

Costa Rica Says Vesco Can Stay

San Jose, Costa Rica

President Daniel Oduber announced yesterday that fugitive American financier Robert Vesco will be permitted to stay in Costa Rica despite a public campaign to expel him as an undesirable.

Oduber said the government has given Vesco no special privileges. He declared that Vesco has had not "the slightest shadow of influence in government affairs."

It was the latest in a string of controversial moves concerning Vesco, who is wanted in the United States on criminal and civil charges.

A Bahamas court rejected pleas for his extradition in 1972, and the Costa Rican Supreme Court has thrown out two similar pleas on technical grounds.

Oduber's decision was in reply to a petition by 26 leaders of Costa Rica's legal, political, academic and religious communities urging Vesco's deportation for alleged undesirable conduct and illegal activities.

Vesco has been living in Costa Rica since 1972 to escape U.S. prosecution on charges of making an illegal \$200,000 contribution to the re-election campaign of former President Nixon to influence an investigation by the Securities and Exchange Commission.

The SEC claims that Vesco looted the scandal-ridden Investors Overseas Services,

a mutual funds complex he controlled, of \$224 million, while investing heavily in Costa Rican enterprises. Stockholders of IOS and individual mutual funds organizations within the complex are suing the financier for recovery of some of the money.

Oduber said of the SEC charge: "Show me the judicial sentence signed by a competent court of justice of any country with a judicial system free of suspicions, and I personally will take the matter to our own courts of justice so they can be acted on with the severity of our laws."

In a televised speech last Wednesday, Vesco denied he took the money and said the attempts to expel him were politically motivated by his enemies in the United States.

Oduber told the petitioners: "It is possible that much of the scandal that has been instigated in the press is owed to the fear of the eventual appearance of the newspaper Excelsior, which is said to be the property of Vesco and his group."

Excelsior will begin publication soon as the third morning paper in Costa Rica. Last June, Oduber presented a bill to Congress that would prohibit foreign ownership in the news media, but no action has been taken.

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4 DEC 74