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Maheu Denies Anti-Onassis CIA Connection

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Onetime Howard Hughes aide Robert Maheu says he was hired by a competitor of Aristotle Onassis to discredit the Greek millionaire.

But he yesterday denied a report that he was part of a purported CIA "dirty tricks" campaign against the late shipping magnate.

Playboy magazine said Maheu, then-Vice President Richard Nixon and now-Chief Justice Warren Burger all took part in the alleged plot to ruin Onassis after the shipowner had received permission to carry Saudi Arabian oil to the United States.

Burger, an assistant attorney general at the time, denied through a spokesman that he received intelligence reports on the anti-Onassis campaign. Nixon could not be reached for comment and the CIA declined comment.

Maheu, who operated an international management consulting and investigative firm and received a \$500-a-month retainer from the CIA, said in an interview yesterday that he had worked for Stavros Niarchos, a fierce competitor of Onassis.

He said his firm did a study of the Onassis-Saudi Arabian agreement and concluded that by 1960 Onassis could be making a profit of \$200 million a year on the shipments.

"He would have controlled more deadweight (tanker) tonnage than the United States had under its command," Maheu said. "Here was a man in so much control, the question was where he would have gone next with his profits."

"He could have tied up the world and our own government hadn't realized the severity of this."