

This case involves Bobby Joe Keese. See subsequent clippings; Keese is first mentioned in clipping 29 May 74.

Other (earlier) references on Keese are noted with clipping of 29 May 74.

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U.S. Diplomat Held for \$500,000 In Mexico; Secret Kept for 5 Days

By Marlise Simons

Special to The Washington Post

MEXICO CITY, March 27—U.S. and Mexican officials disclosed today the kidnaping five days ago of an American diplomat stationed in Mexico.

The victim, the third diplomat to be kidnaped here within the last year, is John Patterson, 31, a commercial officer attached to the U.S. consulate in Hermosillo, a town 150 miles south of the U.S. border.

[The kidnaping first became known publicly when Attorney General William Saxbe men-

tioned at a morning press conference in Washington that he was postponing a trip to Mexico because a consular officer had been kidnaped. After that, U.S. officials in Washington supplied details—including information that secrecy had been imposed as one of the terms laid down by the kidnapers.

[A State Department source said a \$500,000 ransom was being demanded, but he would not reveal by whom.]

The carefully-kept news finally broke in Mexico City when the Mexican attorney

general's office issued a statement saying Patterson had been "missing since March 22," when he was last seen entering his car in the company of an unknown U.S. citizen at 10:30 that morning.

A U.S. embassy spokesman gave the victim's name but few other details. "We can't discuss it for reasons of Mr. Patterson's personal safety," he said.

Well-placed diplomatic sources here said they believed the secrecy indicated that negotia-

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tions with the kidnapers were going on, but others believed the silence was meant to avoid embarrassment to the Mexican government.

Although it is generally thought here that the abduction was the work of leftist guerrillas, there is no indication who they are.

Guerrilla activity has been on the rise in Mexico since 1971, with different groups carrying out bank assaults, kidnapings and two hijackings, but until last year no diplomats had been kidnaped.

Their first diplomatic victim was the U.S. counsel general in Guadalajara, Terrance Leonhardy, 59, who was pulled from his car last May. He spent 76 hours with a guerrilla group called "the People's Revolutionary Army of the Left."

Leonhardy was released unharmed after an \$80,000 ransom was paid and the Mexican government flew 30 political prisoners to Cuba.

The present kidnaping will put to the test the new hard-line policy of Mexican President Luis Echeverria, who was criticized by conservatives at home and by Washington for acceding to the guerrillas' demands.

At the time of Leonhardy's kidnaping, Mexican officials disclosed that the State Department was trying to pressure the Mexican authorities

by informing them that the U.S. position was not to yield to terrorist extortion.

Last October, a leftist guerrilla group calling itself the September 23 Communist League kidnaped simultaneously a British honorary consul, Anthony Duncan Williams, and millionaire industrialist Fernando Aranguren.

When the government refused to give in to the league's demands, namely the release of 51 political prisoners and their transport to North Korea, the terrorists released the consul and killed the industrialist.

Last Thursday, the Mexican police announced they had arrested five members of the September 23 Communist League, who allegedly had been planning to kidnap American Nobel Peace Prize winner Norman Borlaug. Dr. Borlaug, whose experiments in wheat production helped bring on the "Green Revolution," has been directing research projects on farms in the state of Sonora. The state's capital is Hermosillo, where Patterson disappeared. One of the five alleged league members died while in captivity.

Patterson was assigned to the U.S. Consulate in Hermosillo in January of this year. It was his first foreign post. U.S. Embassy officials said. He is married, from Philadelphia.