

Ashland used CIA money illegally

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WASHINGTON (AP) — Ashland Oil Inc. used some of the money it got from the Central Intelligence Agency for admittedly illegal domestic political donations, according to two authoritative sources.

An Ashland spokesman insisted that the CIA had not earmarked the money for political use, but the spokesman admitted that the company may have unintentionally been misleading when it said earlier that the CIA money was "unrelated" to the company's political gifts.

The spokesman conceded that about \$50,000 which Ashland got from the CIA in cash in 1968, 1969 and 1971 was commingled with a secret cash fund used by top Ashland officials to make illegal donations. Also put into the fund were hundreds of thousands of dollars siphoned off secretly from Ashland's own overseas operations.

Two sources familiar with the various federal investigations into Ashland's affairs said some or all of the bills given by the CIA were passed on to U.S. political campaigns. Ashland spokesmen would not deny this, but pointed out that when the fund was eliminated in 1973 it still had more cash in it than the sum of the CIA's cash payments.

The fund was used to make more than \$700,000 in U.S. donations to Richard Nixon, Hubert Humphrey, the Democratic party and others including many still not identified publicly.

The CIA paid Ashland \$50,468 in cash and another \$48,500 in checks allegedly to reimburse the company for the salary of a CIA agent carried on Ashland's payroll.

The checks were deposited in a company bank account and apparently did not pass into the political fund, according to a report Ashland filed this week with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Ashland refuses to give details of the CIA agent's activities, but sources said Thursday the agent worked in Western

Europe until 1973 and has since gone off the Ashland payroll and returned to the United States.

On another matter, a different source said that Ashland paid \$150,000 to the president of the West African nation of Gabon.

Ashland had admitted paying that sum to a "high official" of Gabon after the official threatened to block Ashland's oil

explorations there, but the company refused to identify the recipient.

A source with access to Ashland's files said Thursday that the recipient was Gabon's president, Albert-Bernard Bongo.

Ashland said earlier the recipient of the \$150,000 told the company at the time he wanted it for "social welfare and public purposes."