

FBI Uncovers Gun Cache, Ammunition

4/28/74
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FBI agents confiscated about 200 automatic and semi-automatic weapons, more than 300 cases of ammunition and hundreds of pounds of gunpowder from two Alexandria and Fredericksburg homes Friday and charged an Alexandria man with embezzling ammunition from military stores, an FBI spokesman said yesterday.

Robert G. Kunkel, special agent in charge of the FBI's Alexandria field office, identified the arrested man as Eugene S. Burcher, 43, of 603 Beverly Dr., Alexandria.

Burcher is operations chief of the noise abatement division of the Environmental Protection Agency and a lieutenant colonel in the inactive Marine reserves.

He was arrested at the Little Creek Amphibious Base in Norfolk Thursday when he allegedly tried to withdraw weaponry there, the FBI said. Kunkel said Burcher was wearing a Marine uniform with aviator and paratrooper insignia on it at the time of his arrest.

He is being held in Portsmouth city jail in lieu of \$25,000 bond on a charge of embezzling and converting to his own use four cases of ammunition from the Marine base last November, the FBI said. A preliminary hearing on the charge was set for May 2 in Norfolk.

Kunkel said Burcher gave his consent for a search of his \$60,000 home in the quiet Beverly Hills section of Alexandria, where agents found 175 weapons, 135 cases of ammunition, silencers, gunpowder and military uniforms.

An FBI spokesman said 14 rifles, four pistols, 162 cases of ammunition and 15 cases of unprimed .45-caliber shells were found in the home of Burcher's mother in Fredericksburg.

The FBI said that the weap-

ons were of both military and civilian varieties and included automatic rifles, semiautomatic rifles, shotguns and hand grenades. All were taken to the Marine base at Quantico, where agents are trying to trace their origin through serial numbers.

The FBI spokesman said no

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one else has been arrested in the case but that the investigation was continuing. U.S. Attorney Brian P. Gettings said he has been given no information to indicate that any one other than Burcher is involved in the case.

Burcher's wife said in a telephone interview that she had talked briefly with her husband on the phone after his arrest but had no explanation to offer about the weapons. "I knew that he was a gun collector," she said, "but I have no other information about it."

The FBI spokesman said the weapons in Burcher's home were found throughout the house. Those in his mother's home were found in the attic, he said.

The arrest of Burcher shocked friends and neighbors of the Alexandria family. Burcher spent much of his spare time with his two sons, aged 7 and 5, and has helped coach an Alexandria Soccer Association team on which the boys play.

In the past, his coaching activities were limited by weekend duty as a Marine reserve pilot. His wife said yesterday that Burcher had recently stopped flying.

A GS15 in the government service, Burcher was awarded the Navy's distinguished public service award in 1969 for his work on the Tektite Sealab project.