

# Figueres Hints Vesco Extradition Lag

By ROBERT J. COLE

President José Figueres of Costa Rica suggested strongly yesterday that the United States might have a long wait before Costa Rican courts ordered the extradition of Robert L. Vesco, the fugitive financier and one-time board chairman of a Swiss-based mutual fund organization.

"It's a hell of a thing to prosecute a big fish," the President said in a telephone interview from his ranch home outside San José, Costa Rica's capital, but added, "Our Government is cooperating."

Mr. Vesco was indicted by a Federal grand jury here last month on charges arising out of a secret \$200,000 contribution that he made in \$100 bills to the Nixon election campaign fund last April in an alleged effort to influence a Government investigation of his financial affairs.

Two bench warrants have been issued for his arrest—once when he failed to answer a subpoena to testify before the grand jury and again when he failed to show up for his arraignment.

### Grounds Not Clear

But Costa Rican officials were somewhat in doubt yesterday of the precise grounds on which Mr. Vesco's extradition was being sought and American officials declined to elaborate.

In San Jose, the American Ambassador, Viren Vaky, referred all calls to the Depart-

ment of State or the Justice Department. The Department of State referred all calls to the Justice Department. The Justice Department refused to comment.

One source in San Jose said he understood that Mr. Vesco was charged with the unlawful use of a radiogram to request the transfer of funds from one company to another. President Figueres related a version but said he had heard lawyers remark that "the use of a telegram to request funds is not a crime in Costa Rica."

Mr. Vesco, who was charged last year by the Securities and Exchange Commission with looting the mutual fund group he headed of \$224-million, conceded last month in the S.E.C. case that he had arranged for the telegram.

### Judge Makes Requests

Court papers in the S.E.C. civil suit showed that Mr. Vesco arranged on April 6, 1972, to get the Bahamas Commonwealth Bank to send by Telex \$250,000 in cash to the Barclays Bank in New York. It all went to the Nixon election campaign — \$200,000 in secret.

Although the funds are part of the Federal indictment, the use of a radiogram to request the funds is not known to be the basis of any criminal charge against Mr. Vesco, suggesting that, if it is, it is on the basis of a new indictment not yet public.

In San Jose, a Costa Rican

judge, Atilio Vicenzi, who received the extradition case for review, said last night that he had asked for additional information, including a copy of the bench warrant for Mr. Vesco's arrest and the nature of the offense being charged. Judge Vicenzi said he knew of the radiogram charge.

In an official ruling the judge asked for information to determine if a crime or fraud had been committed, whether it had been committed in the United States and whether Mr. Vesco was in the United States when the alleged crime was committed.

Mr. Vesco's attorneys in Costa Rica could not be reached for confirmation. They are said to have argued against his extradition on the grounds that the alleged crime was not committed in the United States but in the Bahamas and that he cannot be extradited under Costa Rican law or the extradition treaty with the United States, signed in 1922.

Mr. Figueres, discussing how long extradition can take, said that a Peruvian request to extradite some Peruvian lawyers and politicians had already taken four or five months and had not yet reached the highest court.

Mr. Vesco, meanwhile, is not in Costa Rica, Mr. Figueres said he had been told by the Foreign Minister, Gonzalo Facio. Mr. Vesco's familiar 707 Boeing jet was seen at the airport in Nassau, the Bahamas, yesterday but whether Mr. Vesco was also there was not known.