

Nixon Envoy Visited Paraguay To Seek Drug Figure's Return

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WASHINGTON, Aug. 16—

President Nixon sent a personal emissary to Paraguay last week to impress on Gen. Alfredo Stroessner, the Paraguayan leader, the importance this country attached to the extradition of Auguste Joseph Ricord, described as the head of one of the world's largest heroin-smuggling rings.

One week after Nelson G. Gross, the State Department's coordinator for narcotics matters, arrived in the Paraguayan capital of Asunción, a Paraguayan appeals court agreed to permit Ricord's extradition to the United States, where he is to face Federal charges on having conspired to import \$60-million in illegal heroin during six years. Ricord has been in an Asunción jail since April, 1971, when he was arrested following a Federal grand jury indictment a month earlier in Manhattan.

In January, a lower Paraguayan court held that his extradition would be illegal because narcotics trafficking is not listed in a 1913 treaty between the two countries.

Growing Impatience in U.S.

Growing American impatience with the Paraguayan Government, some elements of which are alleged to have strong interests in protecting the considerable narcotics traffic there, finally resulted in Mr. Gross's personal call on General Stroessner.

Mr. Gross, who was accompanied by President Nixon's interpreter, Donald Barnes, said that he carried a letter from the President, "indicating in general terms his respect and friendship" for General Stroessner. The narcotics official refused to disclose either the precise contents of the letter or the substance of the 90-minute talk he had with the Paraguayan leader at the presidential palace.

"I simply indicated in a straightforward way," he said in an interview today, "that our Government had a deep concern and interest in this case, and that we considered Ricord to be vitally important."

He said that General Stroessner replied that he, personally was "committed against narcotics trafficking," but that "he had no influence over the judiciary, which would come to their own decision at the appro-

included a meeting with the Paraguayan Chief Justice, after being advised that "in an extradition case, it was proper to consider the relations with the foreign government making the request."

Mr. Gross and Mr. Barnes flew back to Washington on Tuesday of last week, six days before the appeals court decision allowing Ricord's extradition was handed down. The decision had been pending for eight months.

The State Department has been applying diplomatic pressure of one sort or another for months to speed Ricord's return. But these pressures—which Mr. Gross described as "some minimal indications of unhappiness" and which included cancellation of a traditional Fourth of July party at the American Embassy in Asunción last month—had not met with notable success.

Drug Involvement Alleged

Paraguay's resistance to granting the request, according to knowledgeable sources, was linked to the alleged involvement of a number of important Government officials, principally high-ranking army officers, in the heavy narcotics traffic which flows through Paraguay on its way from Europe to the United States.

The choice for General Stroessner, therefore, may have been between displeasing the Nixon Administration, or angering Paraguayan Army leaders who feared that Ricord might implicate them if he were forced to stand trial.

Although Ricord has never been in the United States, he can be brought to trial here on charges that he conspired to violate United States law. According to a Justice Department spokesman, such a conspiracy is grounds for legal action regardless of where it is joined.

Due Here in a Few Days

Ricord is expected to be flown to New York within a few days. The ring that he allegedly heads is described as among the biggest operating on the route between Europe, Paraguay, Miami and New York and is known by Federal drug officials here as the "Latin-American connection." These officials described him on Monday as "the kingpin" and "very, very big."

Ricord, a French-born Argentine citizen, was accused of collaborating with the Gestapo in France during World War II and was condemned to death in absentia by a French court in 1950.

Before the war ended, however, he made his way to Argentina "with more than \$100,000 in my pockets," which he used to purchase a string of nightclubs in Argentina, Venezuela and Paraguay.

priate time."

Mr. Gross said that he then pointed out that turning Ricord over to the United States "would be a superb example of the international effort to stop narcotics traffic. There was no threat made," he said. "I said that we had had a long history of friendship and wanted this friendship to continue," he reported.

The brief visit, he said, also