

Vesco Is Linked

SAN ANTONIO, Tex. Aug. 22 (AP)—A federal gun-running investigation has come to light here with the seizure of an airplane that prosecutors have linked to fugitive financier Robert Vesco.

James Lindsey, a U.S. Customs Service special agent, said that the plane, a twin-engine Lear executive jet, was seized in the predawn hours Wednesday at the San Antonio International Airport. No arrests were made. A Los Angeles stockbroker, Thomas Patrick Richardson, identified himself as the owner of the plane.

Richardson's lawyer, Mack Ausburn of San Antonio, said today that an inspection of the plane by customs agents turned up "absolutely nothing." He said the seizure "is highly unusual. I think it is incredible."

Lindsey said the seizure was made under a federal statute which "has to do with illegal exportation of munitions from this country to a foreign coun-

try." He declined further comment, referring inquiries to a Los Angeles customs office which primarily is handling the investigation. Officials in the Los Angeles office declined to discuss the seizure.

Ausburn said Richardson, a wealthy businessman, denies being a former employee of Vesco but, "I don't think he would deny knowing Vesco."

"My client's attitude is simple," said Ausburn. "It is that he has not violated any law against the United States, that he is not going to run and that he is going to fight for his rights."

Richardson, in testimony to a U.S. Senate committee, has said he paid three former agents of the U.S. Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs \$1,000 each to conduct an electronic search of the Vesco home and properties in 1972. Richardson said Vesco repaid him by giving him gambling chips for a casino in the Bahamas.

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to Seized Plane

Vesco, now living in Costa Rica, is under federal indictment on charges arising from a secret \$200,000 contribution he made to President Nixon's re-election campaign in an alleged attempt to influence an investigation by the Securities and Exchange Commission.

On July 29, Washington sources reported that government investigators had ob-

tained information that weapons and call girls had been smuggled out of this country to Vesco.

According to one source, the guns reportedly were used to arm bodyguards who protect Vesco in his Costa Rican hideaway. Two days later, Vesco, in a letter to the Costa Rican minister of public security, denied the charges and called them "ridiculous and absurd."