

WXPOST

Nixon Backs Rebozo's

President Nixon last night defended the actions of his close friend, Charles G. "Bebe" Rebozo, who received a \$100,000 cash contribution from an emissary of billionaire Howard Hughes in two parts in 1969 and 1970 and then returned the money this year.

The circumstances surrounding the \$100,000 are currently being investigated by the Senate select Watergate committee. The office of former special prosecutor Archibald Cox also had begun a preliminary investigation of the money, which was kept in a Florida safe deposit box by Rebozo for nearly three years before being returned to Hughes.

President Nixon offered the first detailed public explanation last night for Rebozo's handling of the money.

Rebozo, the President said, received the money as a Nixon campaign contribution and was prepared to turn it over to the 1972 cam-

aign's finance chairman as soon as one was appointed. "In that interlude," the President said, "after he (Rebozo) received the contribution, and before the finance chairman was appointed, the Hughes company, as you all know, had an internal fight of massive proportions, and he (Rebozo) felt that such a contribution to the campaign might prove to be embarrassing."

Mr. Nixon praised Rebozo for exercising "very good judgment in doing what he did"

In addition, the President criticized the ABC television network for broadcasting a report this week that Mr. Nixon had a \$1 million trust fund managed by Rebozo in Florida, a report that Mr. Nixon charged that ABC ran "knowing it was untrue."

ABC news said that the Senate select Watergate committee and the office of former special prosecutor Cox had information from "an

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important witness from the Miami area" who claimed that Rebozo administered a secret "private investment portfolio" for Mr. Nixon and that the fund might contain unreported Nixon campaign money.

Reliable investigative sources have told The Washington Post that the Senate committee and attorneys from the special prosecutor's office had received such allegations from a Miami woman who claims to have tape recordings of conversations with an officer from Rebozo's bank who discussed such a fund.

However, the sources emphasized that investigators for the Senate committee and Cox's office have found nothing to corroborate the charges.

(ABC's Washington bureau chief, Kevin Delaney, said last night that the President was probably referring to the network's Oct. 22 report that Watergate investigators were looking into a

report that contributions from two large corporations amounting to nearly \$1 million may have become part of a Nixon portfolio.

("We didn't say flat out that it was true, all we said was that investigators were looking into it hours before Archibald Cox was fired," Delaney said.)

In his press conference last night, President Nixon also criticized an earlier California newspaper report that \$1 million of campaign money went to purchase Mr. Nixon's estate in San Clemente.

The Senate Select Watergate committee has been investigating the President's personal finances to determine if Mr. Nixon received any campaign money for personal use. While the committee has received several allegations to this effect, reliable sources said this week that the committee presently has no credible evidence showing such a use of campaign funds.