



PRESS RELEASE

Office of the United States Attorney
Western District of Wisconsin
(608) 264-5158
TTY (608) 264-5006

For Immediate Release

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Contact Person

Daniel J. Graber
Assistant U.S. Attorney

Madison, Wisconsin -- Stephen P. Sinnott, United States Attorney for the Western District of Wisconsin, announced today the unsealing of an indictment returned by a federal grand jury sitting in Madison charging Victor Nicolavich Melnichuk, DOB 6/9/84, of Morris, Minnesota, with two federal weapons violations. Count One of the indictment charges Melnichuk with unlawfully importing into the United States two AK-47 machineguns from Iraq. Count Two of the indictment charges Melnichuk with unlawful possession of the two machineguns. If convicted, Melnichuk faces a maximum penalty of five years in prison on the importation count, and a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison on the unlawful possession count.

Melnichuk was arrested today in Minnesota. He appeared this afternoon in federal court in Minneapolis and was released and ordered to appear for arraignment on December 14, 2005, at 10:30 a.m. before U.S. Magistrate Judge Stephen L. Crocker, at the U.S. Courthouse in Madison, Wisconsin.

According to the indictment, Melnichuk held the rank of Specialist E-4 and served as a combat engineer with A Company, 682nd Engineering Battalion of the Minnesota Army National Guard, of Litchfield, Minnesota. In February 2004, the United States Army activated Melnichuk's unit for deployment to Iraq.

The indictment alleges that during the time period from February 22, 2004, to February 20, 2005, Melnichuk's unit built prisons in Iraq and provided security at the prisons. During this period, Melnichuk had access to enemy weapons.

According to the indictment, on or about January 23, 2005, Melnichuk's unit packed their gear and supplies into a shipping container for redeployment back to the United States. The shipping container was sealed on January 23, 2005 at Camp Habbinyia, Iraq, and cleared for shipment back to the United States. The sealed shipping container arrived at Fort McCoy, Wisconsin on or about April 27, 2005.

The indictment charges that Melnichuk knowingly transported, and caused to be transported, in interstate and foreign commerce, without lawful authority or licensing, two machineguns, more commonly referred to as AK-47 assault rifles.

The charges against Melnichuk are the result of an investigation conducted by the U.S. Army-Criminal Investigation Division and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. Prosecution of this case has been assigned to Assistant U.S. Attorney Daniel J. Graber.

You are advised that a charge is merely an accusation and that a defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.

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