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More Munitions Seized As Arms Czar Surrenders



WILLIAM THORESEN III AS HE SURRENDERED ON FIREARMS CHARGE
With him were his wife and son and attorney J. W. Ehrlich (left)

Heir Says He's Just A Collector

By Charles Howe

The mysterious William E. Thoresen III came out of the cold yesterday and, accompanied by his family and a brace of lawyers, surrendered to the United States marshal on a variety of Federal firearms charges.

The munitions czar was immediately taken before U. S. Commissioner Richard Goldsmith, who set bail at \$55,000. This was posted and he was released.

From there, Thoresen went before Federal Judge Oliver J. Carter for a mental competence commitment hearing. Judge Oiver ordered that he be examined by a psychiatrist but refused to order him committed.

DEMAND

This infuriated U.S. Attorney Cecil Poole, who demanded that Thoresen be committed to the Lompoc Medical Facility for psychiatric observation.

He noted that raids yesterday had produced 28 more tons of munitions consigned to Thoresen.

"He has a history of bizarre and antisocial activities," Poole argued. "These are not simple antics; they are full of potential violence.

"What would a man want with such a collection, such a mountain of weapons and ammunition?"



The seized shipment in a Berkeley warehouse — U.S. Attorney Cecil Poole talked with reporters

ATTORNEY

But Thoresen's attorney, J. W. (Jake) Ehrlich, told the judge Thoresen should remain free.

"He was going to open a business here," Ehrlich said. "He wasn't going to shoot anyone.

"If this man is crazy, if he
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is mentally incompetent, then he has made an awful mistake in trusting me with \$55,000 in bail money."

During the hearing, Poole revealed — and Ehrlich later verified — that Thoresen had been in San Francisco since last Monday. Ehrlich said he was here "tending business affairs."

EXAMINATION

Under the provisions of Judge Carter's order, Thoresen will be examined by a psychiatrist who will be picked from a panel of 50 Federally approved doctors. The doctor's report is to be returned to the court on May 10.

'ORNAMENTS'

"I just collect cannons as ornaments," Thoresen said as his fingerprints were being taken. "Every lawn ought to have one."

Attorney Ehrlich agreed with his client. "He's just a collector," Ehrlich said, "and hell, the ammunition he has is 30 years old. It can't even be fired."

Thoresen's son, 5-year-old Michael, tugging at the arm of his mother, Louise, alternately said "I'm scared" and "I eat flowers, white flowers," as he followed his father into the U.S. Marshal's office.

Thorsen volunteered: "I also collect rocks and stamps." He was clad in a conservative dark blue pin striped suit and, standing an erect 6 feet, 2 inches, looked more like a junior executive than a fugitive from justice charged with massive munitions dealings.

As he was booked, Federal agents were sorting through some 28 tons of munitions they had seized at two East Bay locations earlier.

Aided by Army military policemen with trucks, the agents confiscated from two freight terminals an incredible array of explosives, which included:

- A French 25 mm anti-tank gun, vintage 1936.

- More than 250,000 rounds of mouldering 7.92 mm ammunition of German and French manufacture.

- A 81 mm mortar capable of demolishing a well-built 6-room house from a distance of several hundred yards.

- World War Lewis Machine gun magazines plus at least a ton of .303 ammunition used by the weapons.

- A .50 caliber machine gun barrel.

- Assorted explosives, including magnesium parachute flares and mortar flares, United States .30, .45 and .50 caliber machine gun bullets.

The raids were made on Coast Drayage at 1595 Eastshore freeway in Berkeley and Ringsby Systems Inc., at 949 Ferry street in Oakland. Officials of these two trucking firms had earlier alerted Federal and police agents that munitions had been arriving in massive quantities addressed to Thoresen at 2801 Broadway here.

Thoresen's attractive wife, Louise, remained free on more than \$20,000 bail on assorted Federal and State charges ranging from unlawful possession of machine guns to violating State and local laws on storing explosives.

MUNITIONS

United States Attorney Poole said munitions seized

in connection with the Thoresens now totalled 45 tons and added he still had no idea why they were collecting them.

Many of the crates were shipped from the Service Armament Company in Ridgefield, N.J. In addition to these shipping tags they bore markings, in German or French.

Other firms shipping a variety of military hardware to Thoresen included Navy Arms also in Ridgefield, Hunters Lodge and Potomac Arms — both of Alexandria, Va. — and the world's largest private munitions dealer, International Armaments Company.

Called Interarmco for short and headquartered in Monte Carlo, it is owned by Sam Cummings, 39, former CIA agent who set up business in California in 1952 on a \$25,000 shoestring and who now, by his own admission "sells guns to anybody, no questions asked."

SUPPLIES

Interarmco is a major supplier for Navy Arms, Potomac Arms, Hunters Lodge and Service Armament companies.

Drew Pearson, among others, has accused Interarmco

of being a part-time front for the CIA, charging it not only supplied Fidel Castro but also had a hand in furnishing Cuban exiles with guns and military hardware for their disastrous Bay of Pigs raid.

The CIA has never confirmed nor denied these charges. CIA spokesmen yesterday said they had no evidence which showed either of the two Thoresens had any link with their agency.

As Poole poked through cases of bullets (no machine guns were immediately discovered in yesterday's raids) he speculated that Thoresen, 30-year-old heir to a Chicago steel fortune, may be "empire building."

FATHER

In Chicago, Thoresen's father, president of the Great Western Steel Co., was quoted as saying: "This astounds me; I cannot feature" that my son could be an arms broker for guns to be shipped out of the country.

The quality of yesterday's seizure varied from good to poor. Many of the bullets were at least 30 years old and the trench mortar was badly pitted and scored. The French anti-tank gun seemed incapable of doing much besides making a loud bang.

The best of the lot appeared to be U.S. bullets of various calibers, hermetically sealed in metal tins, much like a can of sardines.

RAID

Federal spokesmen indicated the trucking yard of another Oakland firm will probably be raided tomorrow, where another shipment of munitions consigned to Thoresen is located. Two other dumps — their whereabouts still not disclosed — are also scheduled for raids.

As Thoresen, the millionaire playboy defendant, left Judge Carter's courtroom where he was ordered to take a psychiatric examination, his flamboyant attorney kept a Perry Mason-style tight rein on him.

He announced to reporters

that any questions they had for his client would first have to be submitted to him. And he refused to let Thoresen answer most of the questions.

As the pair wandered down the hall, the press following, Thoresen told a Chronicle reporter, "Gee, I'd love to tell you about all of this."

"Be quiet," Ehrlich said. He explained that his client was a second-hand gun deal-

er — that he sold the cannons and anti-tank weapons as "lawn ornaments."

But as his attorney spoke, Thoresen was shaking his head negatively.

"Jake, I'd like to get it straight," Thoresen pleaded. "I'm not in the business of selling second-hand guns. I'm..."

"Shut up," Ehrlich snapped. "I'm your attorney. Keep your mouth shut."