

'Mystery' POW tied to kidnap

United Press International

SAN DIEGO — A massive investigation by U.S. and Mexican officials and the FBI led to federal charges that the kidnaping of an American diplomat in Mexico was spearheaded by Bobby Joe Keesee, the "soldier of misfortune" who has been held prisoner in Jordan and Vietnam and once flew a stolen plane to Cuba.

Keesee was indicted by a federal grand jury Friday for allegedly "aiding, abetting, inducing and causing" the kidnap of Vice Consul John Patterson in Hermosillo March 28.

Patterson's whereabouts are unknown.

Keesee, already in custody on other charges related to the kidnap, was the "mystery man" who turned up among the U.S. prisoners of war released by North Vietnam. The State Department said at the time that U.S. officials had had no idea there was a civilian American POW.

Keesee was arrested May 28 at his home in Huntington Beach by FBI agents and charged with trying to extort \$250,000 from the government for aid in getting Patterson returned.

At the time, the FBI said



BOBBY JOE KEESSEE
"Held in kidnaping"

Keesee had nothing to do with the kidnaping, but that he had tried to cash in on it.

But the U.S. Attorney's office charged Friday that while Keesee did not actually kidnap Patterson, he made trips to Mexico to put the diplomat under surveillance, scouted properties and locations involved in the crime, and directed "preparation of a hand written \$500,000 ransom note" delivered to the consulate after Patterson disappeared.

Keesee also was accused



JOHN S. PATTERSON
Missing diplomat
—UPI Photos

of telephoning Patterson's wife with ransom demands, and setting up a rendezvous to collect the money.

Mrs. Patterson has said she tried to deliver the ransom but could not keep the rendezvous and has appealed to the kidnapers to get in touch with her for another try.

The Justice Department would not say what new evidence led to the indictment.

He was dubbed a "soldier of misfortune" for his in-

volvement in a series of strange international incidents, often leading to prison terms.

Keesee, originally from Arizona, was an army paratrooper and was decorated for service in Korea. A metal plate was inserted in his wound.

In the 1960s he served two years of a five year prison term for deserting from Ft. Huachuca, Ariz., stealing a light plane and flying it to Cuba after a spree across several states. The Castro government returned him to the United States.

Keesee said at his trial he was acting as a CIA agent, setting up a "cover." The CIA said he had no connection with the agency.

Keesee later turned up among hostages held by Palestinian guerrillas in a hotel in Jordan. He was released unharmed.

He has refused to talk about how he came to be a POW in North Vietnam. But his appearance seemed to confirm a report by a Thai charter pilot that an American hijacked his plane at gunpoint in 1970 and forced him to land on a beach in North Vietnam, where the American got out and vanished.