

Bid to 'Buy' Two Presidents Told

Las Vegas

Howard R. Hughes wanted to make a million-dollar payoff to President Lyndon B. Johnson and later to President Nixon as part of his campaign to halt nuclear testing near his Nevada Resort holdings, according to a sworn court deposition.

The payoffs apparently were never made.

The 1505-page deposition was filed in U.S. District Court in Los Angeles by Robert A. Maheu, former manager of Hughes' extensive Nevada enterprises, in connection with lawsuits the two men filed against each other after Hughes fired Maheu in December 1970.

Maheu, who refused to elaborate on his deposition during an interview in the office of his Las Vegas attorney, said in his sworn testimony that Hughes pressed him to forward \$1 million to President Johnson in 1967 and to Mr. Nixon in 1970.

Maheu said he told another Hughes aide, Frank W. Gay, that he refused to carry out Hughes' instructions because "I was concerned about the desire of Mr. Hughes to want to own the presidents of the United States, choose his successors, or members of the Supreme Court, governors, senators, congressmen and politicians at all levels."

The reported offer of a \$1-million "payoff" to Mr. Nixon apparently was unrelated to the \$100,000 Hughes contribution delivered to President Nixon's close friend, Charles G. (Bebe) Rebozo, in two installments in 1969 and 1970. That contribution is now being investigated.

In his deposition, Maheu

said: "In 1967 I received a handwritten memo from Mr. Hughes wherein Mr. Hughes was asking me to make a million-dollar payoff to a president of the United States (Johnson)."

Other sources familiar with the case said Hughes wanted to make the payment as part of his effort to get the Atomic Energy Commission to halt nuclear testing in Nevada, partly for environmental reasons and because of fears the test explosions would physically damage his \$400 million gambling and hotel empire.

"Again in 1970, I talked with Hughes relative to a matter that Mr. Hughes wanted me to handle forthwith and fly to Key Biscayne, Fla.," Maheu said. "I went to Key Biscayne, met with Rebozo, and I categorically refused to carry on the instructions of Howard Hughes."

The court record is unclear about the purpose of the Florida visit, but one source still close to the Hughes organization told UPI that Maheu's assignment was to offer Rebozo \$1 million in exchange for a promise to call off the nuclear testing.

Along with the deposition, Maheu filed a number of undated memos, each handwritten on legal-sized yellow pads, purportedly by Hughes.

One memo, apparently written in 1970, said: "Someone should start negotiating with the AEC just like buying a hotel... I am ready to dedicate the rest of my life and every cent I possess in a complete fight to outlaw all nuclear testing of every kind and everywhere."

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