



AP Wirephoto

Investigator Philip Manuel displayed a silencer-equipped submachine gun of the type Vesco allegedly tried to purchase

Much Testimony About Guns at Vesco Hearing

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The former skipper of a yacht owned by fugitive financier Robert Vesco testified yesterday that he quit the job because he feared the vessel's crew would fire upon U.S. ships if they gave chase.

The witness, Jay Powell Cook, told a Senate subcommittee that the high-speed vessel was armed with a variety of weapons, including a tripod-mounted machine gun.

Cook said that he was given a direct order from Vesco "that no one but Vesco and his representatives would be allowed aboard the boat." For that reason, Cook said, he "felt there was a danger that the boat would fire upon U.S. vessels if given chase."

Vesco, said Cook, told him "that the weapons were for the purpose of protection."

Cook testified after other witnesses described an arrangement through which Vesco allegedly tried to buy 2000 submachine guns with silencers. The panel also heard testimony that Vesco explored the possibility of mass-producing weapons in Costa Rica.

Vesco fled to Costa Rica to avoid arrest under an indictment charging him with contributing to former President Nixon's re-election campaign in an attempt to influence a federal investigation of the financier.

In his testimony, Cook quoted a Vesco family friend as saying the financier had a room the size of a three-car garage filled with firearms.

He also said he once overheard a conversation in which Vesco's sons spoke of a former pilot who would be "taken care of in Sicily" for helping U.S. courts confiscate a Vesco plane.

Cooke said he felt his testi-

mony would place his own life in jeopardy.

Subcommittee Investigator Philip R. Manuel outlined a complicated procedure in which Marti Figueres, son of the former president of Costa Rica and a Vesco associate, contacted an Alabama businessman named Stuart Graydon concerning purchase of submachine guns.

The sale was never completed, but Figueres was subsequently sold six semi-automatic rifles plus 18,000 rounds of ammunition, according to Manuel's sworn statement.

Graydon testified that he met with Vesco and several other American businessmen on April 14 in Costa Rica to discuss financing a proposed factory that could turn out 500 "military weapons" a month. Graydon took the Fifth Amendment when asked if he had ever taken any of the submachine guns to Costa Rica.

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