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Agents Act as Foreign Buyers; Two Arrested

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Of the Herald Staff

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A truckload of automatic weapons was seized and two men arrested today by U. S. Treasury agents posing as arms buyers for a foreign power.

An incomplete inventory of the seized weapons included 100 Thompson submachine guns, four mortars, a .75 mm. recoilless rifle, a quantity of smaller weapons and plenty of ammunition.

Arrested after a high-speed chase were Richard Lauchli, 37, of Collinsville, and Donald Sturgis, 36, of Fairmont City.

Authorities said Lauchli was

the same man who in 1961 was a regional leader of an anti-Communist group which called itself the Minutemen. The group used surplus weapons in carrying out guerrilla warfare maneuvers in preparation for a possible Communist invasion.

Reports said the agents of the Treasury's Alcohol and Tobacco Tax Unit had posed as arms buyers for a foreign power. Cecil M. Wolfe of Elmhurst, chief investigator for the Chicago region, said his undercover agent was of Latin extraction, but refused further comment.

The agents said they paid \$17,000 in marked bills for the arms which they first testfired on a vacant farm owned by Arthur Cooper, 3 1/2 miles east of Wapella.

The purchase was completed and the two men were allowed to drive away while radio messages were quickly made to 20 other agents stationed in the area.

125 M.P.H. Chase

Those agents joined in a chase through back country roads that reached speeds of 125 miles an hour. The pair were seized at an intersection when their car became surrounded by officers.

The two men were taken to Springfield tonight where Asst. U. S. Atty. Leon Scroggins said they were charged in a federal complaint with possession of unregistered automatic weapons.

Scroggins said Treasury agents also raided Lauchli's home in Collinsville and seized submachine guns and a flame-thrower.

The arrests came after agents had worked for two to three months to set up the fake purchase after Lauchli contacted a man in Chicago to offer to sell him the arms cache.

That unidentified man, a government informant, told the Treasury agents of the offer. The agents would not elaborate further, and it is not known how Wapella was chosen as the site to transfer the weapons.

Wolfe said the seized weapons allegedly had been scrapped someplace out West, and that Lauchli purchased them and restored them into working order. The federal government reportedly had the weapons cut in two before they were discarded.

← "LATIN"

Lauchli allegedly then had the weapons welded back together before the sale.

The sale came after two agents helped load the weapons aboard a rented truck in Collinsville today. They then drove to the Wapella farm where the transfer was made.

David Eaton, a Dewitt County deputy sheriff, said local police did not aid in the 5 p.m. arrest because they were not familiar with identification of the Treasury agents and may have exchanged shots with them if shooting had become necessary.