

Nixon Link To Lebanon Bank Deal

WASHINGTON — (AP) — Although Presidential adviser John D. Ehrlichman says he did not offer White House support of a Lebanese bank deal for financier Robert L. Vesco, the Washington Post reported today that Ehrlichman twice offered help.

Vesco, who contributed to President Nixon's re-election campaign, has been charged in a civil suit by the Securities and Exchange Commission with looting \$224 million from Investors Overseas Services, Ltd., a Geneva-based financial empire.

A campaign contribution of \$200,000 was returned to Vesco by Nixon's campaign committee on Jan. 31, 1973, but the donation is being investigated by a federal grand jury for possible federal campaign law violations.

In a statement released by the White House press office, Ehrlichman said the Vesco representatives "were seeking U.S. government support for some bank deal

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they were trying to promote in Lebanon."

Ehrlichman said that on Dec. 20, three days after he met with the Vesco agents, "our embassy in Lebanon reported that Vesco representatives were claiming U.S. government support for their project and were using my name.

"After obtaining additional details, I notified the State Department to inform the U.S. embassy in Lebanon and any others involved that there was no White House support for, no interest in, the Vesco activities."

Ehrlichman said the instructions were transmitted to the U.S. ambassador in Beirut.

'Agreed Twice'

But the Post, quoting a

well-informed source, said the Dec. 17 meeting was actually the second time Ehrlichman had been asked for help and that he agreed both times.

Yesterday the Los Angeles Times, quoting unnamed sources, reported Ehrlichman met with two close associates of Vesco, Gilbert R. J. Straub and Lawrence B. Richardson. In his statement, Ehrlichman said he was visited Dec. 17 by Richardson, Straub and a third man identified only as "Sears."

Harry L. Sears, an attorney and prominent New Jersey Republican had said in a the SEC suit against Vesco, that he was Vesco's intermediary in dealings with Maurice Stans, Nixon's former finance chairman.

'Try Again'

The Post quoted their source as telling Ehrlichman at the Dec. 17 meeting, in effect, that "the first call you made to us didn't work; how about trying it again." The newspaper said Ehrlichman agreed to make another effort.

The Post said Vesco was interested in buying Intra Bank, a Beirut holding company which went bankrupt in 1966. As part of the settlement of the case, the Commodity Credit Corp., a unit of the Agriculture Department, became a shareholder in the bank.

The Post said the first meeting with Ehrlichman came after CCC representatives in Beirut and the U.S. embassy there were reportedly opposed to Vesco because of his association with IOS, which Vesco took over in 1970.

Nixon Nephew

The Post said that after the CCC meeting, Straub and Richardson went to a meeting with Ehrlichman. The newspaper said the source stated that Straub and Ehrlichman had been in frequent communication since Nixon's nephew, Donald Nixon Jr., went to work for Vesco as his administrative assistant in 1971, a position he still holds.

The Post quoted their source as saying there was no discussion at the earlier meeting of any potential campaign contribution by



Traveling with President Nixon to Mississippi, aide H. R. Haldeman makes a telephone call. —UPI Photo

Vesco.

"It was more in the sense of 'We've been taking care of Junior for you and we'd like you to do a favor for us,'" the newspaper quoted the source as saying.