

# U.S. jury finds Arocena guilty of weapons charges

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Eduardo Arocena, reputed mastermind of Cuban exile group Omega 7, was convicted Tuesday of harboring an illegal terrorist arsenal.

A federal jury took 2½ hours to convict the former New Jersey longshoreman — who federal officials say is "Omar," the cryptic figure who headed Omega 7 — on 23 charges of possessing illegal weapons and conspiracy to possess the weapons.

The six-man, six-woman jury — including three Latins — also convicted Milton Badia, formerly a licensed firearms dealer.

Arocena stood impassively as the guilty verdicts were read and made no comment afterward. He was taken away from the courtroom by federal marshals.

Arocena's wife Miriam, who attended the entire two-week trial and sat near her husband in the spectator area, walked away from the courtroom in tears.

U.S. District Judge William Hoeveller withheld setting a sentencing date, pending a presentence investigation.

Arocena, who was accused of possessing a cache of firearms, including three machine guns and silencers found at his Little Havana apartment, faces a maximum 115-year sentence.

Badia, convicted of one count of conspiring to manufacture and possess firearms, faces five years in prison.

Arocena already has been sentenced to life plus 35 years for gunning down a Cuban diplomat and for several New York area

bombings.

U.S. Attorney Stanley Marcus is expected to decide whether to try Arocena for a third time on charges of bombing the Mexican and Venezuelan consulates in Miami and several South Florida businesses. The Mexican bombing alone caused more than \$2 million in damages.

After Tuesday's verdict, Mrs. Arocena said, "It's too bad they chose to believe the lies of Gomez."

Nestor Gomez, a confessed member of Omega 7 who made a deal with federal prosecutors in exchange for his testimony, testified that he fired a machine gun at the front of a Miami drugstore on Arocena's orders. The machine gun used, FBI agents said, was later found in Arocena's apartment.

The drugstore, Hispania Interamericana, was targeted because it has an arrangement to send shipments of medicine, clothes and other items to Cuba on behalf of Cuban exiles in the United States.

"We weren't really expecting this verdict," said Arocena's court-appointed lawyer, Miguel San Pedro. "We had raised our hopes that he would not be found guilty." San Pedro said he will appeal.

"The government is obviously pleased with the verdict," said Assistant U.S. Attorney Frederick Mann, who used 2,600 pages of documents, taped conversations and the 2,500 pages of transcript from Arocena's first trial to prepare the case.

Hoeveller turned the ninth-floor courtroom, where an evidence



**Eduardo Arocena: Faces 115-year sentence.**

table bristled with machine guns, pistols and silencers, over to the jury for deliberation shortly after 11 a.m. Tuesday.

Though federal prosecutors say Arocena headed Omega 7, he has steadfastly denied the he has ever belonged to the group.

In the two-week-long trial, Mann presented taped conversations, testimony of confessed Omega 7 members and an arsenal of firearms, silencers and ammunition FBI agents testified were found at Arocena's apartment when he was arrested in July 1983.

Arocena has denied that he has ever owned illegal weaponry.

The trial presented thorny security problems for U.S. marshals, who were forced to evacuate the federal courthouse shortly after the case began. The three-hour evacuation was prompted by an anonymous phone call Jan. 30 warning of an impending breakout of prisoners during the early morning transfer from jail to the courthouse.

Later the same day, the marshals service began providing round-the-clock protection for Judge Hoeveller in court and at his Coral Gables home, after Hoeveller reported receiving an anonymous threatening phone call at his residence.