

NEWS

REPUTED PORN KINGPIN CONVICTED IN PLOT AGAINST ADULT BOOK STORES



By **CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

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Reuben Sturman, whom prosecutors described as the nation's largest distributor of hard-core pornography, was convicted Thursday of conspiring to send thugs to Chicago to damage several adult bookstores in an attempt to extort payoffs from their owner.

A federal jury, though, acquitted Sturman of seven other counts related to the attempted bombings of the Chicago bookstores in April 1992.

That plot went awry when a pipe bomb prematurely exploded as two of the four men from California neared one of the bookstores in the Rush Street area in a rented car.

One was killed and the other injured in the fiery blast

The six-man, six-woman jury deliberated over parts of two days before convicting Sturman, 69, on three counts for the extortion conspiracy and acquitting him of the other counts.

Prosecutors contended Sturman had a business associate first hire the thugs in late 1991 to smash peep-show booths at a Phoenix adult bookstore when the new owner balked at continuing payoffs to the powerful industry figure.

After the same Sturman associate hired the thugs several months later to send a message to the Chicago owner, the men decided to plant homemade bombs outside the stores, prosecutors said.

The jury convicted Sturman of conspiring to extort the Chicago owner through the use of force and violence.

The jury, though, acquitted Sturman of involvement in the attempted bombings, apparently believing the hired men decided to escalate the violence without Sturman's knowledge.

Sturman's lawyer, Adam Bourgeois Sr., said the verdict appeared to be inconsistent and indicated he would appeal.

Sturman could be sentenced to as much as 20 years in prison when he is sentenced in December.

If he had been convicted of the bombings, Sturman would have faced a minimum of 30 years in prison.

Sturman, convicted in federal court in Cleveland in 1989 of tax evasion, conspiracy to defraud the Internal Revenue Service and obstruction of justice, is serving a 10-year prison term.

In remarks to jurors, Assistant U.S. Attorneys Mark Prosperi and Patrick King said Sturman controlled a large share of the distribution of hard-core pornography nationally, asserting that he "was the industry" for years until his tax problems.

The Attorney General's Commission on Pornography, in a report in 1986, said there was "strong evidence" that Sturman controlled "a great deal of the pornographic film and videotape distribution and some of the pornographic

Given his powerful position, Sturman extorted hundreds of thousands of dollars in kickbacks of peep-show revenues from owners who feared he could crush their businesses if they didn't pay, prosecutors have alleged.

When owners of adult bookstore chains in Chicago, Phoenix and Cleveland balked in the early 1990s at paying \$60,000 to \$100,000 every four to six weeks, Sturman resorted to threats and violence, prosecutors charged.

The premature explosion of the pipe bomb in Chicago killed Donald Mares, 28, of Palmdale, Calif.

The three other men who traveled here to carry out the bombings were sentenced to prison terms ranging between 7 1/2 years and 12 years.

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