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John Swallow's Freebie, Concealed Weapon; Other Utah Assistant AGs Also Pack Heat

By Lynn Packer July 31, 2013

When John Swallow first joined the Attorney General's Office in December, 2009, and decided he needed a handgun, he sought out the little-known Utah dealer TTI Armory. The company manufactures and sells specialty ammunition mostly for the military and SWAT teams. But it also has a license to sell firearms even though it stocks no weapons.

"He was bragging about the fact that the badge that he had permitted him to carry a concealed weapon," TTI owner Brad Mackerell said of the time Swallow approached him to buy a gun. He said Swallow had been issued a badge in connection with his role as a state law enforcement officer.

Swallow, however, was not over the AG's criminal division but chief deputy over civil cases. Nevertheless he wanted to pack heat. After all he would later win the endorsement and A+ rating from the National Rifle Association Political Victory Fund when he ran for Attorney General in 2012. An NRA press release said, "While serving in the Utah House of Representatives, John Swallow maintained a 100% voting record on pro-gun legislation, at times standing up to leaders of his own party. As Chief Deputy Attorney General, Swallow supported allowing people with valid concealed handgun permits to carry concealed guns on campus grounds, believing public universities and community colleges should not be able to restrict a person's right to self-defense."

"It caught me off guard he even came to me to buy the firearm," Mackerell said. He said a "handful of guys" came in to make a group buy. The other guys he said were also members of the attorney general's staff, maybe five or six.

Mackerell says Swallow thought someone else was going to pay for his firearm. "He thought it was paid for but it made no sense to me." When TTI Armory received no payment Mackerell contacted Swallow. "John was clear he cannot receive any gifts because of his position with the state," Mackerell said. "At the end of the day he never paid me."

Mackerell says he is prohibited by law to look up the date of the transaction and type of handgun except for a criminal investigation. He said Swallow's weapon may have been a Glock.

Mackerell says he first met Swallow in about 1998 when Swallow was doing legal work for one of his father's companies. Later his father, Richard, was hired to work for On International, Inc. a company co-founded by Swallow. It was through Swallow that Mackerell met George Evan Bybee.



John Swallow: Pistol-Packin' AG

The Ill-fated Browning Arms Meeting

Perhaps near the time of the handgun sale, Brad Mackerell said he had another odd encounter with Swallow, in about October 1990. Swallow's friend and sometime legal client George Evan Bybee had been interested in investing in or somehow becoming involved with TTI Armory. Mackerell says Swallow and Bybee set up a meeting with Browning Arms in Morgan, Utah to discuss a possible joint venture.

At the time Bybee held a patent for a coating process, similar to epoxies used on concrete floors. Working out of an Orem warehouse Bybee was trying to get a contract with the Mormon Church to seal parking lots and fiberglass church and temple spires. But he also applied for a patent to coat ammunition, like the bullets being sold by TTI Armory.

Mackerell said he and his business partner, Payne, were invited to a meeting at Browning. When they arrived Bybee and Swallow were there. At the meeting Browning showed the visitors a new 22 caliber pistol it was bringing to market. Then they wanted to hear background about TT Armory.

"The meeting did not go anywhere," Mackerell said. "They were even confused as to who everybody was and why were sitting down. It was a little bit awkward." "Browning is a recreational commercial company that supplies mainly to the civilian market. They really don't deal with the military at all."

He said Bybee called alter and wondered if TTI Armory planned to follow up. Mackerell said he told Bybee they didn't have time to pursue it.

Besides the two had a falling out. Bybee put Brad Mackerell's name and his partners on a patent application for coating ammunition. Without Mackerell's knowledge. "I don't know if he thought he could take someone else's idea and patent it," he said. Mackerell said it could have been underhanded or a technical lapse.

"He thought (TTI Armory) was an interesting story and was always trying to show some self-worth to us. He was always trying to impress us. You could say the same about John Swallow."

