

Washington Merry-go-round By Jack Anderson & Les Whitten.

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WASHINGTON — The U.S. government is making a last-ditch attempt to nab that elusive financial fugitive, Robert L. Vesco, before he escapes forever.

The Carter Administration is actively considering another try at extraditing Vesco from his palatial villa in Costa Rica, according to government sources. But time is running out. Confidential State Dept. cables warn that Vesco will be eligible for Costa Rican citizenship in a few months, thus effectively making him immune to extradition.

The financial outlaw evaded the U.S. government after it botched an attempt to extradite him in 1973. A new extradition law making it nearly impossible to seize Vesco was promptly pushed through in Costa Rica by then President Jose "Don Pepe" Figueres.

Figueres was grateful to the financier for helping to bail out both his government and his faltering personal businesses. But the "Vesco Law" was repealed after the current president, Daniel Oduber, took office. The United States now has until July 1 to extradite the brazen Vesco before he becomes a Costa Rican citizen.

In a confidential dispatch last September, then U.S. Ambassador Terence Todman reported that the Costa Ricans were becoming embarrassed by Vesco. President Oduber, the cable noted, now feels "that he can act against Vesco without alienating former President Figueres." Oduber also wants to "deflate the corruption issue" and put

an end to "Costa Rican disgust with the image Vesco brings to their country."

Concluded the cable: "If we are ever to convince the Costa Ricans that we have been serious about the Vesco case, we must be prepared to move on short notice with a well prepared extradition request."

VESCO: TAKE TWO — The millionaire fugitive is also the star of another controversy. A documentary film about Vesco that could have been embarrassing to the Ford administration was swiped from a Hollywood studio just two weeks before the 1976 election.

Vesco alleges on the film that he was promised a pardon by President Ford, but that it was denied because of the furor over the pardon of Richard Nixon. The film suggests that U.S. officials are afraid to extradite Vesco because he might sink some politicians with verbal broadsides. Had he returned during the presidential campaign, Vesco says on the film, it would have created a "helluva mess." He calls this secret storehouse of knowledge his "life insurance."

"When Robert Vesco first arrived in Costa Rica, he liked the country so much he decided to buy it," says the film's narrator. This is echoed on the film by Capt. A. L. Eisenhauer, Vesco's former pilot and the author of a new book about Vesco, "The Flying Carpetbagger."

Also interviewed was the editor of the now defunct Costa Rican newspaper El Diario, who claimed his editorial at-

tacks on Vesco caused the Costa Rican government to withdraw its advertising and thus forced his paper into bankruptcy.

The film, financed by the Mexican TV network Televisa, was spirited away by Televisa representatives shortly after a preview in New York City. "If you show this film before the (U.S.) election it would look as though Mexico is trying to interfere in U.S. politics," a Televisa representative reportedly explained to a newsmen. Officially, however, a Televisa official insisted to our associate, Gary Cohn, that they took back the film and suppressed it, not because of politics, but "because of enormous cost overruns."

WAR COLLEGE — A private military think tank financed by defense contractors and oil companies, is being built on federal land at the Air Force Academy in Colorado.

The conservative Civilian Military Institute bills itself as an open forum for the military and society. But it enjoys a cozy relationship with the Air Force Academy, which will lease the group part of its new multimillion-dollar visitors center.

The institute is being funded by defense contractors such as Rockwell International, which kicked in \$250,000. Other sugar daddies include beer magnate William Coors, General Electric, Texaco, Standard Oil of Indiana, the Midwest Oil Foundation, and retired oil tycoon Arthur Johnson, who contributed \$400,000.

The trustees of the supposedly private institute include Gen. George Brown, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and six top brass hats from the Air Force, Army and Navy. Civilian members include Air Force Academy president William Tutt, Pan Am chairman William Sewell, and former Secretary of State Dean Rusk. At a recent symposium, "Everyone there was a high-ranking admiral or general or a retired military official," said one participant.

Rusk sees no problem with money coming from Pentagon contractors as long as the military men don't solicit them. As for building it on federal land, Rusk said: "It's not a problem unless people like you make it one."

HOME, JAMES — President Carter's ban on limousines for government officials doesn't extend to Capitol Hill, where the taxpayers are shelling out more than \$70,000 a year for congressional bigwigs.

Limousines and chauffeurs are provided for Sens. James Eastland, D.-Miss., Hubert Humphrey, D.-Minn., Robert Byrd, D.-W. Va., and Howard Baker, R.-Tenn. Speaker Thomas "Tip" O'Neill, D.-Mass., and Reps. Jim Wright, D.-Tex., and John Rhodes, R.-Ariz., also have cars at their service.

The federal wheels don't stop there. Three sergeants-at-arms, two high-ranking clerks, the congressional doctor and postmaster each has a car.

The cars are supposed to be for official business but in fact are often used for errands and shopping trips.