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U.S. Officials Issue Appeal in Mexico On Missing Consul

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HERMOSILLO, Mexico, March 31 — United States officials and the Mexican police appealed to the public today for information on the whereabouts of a missing American diplomat and the identity of the men who apparently kidnapped him.

They made clear that they had no reliable leads in the case of Vice Consul, John Patterson, 31 years old, who disappeared from this dusty northwestern Mexican town nine days ago.

The United States consulate general in Hermosillo, the capital of Sonora state prepared to distribute hundreds of leaflets carrying Mr. Patterson's photograph and an appeal for information on his whereabouts.

The Sonora police asked anyone who saw the United States

consular vehicle in which Mr. Patterson left the consulate-general on March 22 in the company of an unidentified American to come forward. They also asked whether anyone had noticed if the vehicle was followed.

The action of the United States and Mexican officials today tended to contradict rumors here that the diplomat might soon reappear.

A note left at the consulate general three hours after he disappeared demanded \$500,000 in ransom and ordered a news blackout on the case. Some sources indicated yesterday that the ransom money had been delivered, but this could not be confirmed.

The fact that Mr. Patterson's captors did not demand the publication of any political statements or request the release of any political prisoners has led many observers to speculate that the kidnapping might be the work of ordinary criminals rather than leftist guerrillas.