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Exporter Indicted for Selling Wiretap Devices Overseas

By Jim Mann
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The owner of a Washington exporting firm was indicted by a federal grand jury yesterday for mailing electronic eavesdropping equipment to officials of two foreign countries.

Named in the six-count indictment was Richard Lee Bast, owner of the Redex Corp., Suite 629, at 1404 New York Avenue NW.

The foreign governments were not named in the indictment. According to the prosecutor, Assistant U.S. Attorney John E. Drury, the eavesdropping devices were to be used for "internal investigations" in the two countries.

According to the indictment, those devices included an attache case with a concealed, built-in microphone, a tie-clip microphone, and a voice-activated FM transmitter. Drury said the entire package sold for about \$2,000.

Bast told a reporter yesterday: "My lawyer tells me not to make any comment except that I'm not guilty. I'm sure

the full story will eventually come out."

Bast was charged with two counts of sending an electronic device illegally through the mail. He was also charged with two counts of illegal possession of electronic devices and two counts of illegally advertising electronic devices.

The case is the first of its kind in the Washington area, and in the case of the two advertising counts, is the first prosecution of its kind in the country.

A Justice Department official said yesterday that there have been approximately 10 prosecutions a year under a wiretap statute passed in 1968.

Drury said that Bast was first warned regarding the sale of eavesdropping devices in 1969, when he first came under investigation by the Justice Department.

Last month, federal agents with a search warrant visited Bast's office, prosecutors said.

Bast, 39, a Washington native who now lives in Fairfax

County, has run Redex and several other export-import businesses since 1960. He said yesterday that Redex's business consists primarily of the sale of electronic equipment.

From his small New York Avenue office, he told a reporter in an earlier interview, he has also operated Redex Viet-Nam, Inc., a company that made news in 1967 when it decided to export topless go-go girls to Vietnam.

Another of his enterprises he said then, was Consolidated Armaments, Inc., which sold small arms—rifles, machine guns, pistols and hand grenades—to foreign governments and private individuals overseas.

"I'm a middleman," he once told an interviewer. "You name the merchandise and I can get it."

Bast was not arrested yesterday. Instead, he had arranged through his lawyer to appear in court for arraignment.