

7 Convicted 5-1-68 6-24-68 Of Plotting to Rob 4 Banks

SPOKANE, Wash. (AP) — Seven men were convicted Saturday night of conspiring to rob four suburban Seattle banks in a bizarre plot described as a training exercise for the secret Minuteman organization.

The seven were arrested Jan. 26, on which they allegedly were to blow up police and power stations in Redmond as a diversionary tactic before robbing three banks in Redmond and one in nearby Des Moines.

Still being hunted on the same conspiracy charges are Robert Bolivar De Pugh, 44, founder and head of the Minuteman organization, and Walter Patrick Peyson, 24, both of Norborne, Mo.

An FBI informant who infiltrated the group told the jury the robberies were to raise nearly \$100,000 for the Minuteman group. The group were described by the FBI as a right-wing paramilitary organization whose duty would be to protect the country in case of a Communist takeover.

Government attorneys claimed De Pugh and Peyson master-minded the plot.

Defense attorneys and two of the defendants who testified claimed the whole business was just a training exercise for the Minutemen and that none of the plans was meant to be carried out.

If the defendants were guilty of anything, it was of "being stupid," defense attorneys told the jury.