

Vesco Says He's Italian Now

San Jose, Costa Rica

Fugitive financier Robert Vesco, who fled the United States four years ago to avoid prosecution on fraud and other charges, has given up his U.S. citizenship and become

a naturalized Italian, a spokesman for the multimillionaire said yesterday.

"Mr. Vesco is no longer a U.S. citizen," Alberto Abreu said. "He gave his American citizenship up quite a while ago, and he did it

legally. He is now a citizen of Italy."

Vesco and six associates have been indicted by the federal government on charges of conspiracy, wire fraud, and securities law violations for allegedly stripping the Investors Overseas Services mutual fund and several other enterprises of millions of dollars. The Securities and Exchange Commission has also accused Vesco of "looting" \$224 million from IOS.

Abreu, who said he was authorized to speak for Vesco, declined to give any indication of when and where the switch in citizenship occurred. But he indicated that it did not take place in this Central American nation where Vesco has lived since leaving the United States.

The U.S. Consulate here has said repeatedly there is no record that Vesco has turned in his U.S. passport or renounced his U.S. citizenship.

Abreu, a Dominican-born, naturalized Costa Rican, said, "I imagine he eventually will become a Costa Rica citizen, once he has fulfilled the five-year residence requirement."

Without explaining why the 40-year-old Vesco chose Italian citizenship, Abreu commented that the former New Jersey resident is "of Italian descent."

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* See NYTimes 31 Jul 76, Notes on People.