

Ex-Vesco Aide Tells Of Mitchell Link



UPI Telephoto

HARRY SEARS
Immunity granted

New York

The government started yesterday to get to the core of its case against John Mitchell and Maurice Stans, with the first testimony linking former Attorney General Mitchell to Robert L. Vesco, the financier who is now a fugitive.

This was done through Harry L. Sears, the former Republican majority leader of the New Jersey Senate, who told of introducing Vesco to Mitchell and of inducing Mitchell to intervene in a federal investigation of Vesco's financial dealings.

He also told how Mitchell helped get Vesco out of a

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Swiss jail where he was being held while the Swiss investigated his finances.

Mitchell and former Secretary of Commerce Stans are accused of attempting to impede the investigation of Vesco by the Securities and Exchange Commission in return for a secret \$200,000 contribution Vesco made to President Nixon's re-election campaign.

The government had some shaky moments before Sears was allowed to testify, when the defense challenged the government's right to grant the witness total immunity in this case. Sears, who also was indicted in the case but whose trial was officially severed from this one, refused to testify without the total immunity.

The defense contended he was entitled to only partial immunity, but after two recesses to consider the legal problem, U.S. District judge Lee P. Gagliardi granted the government's request.

Now there will be no Sears trial.

Sears then proceeded to recount his communications with Mitchell about the Securities and Exchange Commission inquiry on Vesco.

On July 6, 1971, Sears met with Mitchell at the Justice Department to discuss the Vesco case, Sears testified.

"I told Mr. Mitchell, reminded him," he said, "Vesco was a very good friend of mine . . . and that he was asking for help and that if it could be properly given, I

would like him (Mitchell) to help him."

"Mr. Mitchell said that he didn't know whether anything could be done but that he would talk to Bill Casey at some opportunity. I recall there having been during the course of the conversation an indication by Mr. Mitchell that he had some discussions with Bill Casey."

William J. Casey at that time was chairman of the SEC.

Sears said that "after that meeting I left it (the Vesco case) with Mr. Mitchell and I never recall hearing anything back."

Vesco allegedly gave the \$200,000 campaign contribution nearly a year later, on April 10, 1972.

Sears said that toward the end of December, 1971, as his State Senate term was drawing to a close, he accepted some legal work for Vesco.

He was told by Vesco that, among other things, he was expected to "get John Mitchell" to help in the investigation.

It was at the end of November, 1971, that Vesco was jailed without bail in Switzerland, and that Sears brought that problem to Mitchell, he testified.

He (Mitchell) finally said he would endeavor "to get ahold of the (American) ambassador" or the Swiss attorney general, Sears testified, and shortly thereafter Vesco was released in \$125,000 bail.

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