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THE WASHINGTON POST
25 SEPTEMBER 1982

Judge Enters 'Not Guilty' Plea for Edwin Wilson

By Philip Smith
Washington Post Staff Writer

A federal judge ordered a plea of not guilty entered yesterday on behalf of former CIA agent Edwin P. Wilson, who faces charges he masterminded a scheme to smuggle firearms out of the country to Libyan officials.

District Judge Albert V. Bryan Jr. overruled a contention by Wilson's lawyer, John A. Keats, that U.S. courts lack jurisdiction over his client.

Wilson, who also has been indicted in the District of Columbia and Houston in connection with alleged arms dealings on behalf of Libyan dictator Muammar Qaddafi, was arrested in New York in June after federal officials lured him away from Libya. Defense lawyers have claimed government misconduct in the scheme to capture Wilson.

Wilson, 54, did not speak during yesterday's 10-minute appearance in U.S. District Court in Alexandria. He clutched a thick file folder as he was escorted from the courthouse under heavy guard by deputy U.S. marshals.

Wilson was indicted earlier this week in Alexandria on eight counts alleging that, working through two intermediaries, he arranged to have four handguns and an M-16 rifle smuggled from Dulles International Airport to Europe. One of the handguns allegedly was used later in the assassination of a Libyan dissident in Bonn.

Wilson faces maximum penalties of 44 years in prison and a $245,000 fine if convicted of the charges.

Bryan set trial for Nov. 15, about three weeks after Wilson is scheduled to go on trial in Houston on charges he allegedly shipped 20 tons of explosives to Libya in 1977 in aid of Libyan terrorist activities.

Wilson, who is scheduled to appear Monday in federal court in the District of Columbia, is being held in lieu of bonds totaling $60 million set by the three jurisdictions.

In a separate development, a Spanish court agreed yesterday to extradite an American arrested there as a fugitive, provided U.S. authorities guarantee him a new trial on illegal arms dealing charges, the Associated Press reported.

The defendant, George G. Korkola, 42, was convicted in a New York State court last year on gun-running charges along with former CIA employe Frank Terpil, a one-time associate of Wilson's. Korkola, sentenced in absentia to 17 to 53 years in state prison, was arrested in Spain in February.

Korkola also has been indicted in New York on federal charges of violating the Neutrality Act by selling arms to Uganda in a case that also involved Terpil.

Justice Department spokesman John Russell said yesterday federal authorities maintain that Korkola is extraditable, based on the New York conviction and pending U.S. felony charges, and will pursue the matter next week.

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