

1/2/73

The note you added to the ChiTrib 12/28/73 Howard Hughes Indicted story asks if this Air West deal could be Operation Phoenix. I wish I knew the answer. Save for the symbolic, the rising from the ashes, I see no special significance to the core name. I assume it has one that I've missed; esp. if Hunt selected it. None of the few things I've thought of seem to make much sense. I just can't project myself enough into Hunt's special meanings and interpretations and political views to know what he would regard as, for example, risen from the ashes. Perhaps something anti-CIA or anti-Castro or anti-Hunt's friends and co-believers. Maybe some who once Hunt Nixon much. But I don't see any special reason to connect with Hughes or Air West. There was a Greenspan bra-skin but the safe withstood the burglars. And the Ervin committee's earlier approach was an abortion. The indicted Chester Davis is the partner of Archie Cox's brother.

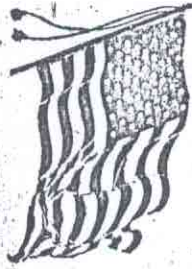
I suggest that Hughes' return to the Bahamas is a result of the Vesco decision on extradition. England is too servile. Ray was not subject to extradition under that treaty but he was extradited. Under the same treaty Vesco was ruled not subject to extradition. Flee Hughes to that jurisdiction!

The treaty is explicit: political crimes are not extraditable. Can you imagine a more political crime than the one with which Ray was charged? This addresses motive, and there could have been no non-political motive.

If you hear anything more about those two Chicago wiremen, I'd like to hear. Even if only names, so I can be alert.

Meanwhile, for what my opinion is worth, Hunt has an ongoing deal that is improved a bit by release pending appeal. He has said less than he could and has not ever been asked all or even the right questions. No whisper on him would not interest.

Thanks and best, HW 1/2/74



# Chicago Tribune

THE WORLD'S

GREATEST NEWSPAPER

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# Howard Hughes

From Tribune Wire Services

**LAS VEGAS, Nev., Dec. 27**—Evasive billionaire Howard Hughes was indicted by a federal grand jury today in connection with his takeover of Air West Airlines.

Hughes was charged with fraud, conspiracy, stock manipulation, and other crimes in his 1969 takeover of the regional airline.

It was the first time criminal charges had been brought against him, despite numerous investigations of his financial record.

HIS FORMER TOP aide and three other associates also named defendants in the nine-count indictment returned Federal District Court here. The indictment accused the men of conspiring to depress the market price of Air West

stock in a roundabout scheme to pressure Air West directors to agree to the Hughes takeover.

Hughes last week reportedly left his hideout in England for the Bahamas where he is said to have taken over the top two floors of Freeport's Xanadu Princess Hotel, a casino resort.

A spokesman for Hughes in Los Angeles said "until we have an opportunity to read what we're accused of, we can't have anything to say about it."

A SPOKESMAN for the Justice Department said attorneys are studying whether Hughes can be extradited to face the charges.

Indicted along with the industrialist were: Robert Mahen, former chief executive officer of the Hughes' Nevada

operations; Chester C. Davis, chief legal counsel for the corporation; David B. Charnay, a Hughes associate and president of Four Star International, a TV and movie production firm; and James H. Hall, who is in charge of land acquisition for Hughes' Nevada operations.

Hughes, who has not been seen in public for years, is reportedly in the Bahamas.

The indictment said the alleged conspiracy took place between June, 1969, and January, 1969. Hughes bought the airline in December, 1968.

THE INDICTMENT said Charnay and two unindicted coconspirators sold a total of 46,000 shares of Air West stock during a two-day period in December, 1968.

Hughes, Mahen, and Davis caused lawsuits to be filed

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# indicted

against Air West directors who had voted against selling out to Hughes' company, the Hughes Tool Co., the indictment said.

Hughes and his associates then used the lawsuits to pressure the recalcitrant directors into changing their votes, the indictment said.

Named as coconspirators but not indicted were Herman Greenspun, editor and publisher of the Las Vegas Sun, who has been involved with Hughes in numerous financial dealing, and George Crocket, former owner, of Alamo Airways and a long-time friend of Hughes.

HE AND THE other defendants if convicted could be sentenced to a maximum of five years in prison and fined \$10,000 on the conspiracy charge. The other charges carry lesser penalties.