



AP Wirephoto

BOBBY JOE KEESSEE
Conspiracy case

Guilty Plea In Death of U.S. Consul

San Diego

Bobby Joe Keesee, the "soldier of misfortune" who spent time in a North Vietnam prison camp, pleaded guilty yesterday to a charge of conspiracy in the kidnap-murder of a U.S. consul in Mexico.

Keesee, 40, entered a plea of guilty to the charge of conspiracy to kidnap for ransom in an appearance before U.S. District Judge Leland C. Nielsen. Judge Nielsen set April 28 for sentencing. Keesee could be sent to prison for life.

Keesee was accused in an indictment of both murder and conspiracy in connection with the death last year of John S. Patterson, the U.S. consul in Hermosillo, Mexico. Patterson disappeared after leaving his office in March, 1974, and his body was later found in a dry creek bed outside Hermosillo. (2)

Keesee's attorney, John Cleary, told Judge Nielsen that the only agreement between Keesee and the prosecution was that the United States would not extradite the defendant to Mexico to face any charges there. Keesee told the court he understood that the court had no power over Mexican officials in case they seek to extradite him.

- ① Filed POWs, ca. Mar 73. (?)
- ① Other clippings on Keesee, filed CIA, 13, 14, 15, 19 Mar 73. ~~29-31~~
- ② Clippings on kidnapping of Patterson are filed CIA, beginning 28 Mar 74. Sentenced, SFC 29 Apr 75.

Keesee testified that he discussed kidnapping a consular official with an employee who worked for him while he operated a furniture store. He said he and the employee, Gregg Curtis Fields, went to Hermosillo in January, 1974 and inspected the consulate.

"Fields and I stood there about five minutes and I just didn't feel comfortable and I said let's go home," Keesee said.

He denied carrying out the kidnap plan but said after reports were published that Patterson had disappeared, he returned to Hermosillo April 30 and prepared a ransom note.

Keesee did not say what he did with the ransom note, but a note was later received at the U.S. consulate.

Keesee claimed to have worked at one time for the Central Intelligence Agency, but the CIA said it never heard of him.

In 1962, he deserted the Army at Ft. Huachuca, Ariz., flew a rented single-engine plane to Cuba and asked for political asylum. Cuba returned him 49 days later to face trial in Arizona on the charges.

He was convicted on a single count of transporting a stolen car across state lines and sentenced to five years in prison. He served two years.

Keesee made headlines again when he was released by North Vietnam along with military prisoners of war in March, 1973. A charter pilot said Keesee had hijacked a rented plane and was flown from Thailand in 1980. He was captured when gunfire forced the pilot to land on a beach near Dong Hoi. (1)

A.P. & U.P.