

Maheu's story of Hughes, CIA

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LOS ANGELES — Howard Hughes wanted his business to become a front for the Central Intelligence Agency to give him leverage with federal regulatory agencies, a former top Hughes executive testified in federal court yesterday.

Robert Maheu, a former FBI agent who testified he was involved with the CIA while working for Hughes, said he refused to help the mysterious billionaire accomplish the linkup.

Maheu testified at the trial of his \$17.5 million libel suit against Hughes for the billionaire's statement that Maheu was fired as head of the Hughes Nevada empire because "he stole me blind."

Maheu has spent the week detailing for the jury the unusual nature of his work for Hughes, for which he was paid a half million dollars a year.

Hughes learned of Maheu's links to the CIA in 1960 or early 1961, Maheu testified, when he had to spend a lot of time in Miami "on a very sensitive assignment for a government intelligence agency."

Maheu identified the agency as the CIA. He did not reveal the nature of the "sensitive assignment," but the time referred to is when the CIA was mounting the Bay of Pigs invasion against Cuba.

He also was working for Hughes, Maheu said, and Hughes complained to him that he was neglecting the billionaire's interests.

"I finally received permission from my major contact in the intelligence to reveal to Hughes the necessity" for the Miami work, Maheu said.

Eight years later, Maheu said, "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.

"He pointed out that if he ever became involved with the government — with a regulatory body or investigative agency — he thought it would very beneficial to him...

"I told him I couldn't believe what he was telling me and under no circumstances would I assist him in such an endeavor."

In other testimony, Maheu said Hughes wanted to gain favor with then vice president Lyndon Johnson and told him to let Johnson know that Hughes would give financial backing to "any candidate Johnson would like to see elected."

Maheu said it was learned Johnson wanted to help John Connally in his campaign to become governor of Texas, so Hughes ordered money be given to Connally.