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**Mitchell Is Linked
To Vesco by Sears**

By MARTIN ARNOLD

The Government started yesterday to get to the core of its case against John N. Mitchell and Maurice H. 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 Mr. Vesco to Mr. Mitchell and of inducing Mr. Mitchell to intervene in a Federal investigation of Mr. Vesco's financial dealings.

He also told how Mr. Mitchell helped get Mr. Vesco out of a Swiss jail where he was being held while the Swiss

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investigated his finances.

Mr. Sears had been described by the defense in one of its opening statements as being "supposedly central to this conspiracy," and yesterday the large, round-faced lawyer showed in his testimony why the Government considers him its perhaps most important, if not most dramatic, witness.

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

Mr. Sears was an articulate, assured witness as John R. Wing, chief of the fraud bureau of the United States Attorney's office, asked him questions.

He told how in March, 1971, at a political dinner in New Jersey, he introduced Mr. Vesco to the then Attorney General.

How They Met

"As far as I recall," he related "I said to Mr. Mitchell, 'I want you to meet my friend, Robert Vesco, and his wife, Pat.' I think I said, 'This is a fellow I talked to you about.'"

The Government had some shaky moments, however, before Mr. Sears was allowed to testify, when the defense challenged the Government's right to grant the witness total immunity in this case. Mr. Sears, who was also indicated 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, Federal Judge Lee P. Gagliardi granted the Government's request. Now there will be no Sears trial.

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

He told, for instance, of writing to Mr. Mitchell about Mr. Vesco on May 18, 1971. That letter, he sent not to Mr. Mitchell's office at the Justice Department but to his home at the Watergate apartments in Washington. It was addressed to "Dear John."

In it, he explained that Mr. Vesco had filed a civil suit against the commission, and "the purpose of this letter is not necessarily to ask any intervention on your part, but simply to make you aware of

the reason why the suit was filed."

"Frankly, Bob's concern is that the suit may be viewed out of context by the Administration. . . . Bob is a good friend otherwise I would not trouble you with this information," Mr. Sears said in his letter.

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

Mr. Sears also told the attorney general, he testified, that "Vesco represents himself to be a friend of some of the the President's family and a supporter of the President in 1968."

Vesco Associate

One of MR. Nixon's nephews, Donald Nixon, is a business associate of Mr. Vesco. Two of the President's brothers, Donald and Edward Nixon, are expected to be witnesses at this trial.

"I would like to assist him [Vesco], and I outlined the problem as I understood it," Mr. Sears testified in an even voice, stopping once and a while to sip water from a paper cup.

He went on: "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 had some discussions with Bill Casey."

William J. Casey at that time was chairman of the S.E.C.

The small courtroom on the ninth floor of the Federal Court House was once again jammed, but it was a very quiet audience. During the morning session, high winds howling outside made hearing difficult. During the afternoon session, the quiet was disturbed by the sirens of fire engines and police cars.

Mr. Sears, however, had little trouble making himself heard as he sat staring through black-rimmed glasses at Mr. Wing.

He said that "after that meeting I left it [the Vesco case] with Mr. Mitchell and I never recall hearing anything back."

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

Mr. Mitchell's office log, which was introduced into evidence, supported Mr. Sears's

contention that he met with Mr. Mitchell on July 6. It said, "3 o'clock saw Harry Sears."

Mr. Sears said that toward the end of December, 1971, as his State Senate term was drawing to a close, he was offered the opportunity to do some legal work for Mr. Vesco, and that he accepted. He was told by Mr. Vesco that, among other things, he was expected to "get John Mitchell" to help in the investigation, and he added, "I said I can only try. Bob, we didn't do too much good last year." Mr. Sears apparently meant earlier in 1971.

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