

Maheu Charges Hughes Offered Front for CIA

Los Angeles

Robert Maheu testified yesterday that Howard Hughes once asked him to set up one of the billionaire's business organizations as a front for the Central Intelligence Agency.

Maheu, on the witness stand at his \$17.5 million libel suit against Hughes, said he indignantly refused.

The one-time \$500,000-a-year Hughes' employee gave the testimony while outlining a weird range of duties he was called upon to perform for the eccentric recluse who later fired Maheu and told newsmen that "Maheu stole me blind."

Maheu, a former FBI agent, said Hughes first expressed an interest in the CIA in early 1961. Maheu was in Miami at the time and Hughes telephoned him to complain that he was not devoting enough time to Hughes' interests.

"I finally told him it was necessary for me to be in Miami because I was involved in a very sensitive assignment for an intelligence agency of the government," Maheu said.



ROBERT MAHEU
Trial testimony

He said Hughes asked him what agency and he told him it was the CIA. Maheu did not elaborate on his assignment, but it was in the spring of 1961 that the Cuban Bay of Pigs invasion was attempted with CIA backing.

Hughes told him to go ahead with the government work and to accept any other assignments, he said.

In 1968, Maheu said he

told Hughes that his organization had a very poor "image" in Washington and it did not appear there would be a favorable response to Hughes' negotiations to buy another airline, Airwest.

"Mr. Hughes asked me if I could try to make some kind of arrangement with the CIA whereby some part of the Hughes Tool Co. could become a front for the intelligence agency," Maheu said.

Maheu said Hughes explained if his companies ran into problems with government regulatory agencies or became the subject of investigation, it could be pointed out that the Hughes' organization had been doing work for the CIA.

"I said I could not believe what he was telling me and under no circumstances would I aid in such an endeavor," Maheu said.

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