

Two Oil Firms Plead Guilty for Donations

By Timothy S. Robinson
Washington Post Staff Writer

Two oil companies pleaded guilty yesterday in federal courts here and in Kentucky to charges of making illegal campaign contributions totaling \$225,000.

Gulf Oil Corp. entered its guilty plea here to charges that it illegally gave \$125,000 to 1972 presidential campaigns, with \$100,000 going to President Nixon's re-election effort, \$5,000 to the unsuccessful Democratic campaign of Sen. Wilbur Mills (D-Ark.) and \$10,000 to the unsuccessful drive by Sen. Henry Jackson (D-Wash.).

Ashland Petroleum Gas, a subsidiary of Ashland Oil Inc., pleaded guilty in Kentucky to giving \$100,000 to the Nixon re-election campaign.

Both companies were fined \$5,000 and two company officials were fined \$1,000 each. The officials could have been jailed for a year, but apparently escaped imprisonment because they volunteered their cooperation to the Watergate special prosecution force.

Claude C. Wild Jr., a vice president of Gulf since 1967 who pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge George L. Hart Jr., said the donation was "a mistake in judgment and certainly inexcusable."

In accepting the pleas by Wild and the company to criminal information charges filed by the Watergate special prosecution office, Hart said the criminal acts they admitted may be worse than a crime of violence "because you're corrupting our government."

Hart said he hoped the special prosecutor's office will move against those who accepted the money as well as those who gave it, since "it takes two to commit this crime."

Spokesmen for both Jackson and Mills said the two Democrats did not know the Gulf donation was illegal, and said preparations were

Watergate committee yesterday during its investigation into campaign financing.

Watergate Associate Special Prosecutor Thomas F. McBride, who heads the task force investigating presidential campaign financing, has told newsmen that additional prosecutions are expected, and that as many as two dozen corporations and labor unions are being investigated.

Gulf and its vice president were specifically charged with a nonwillful violation of federal laws prohibiting campaign contributions by corporations.

They were also the first charged with a nonwillful violation of federal laws prohibiting campaign contributions by corporations.

They were also the first charged with illegal contributions to Democratic candidates in 1972, and when this was pointed out to Hart, he exclaimed that at least the organization was "impartial."

Attorney Cloyd Ellott of Pittsburgh, representing the company and Wild, said Gulf has determined "never again (to) use corporate funds" for political contributions.

He said the firm regretted the incident, and claimed that the political system "exerted pressure both on this corporation and this officer" for such donations. He did not expand on this statement in court, and would not comment out of court.

Mellott said also that the donations were not made in an effort to get favor from the government.

Mills, who lost his attempt at the Democratic presidential nomination, is chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, which writes legislation on tax matters that include such elements as oil-depletion allowances. A spokesman for him said the congressman had not been aware of the illegal donation and would return the money from his own pocket if Gulf asks for it.

Jackson, who also failed in his bid, is chairman of the Senate Interior Committee and takes a special interest in oil policy and other energy-related matters. A spokesman said the senator was not aware that corporate funds were involved in the donation, and that a refund to the corporation was being processed.

under way to refund the money.

Yesterday's pleas brought to six the corporations that have pleaded guilty after coming forth to tell the Watergate special prosecutor that they gave illegal corporate campaign donations.

A seventh corporation, American Shipbuilding Co. of Cleveland, is known to be under investigation by the special prosecutor for illegal campaign contributions. Executives for that firm who have been granted immunity appeared before the Senate