

DATE OF CONTRACT BY HUGHES IS CITED

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Award of Glomar Explorer Said to Have Followed Nixon Campaign Gift NYTimes

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LOS ANGELES, Aug. 3—Howard R. Hughes got his secret contract with the Central Intelligence Agency for the ship Glomar Explorer five weeks after making an "emergency" contribution of \$100,000 to President Nixon's 1972 re-election campaign, according to sources familiar with a tax investigation of the ship here.

The sources said that the billionaire industrialist obtained the contract on Dec. 5, 1972. That was a month after the launching of the mystery vessel, designed to raise from the bottom of the Pacific Ocean a Soviet submarine that sank in 1968.

A man* who handled Mr. Hughes' political contributions in 1972 has said that he was approached by aides to the Nixon re-election campaign to make the emergency gift in the last week of the campaign, when, he later learned, the Nixon fund had a multimillion-dollar surplus.

The Glomar Explorer, whose mission was conceived by the C.I.A. in 1969, eventually succeeded in raising part of the submarine from the ocean floor but then lost it.

Connection to C.I.A.

The Glomar Explorer contract gave Mr. Hughes a "connection" that Robert A. Maheu, his former top aide, said Mr. Hughes had been seeking for years as a convenience if he ever encountered difficulties with Federal agencies.

Mr. Maheu testified last week before the Senate committee investigating the Central Intelligence Agency about his role in an alleged attempt in 1960 to assassinate Premier Fidel Castro and other Cuban leaders.

He asserted that Mr. Hughes, on learning of Mr. Maheu's C.I.A. association, importuned him to obtain an agency connection for the Hughes company. Mr. Maheu said he told his employer that he would not help him to bring this about.

* Robert Bennett
(below)

There has been no evidence that the 1972 \$100,000 contribution and the award of the secret C.I.A. contract were connected. But the date of the contract conflicted with previously available information about the ship.

The existence of the 618-foot-long Glomar Explorer became known in May, 1973. At that time an official at the Sun Shipbuilding Company in Chester, Pa., was quoted as saying that the vessel's keel was laid in December, 1971, and that she was launched Nov. 4, 1972.

The contract between the Government and Mr. Hughes's Summa Corporation set forth that the Government would finance and control the Glomar Explorer, that Global Marine Inc. would operate her, and that Summa would pose as the owner to conceal the sub-raising mission, according to sources familiar with the tax inquiry. The billionaire's company was exempted from any costs or responsibility for the ship, these sources said.

Global Marine Inc. is a public held company that owns and operates a fleet of oil-exploration vessels. When construction of the Glomar Explorer was announced in 1973, it was stated that Mr. Hughes had built the ship to mine valuable mineral nodules from the ocean floor, with Global Marine serving as the ship's operator.

C.I.A. sources have privately stated that Mr. Hughes had been engaged as a "C.I.A. cover" because he was the only person wealthy enough to pose as owner of the Glomar Explorer, and because he was intensely security-minded and adept at keeping secrets.

Mr. Hughes had long been both an open and covert financial supporter of Mr. Nixon, as well as other political figures.

At the time in 1972 when he made the emergency \$100,000 gift to the Nixon campaign, he had already openly contributed \$50,000 and had covertly sent \$100,000 in cash to Charles G. Rebozo, a close personal friend of Mr. Nixon.

Mr. Rebozo, who described the two packages of \$50,000 in \$100 bills given him as a "1972 campaign contribution," returned the money to Mr. Hughes's lawyers in 1973 after details of the transaction became public knowledge.

Robert Bennett, who handled campaign contributions for Mr. Hughes in 1972, said that he was approached in the final week of the campaign by Nixon aides and solicited for an additional \$100,000 on the ground that the campaign had some urgent last-minute bills. Mr. Bennett told a reporter that he was surprised to learn after the election that Mr. Nixon's fund in fact had a substantial surplus.

The date of the Glomar Explorer contract, just five weeks after this \$100,000 contribution came to light in the current Los Angeles County investigation into possible tax fraud involving the ship.

Philip Watson, the county tax assessor, recently filed a belated tax bill of \$7,500,000 in back assessments and penalties against the Summa Corporation. He made the assessment when he discovered that James H. Miles, the master of the Glomar Explorer, had documented the ship in Long Beach and signed a sworn statement that she was solely owned by Summa.

Mr. Watson had earlier been told in a letter from Verne Olsen, the Summa controller, that the vessel was registered out of Wilmington, Del., and hence not subject to Los Angeles County taxes.

Mr. Watson then referred the case to the Los Angeles district attorney's office for investigation of possible tax fraud.

In the last two weeks there has been a series of conferences here between C.I.A. representatives and staff members of the assessor's and district attorney's offices.

Neither the assessor nor the district attorney will comment on these conferences. But sources close to the investigation assert that the sworn statement by the captain listing Summa as the Glomar's owner, was intended to conceal the C.I.A. ownership of the vessel.