

5/21/64

Deputy Marshall Escorts Pair Decatur, Illinois

A manacled Donald Sturgis of Fairmont City and Richard Lauchli (rear) of Collinsville are escorted by a deputy United States marshal into Federal Building in Springfield Wednesday for arraignment in connection with the government's seizure of weapons near Clinton Tuesday following a high-speed chase.

\$20,000 Bond Set

THU MAY 21 1964

2 Arraigned After Wapella Arms Raid

By John R. Harpster
Of the Herald Staff

Two men from whom undercover federal agents bought a large quantity of automatic firearms near Wapella Tuesday were arraigned yesterday before U. S. Commissioner Edward F. Casey in Springfield.

They are Richard Lauchli, 37, of Collinsville, and Donald Sturgis, 36, of Fairmont City.

They are charged with possession of unregistered firearms, failure to pay federal taxes on automatic firearms and failure to file with the district director of Internal Revenue a statement of their intention to make firearms.

Asst. U. S. Attorney Leon Scroggins said the latter count is based on the allegation that Lauchli and Sturgis reassembled 100 Thompson submachine guns which had been dismembered by the government and sold as scrap iron.

The submachine guns, along with mortars, a 75-mm. recoilless rifle and assorted other arms, were sold by Lauchli and Sturgis to agents of the Treasury Department's Alcohol and Tobacco Tax Unit for \$17,000.

Lauchli and Sturgis apparently believed they were dealing with agents of a foreign power, although one of the federal agents said they represented themselves only "as guys with \$17,000 who wanted to buy guns."

The agents, however, apparently did nothing to dissuade the arms sellers' belief that they were foreign agents.

\$20,000 Bond Set

Bond for both Lauchli and Sturgis was fixed yesterday at \$20,000 each, which they were unable to post. Lauchli waived preliminary hearing while Sturgis asked to be allowed to consult an attorney before deciding whether to ask for one.

Lauchli told the commissioner "Mr. Sturgis came along from Collinsville at my request. I sincerely don't believe that he's guilty of the charges."

Scroggins said the case will be presented to a federal grand jury on a date not yet determined.

Treasury agents organized the arms purchase from the two men because the Treasury Department is charged with enforcement of the federal firearms laws under which they were arrested.

There is no federal law restricting sale or possession of ordinary - type firearms, but fully - automatic, military-type weapons of the kind bought by the Treasury agents are restricted.

The federal laws do not completely prohibit sale or possession of such weapons, but do provide for their registration and payment of taxes on them.

Scroggins said that sale or possession of virtually any type weapon is permissible under federal law, provided the applicable registration and taxation requirements are met.

Lauchli and Sturgis are thus charged not because they possessed and sold the guns in question, but because the weapons were not registered with the government and because taxes due on them had not been paid.

Chief Dep. Sheriff David Eaton of Dewitt County said the submachine guns sold by Lauchli and Sturgis had been "destroyed" by the government by cutting them in two, across the receiver which houses the operating mechanism, with an acetylene torch.

They were then sold by the government as scrap iron, and were obtained by Lauchli, a gunsmith and machinist who reassembled them to working condition.