $220,000 at auction last year. He was arrested after a chance encounter with House Speaker Thomas S. Foley on the Capitol's east plaza. Police charged Luongo with carrying an unregistered gun and carrying the Colt without a license, both misdemeanors.

The gun was not loaded when it was seized and police found no ammunition on Luongo when they arrested him, officials said.

Firearms charges against Luongo were dismissed Monday during a hearing before Judge Zeldon. The U.S. attorney's office said in a statement that an investigation proved Luongo was acting as an authorized agent of the revolver's owners and had no intention of using the gun as a weapon.

But the fate of the gun remained in doubt for several days. To resolve the matter, Dale filed a motion asking the court to order the gun returned to his client. In his motion, Dale argued that the law provides that a person "aggrieved by an unlawful search or deprivation of property may move the court for return of the property on the grounds that the person is entitled to lawful possession of the property."