

Puzzling Mexican Kidnap Case

Mexico City

ON March 22, between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m., John Patterson Patterson, a young American diplomat, disappeared from his post in the town of Hermosillo in northern Mexico.

Officially, the U.S. government says it presumes he was kidnaped. Privately, Mexican officials say they believe it is a hoax. In any case, Patterson has still not shown up, a month after his disappearance.

Who is Patterson and what happened to him?

Little is known, mainly because the U.S. government has revealed only the barest details about the case. U.S. officials have said they are reluctant to speak threatened "further violence" if the kidnaping were publicized. The State Department, in fact, only announced the disappearance after Attorney General William O. Saxbe let the news slip out in a news conference.

Until this week, U.S. officials in Mexico had even refused to give any biographical information about Patterson except that he is 31, married and a new Foreign Service officer. Recently, however, State Department officials in Washington, after a request from the Los Angeles Times, released more details.

The State Department said Patterson was born in Philadelphia and educated at the University of Michigan and Columbia University in New York. He earned

two masters degrees at Columbia.

Before joining the Foreign Service, he had worked as a teacher in the Philadelphia public schools, as a case worker in the New York City department of welfare and as a financial analyst for the U.S. Price Control Commission. He began training in the Foreign Service in July, 1973, and was assigned to Hermosillo, his first post, in January, 1974, as a commercial officer.

The State Department said Patterson is married

and has one child, the daughter of his wife's previous marriage.

No information came from the State Department about the rest of his family. But private sources in Mexico report that both Patterson's parents and the parents of his wife are wealthy.

Patterson, a lanky young man with glasses, left his office at the U.S. consulate general at 10:50 a.m. on March 22 in a U.S. government station wagon. He had an appointment, never kept, with the committee for live-

stock production and development of the Mexican state of Sonaora.

At 2 p.m., when the consulate-general reopened after lunch, a large manila envelope was found with the ransom note. The note, according to U.S. officials, was in Patterson's handwriting.

The U.S. government has never revealed the contents of the note. But, according to Mexican sources, it was a letter of several pages with detailed instructions.

Los Angeles Times