

Alleged neo-Nazi gets prison term

By SCOTT WILLIAMS
of the Journal Star

Despite efforts to depict him as an American patriot ready to guard the country against invasion, a former U.S. Marine from Putnam County was ordered to prison Thursday by a federal judge who told him, "We don't need people like you."

James Lee Fox, who is suspected of organizing a paramilitary outfit and taking that group on maneuvers in the Putnam County countryside, was sentenced to six years in prison on charges of carrying a loaded machine gun.

Defense attorney Michael W. Heller downplayed the paramilitary group as a mere hobby for Fox, whom he described as an intensely military-minded person hopeful of someday resuming his career in the U.S. armed services.

"That is exactly where he belongs," the defense attorney said, likening the ex-Marine to World War II hero Gen. George S. Patton. "I submit that our country needs more people like Jimmy Fox."

During the 2½-hour sentencing hearing, Heller called a dozen of Fox's relatives, friends and neighbors to testify to what they said was his good character and harmless fascination with military paraphernalia.

"I would trust Mr. Fox with my



JAMES LEE FOX

life," said neighbor Cindy Carr.

"If anything, I would say he is pro-American," added high school teacher Phil Hopkins.

The government prosecutor, however, described the 23-year-old former serviceman as the disturbed

leader of a neo-Nazi clan armed with a sophisticated arsenal of weaponry in preparation for a Soviet invasion of the United States.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Tate Chambers pointed out that Nazism itself is not illegal and that the U.S. Constitution permits people to espouse all types of political beliefs.

However, he added, "We cannot allow a person to carry out his beliefs by stockpiling dangerous weapons in his home."

A police raid on Fox's home near Magnolia in January yielded a cache of homemade bombs, military explosives, automatic rifles and boxes of ammunition, as well as survival rations and military training manuals.

Police also found the home filled with Nazi paraphernalia, including a Nazi flag, a photograph of Adolf Hitler and drawings of German military men.

In a notepad he was carrying at the time of his arrest, Fox had outlined his mission as "to maintain and train a small group of highly trained men in all types of warfare . . . in case of a conventional or nuclear attack on the U.S. Midwest."

The ex-Marine was arrested in January, after a group of young boys told police that he had pointed a machine gun at them outside a pizza parlor in Henry.

Fox later pleaded guilty to the weapons charge, which carries a maximum prison term of 10 years. At the first sentencing hearing, however, U.S. District Judge Michael Mihm ordered Fox to undergo a psychiatric exam.

Although that exam uncovered no sign of mental disorder, the judge on Thursday encouraged Fox to seek professional counseling during his term in prison.

Referring to an incident when the defendant reportedly was found to have a homemade bomb in a high-school locker, Mihm said: "People who take bombs to school, anyone who does, needs help. I think it's unfortunate that you did not get that help."

The judge said he was reluctant to order Fox to prison for fear that, because of his experience with weapons, the ex-Marine might be embraced by inmate gangs thought to be organized in the prison system.

But Mihm said he believes Fox needs to be broken of his "obsession" with weapons and separated from society — at least for the two to three years he will be imprisoned before becoming eligible for parole.

"We don't need people like you," the judge said, referring back to the defense attorney's comments. "On that particular night (of the arrest), we had not been invaded."