

Costa Rica's President Defends Vesco Relationship

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SAN JOSE, Costa Rica, May 23 (UPI)—President Jose Figueres of Costa Rica told a nationwide radio and television audience last night that he was innocent of any wrongdoing in his relationship with Robert L. Vesco, the fugitive financier who has taken up residence in Costa Rica.

President Figueres made the speech after allegations that Vesco-owned companies had placed more than \$300,000 in a Figueres bank account in New York.

During an hour-long speech, Mr. Figueres accounted for funds totaling \$436,000 that moved through a New York bank account in his name, but he said the money was meant for causes as varied as a national symphony orchestra and a factory to build prefabricated houses.

Of the \$436,000, he said "some of this money" came from the same bank Mr. Vesco uses in the Bahamas, but the President indicated that was a coincidence.

He referred only briefly to the 37-year-old Mr. Vesco, whose \$25-million in investments in this tiny Central America state have become a subject of political controversy.

Vesco Role Described

President Figueres explained briefly the Watergate case and referred to the indirect role Mr. Vesco had played in it, his alleged campaign contribution.

He also said that Mr. Vesco had a right to contribute money to help re-elect President Nixon.

President Figueres ruffled what he said were statements and deposit slips from his New York bank, the National Bank of North America.

He said that although the account was in his name, it was used for various purposes involving Government and private transactions and he listed the following:

¶ The sum of \$60,000, dated by "two music lovers" in the Bahamas for an endowment fund for a Costa Rican national symphony orchestra, with the money intended for use in a lumber farm. He identified the donors only as Mr. Gracand Mr. Purcell.

¶ The sum of \$160,000 earmarked for the P.I.A. bank institution in Costa Rica for loans to small industry. President Figueres indicated that the amount came from "cess funds" from unidentified international loans.

¶ The sum of \$75,000 deposited in his private account by the San Cristobal Corporation, a San José-based investment company that he founded and partly owns, as a transfer of funds for normal business activities.

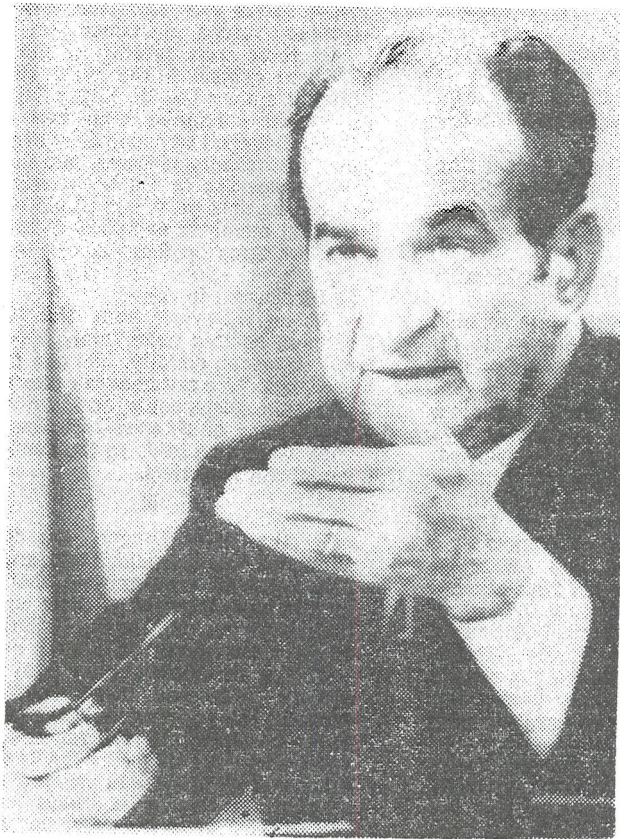
¶ The sum of \$50,000 that he said went through his account to an unidentified laboratory in Phoenix, Ariz., for undisclosed "interesting scientific experiments."

¶ The sum of \$210,000 channeled through his personal account by the San Cristobal Corporation for the purchase in Miami of material for use in building a prefab housing factory.

These figures and others listed by Mr. Figueres totaled more than \$436,000 but he did not explain the difference.

He emphasized that all funds related to the San Cristobal Corporation were a matter of public record because they involve imports controlled by Costa Rican law.

Mr. Vesco went back into hiding today after demanding "absolute impartiality" by Watergate investigators as the



United Press International

José Figueres, President of Costa Rica, in San José Tuesday night, denying any wrongdoing in Vesco case.

prime condition for his returning home to face arrest.

An aide said the 37-year-old American financier, who now has a provisional Costa Rica passport, was ready to renounce his United States citizenship if necessary.

Norman P. LeBlanc, an associate of Mr. Vesco, meanwhile characterized as "extortion" a \$200,000 contribution to President Nixon's campaign fund,

which led to indictments against Mr. Vesco, John N. Mitchell, former Attorney General; Maurice H. Stans, former Secretary of Commerce, and Harry L. Sears, a New Jersey Republican.

G. Bradford Cooke has resigned as chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission over the contribution case.

Mr. LeBlanc, who now lives in Costa Rica, said the facts

of the case would "startle the world" and destroy investor confidence in United States securities abroad.

The S.E.C. called these statements untrue and "outlandish," and one of Mr. Vesco's lawyers in New York termed them "nonsense."

Press Aide Issued Statement

Mr. Vesco's statement, issued through his press aide in San Jose, was his first comment in more than two months on the deepening probe into his financial operations and the campaign contribution.

Mr. Vesco, Mr. Mitchell, Mr. Stans and Mr. Sears, former president of the New Jersey Senate, have been indicted by a grand jury in New York on charges of obstructing a Federal investigation into the contribution.

A warrant was issued for Mr. Vesco's arrest Monday when he did not show up for arraignment. Mr. Mitchell, Mr. Stans and Mr. Sears all pleaded not guilty.

Appearing briefly last night for a United States television interview in a local hotel, Mr. Vesco said, "I would only return home if there is a guarantee of absolute impartiality by the Watergate investigators."

Extradition a Possibility

PORTLAND, Ore., May 23 (UPI)—A Costa Rican Cabinet member said yesterday that his nation would permit the extradition of Mr. Vesco if the United States requested it.

Dr. Jaime Gutierrez, Minister of Social Security for Costa Rica, said during a visit here to study hospital health plans that Costa Rica would honor its extradition treaty with the United States even though Mr. Vesco is the largest private investor in his country.