

Vesco's Cash Got Quick

New York

A government witness testified yesterday that hours after financier Robert Vesco made a \$200,000 cash contribution to President Nixon's re-election campaign, then-Attorney General John N. Mitchell set up a meeting between Vesco's lawyer and the head of the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Vesco aide Harry Sears testified in U.S. District Court that the meeting, which Vesco had been trying to arrange for months, jelled quickly once the cash was delivered to former Com-

merce Secretary Maurice H. Stans, who was then Mr. Nixon's re-election finance chairman.

Sears testified for a third day in the criminal conspiracy trial of former Cabinet members Mitchell and Stans.

In return for Vesco's contribution, the government claims, Mitchell and Stans sought to impede an SEC fraud investigation of Vesco's far-flung corporate empire.

Despite the \$200,000 contribution and the subsequent meeting between his lawyer

and then-SEC Chairman William Casey, and despite a number of other high-level conclaves, Vesco wasn't satisfied with the progress of his legal battles with federal investigators, Sears said. Three months after the Casey meeting, Vesco was ready to go back to Stans for aid, he said.

When he argued against such a course of action, Sears testified, Vesco exploded: "My God, I gave all that money!"

Sears and Vesco were indicted in the case along with Mitchell and Stans. Vesco

fled the country and Sears was given immunity to testify for the government.

A key government witness, Sears yesterday delivered a graphic account of the delivery of Vesco's \$200,000 campaign contribution, and the sudden action he said it produced.

Sears said he went to Stans' office in Washington April 10, 1972. The former Cabinet member by that time was chief fund raiser for the Nixon campaign, which was headed by Mitchell. With Sears, he said, was Laurence Richardson, presi-

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dent at the time of International Controls Corp., flagship company of Vesco's operations.

Sears testified that "Mr. Richardson was carrying a briefcase, which had in it — he told me, I hadn't seen it — \$200,000 in cash."

During the brief discussion, Sears related, Richardson put the briefcase on Stans' desk and then said, "Mr. Stans, here's your currency."

Richardson then said, Sears testified, "I thought you would want to know that the money is here. Do you

want to count it?"

Sears said Stans replied, "No, that wouldn't be necessary."

"Mr. Richardson then said," Sears continued, "Mr. Vesco wants me to deliver you a message. He'd like to get some help."

"Mr. Stans said quickly, 'Tell him that's not my department, my bailiwick, that's John Mitchell's department.'"

Sears said he then went to Mitchell's office, reported that the \$200,000 in Vesco cash had been delivered to

Stans and then reminded the former attorney general that he still wanted to see then-SEC Chairman Casey about Vesco's difficulties with the agency.

Sears had previously testified to months of vain efforts through Mitchell and others to gain access to Casey or his general SEC counsel.

"As I recall," the witness continued, "Mr. Mitchell said 'Let's see if I can get hold of Bill now.' He picked up the telephone."

Sears said that Casey called back within a short

time in response to Mitchell's call. He said of Mitchell:

"He said, 'Harry Sears is here and he'd like to sit down with you for a few minutes on this Vesco matter. Can you see him?' And then Mr. Mitchell turned to me and asked, 'Can you stay in Washington until 4 o'clock?'"

At 4 p.m., Sears said, he had his long-awaited meeting with Casey. It was the first of a number of high-level meetings Sears was to detail.

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