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Couple Charged of Possession of Firearms in Tax Case

A couple from Alaska was charged with possession of firearms gathered with the intent to murder a federal judge, his family and an IRA employee over \$165,000 in unpaid taxes. Lonnie and Karen Vernon amassed a cache of weapons that included a machine gun, a silenced firearm and grenades. In addition to this couple, several other members of the local military group were also charged with helping them gather the weapons.

Lonnie was earlier indicted on a charge of threatening to kill US District Judge Ralph Beistline and a family member. Citizen militia leader Francis Schaeffer Cox from Fairbanks and Coleman Barney of North Pole were also charged along with Lonnie Vernon in a separate federal indictment alleging the three conspired to possess unregistered grenades and silencers. Cox also faces a charge of possessing an illegal machine gun and silencer.

For the last two years or so, the Vernons have been disputing their income taxes, penalties and interest of more than \$165,000 that the IRS says they owe. The IRS filed tax liens on their home in Salcha, located along the Richardson Highway about 40 miles south of Fairbanks. In addition, the IRS sued to foreclose on the property and auction it off to pay the taxes the

Vernons owe in July 2009. It was Judge Beistline who presided over the Vernons' case. According to the federal indictment, Lonnie Vernon threatened to murder Judge Beistline and a family member over the judge's ruling in his case.

Cox is the founder of the Second Amendment Task Force and the Alaska Peacekeepers Militia. These organizations propose that all individuals are sovereign citizens and the government has no authority over them.

In March last year, Cox was charged with weapons misconduct for possession of an arsenal of weapons that included an automatic assault rifle, military-issue pineapple grenades and black powder grenades, a tripod-mounted, belt-fed .50-caliber gun, a tripod-mounted .30-caliber machine gun, a grenade launcher, dozens of rifles and pistols, and thousands of rounds of ammunition. Among Cox's alleged targets were Superior Court Judge Michael McConahy and at least two troopers. In a pretrial hearing in December, Cox represented himself and denied the Alaskan court as legitimate.

According to federal prosecutors, Cox had a few meetings with the commanders of the Peacekeepers Militia that include the Vernons and Barney in the weeks leading up to his trial date.

If convicted of the federal murder conspiracy charge, the Vernons could be imprisoned for life.