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CIA

Hughes Left Riddles Behind In Acapulco

By Marlise Simons

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ACAPULCO, Mexico, April 16—“I read in the newspapers that everyone's looking for the millionaire's will. What if it were right here inside?”

The plainclothes guard at a Mexican federal building overlooking Acapulco Bay gestured toward a room where two desks and four filing cabinets containing documents are locked and sealed away.

The office furniture and the contents belong in one way or another to the empire of the late Howard Robard Hughes, and the guard's idle comment reflects the waves of curiosity, speculation and suspicion stirred up by the reclusive billionaire's passage through this lovely resort.

Government officials acknowledge, with some expressions of puzzlement, that the lawyer representing Hughes' Summa Corp. in Mexico, Antonio Correa, has so far made no attempt to take possession of the desks and filing cabinets or of other office and medical equipment left behind when Hughes' aides suddenly loaded the dying industrialist aboard a Lear ambulance jet for his last airplane flight.

Mexican authorities admit that much of what went on during Hughes' eight-week stay here is still as unclear as the intentions of Hughes' heirs and aides toward the debris of his passage.

But, in building a case against one of his aides to support charges of forgery of immigration documents, officials here have, they believe, discovered the shape of, at least, some of the pieces of the puzzle.

More than a hundred pages of testimony gathered from three Hughes aides and a number of Mexicans, including the housekeeper and security personnel of the Princess Hotel where Hughes stayed, airport employees and immigration officials, offer a picture of increasing alarm as it became clear that the playboy-industrialist-recluse was dying.

For example, on the last morning of Hughes' life his aides—dressed only in their underwear, by one account—were rushing about in a state of near panic, according to several witnesses.

here during their investigations.

They quote Crow as saying he had not had any long conversations with his boss in more than 20 years, but say he proudly recalled that when he took a light into Hughes' room during a power failure in March the industrialist greeted him by name.

Crow and the other two aides whose testimony is included in the Mexican investigation said they took turns working two weeks on and two weeks off, going back to their homes in the United States during their time off with all travel expenses paid.

The other two, Eric Bundy, 71, and Clarence Waldron, 83, testified that they never saw the billionaire leave his bed during his time in Acapulco. The investigators' documents quote Waldron as saying that although Hughes “normally took his decisions by giving written orders, in Acapulco he did so only verbally.”

The charge was dismissed by a Mexican federal judge for “lack of sufficient evidence,” but the government has appealed the dismissal.

Waldron, whom the police say was Hughes' bodyguard, worked for the Hughes company since 1957, but is quoted in the testimony as saying he graduated into the inner circle only a decade ago.

Police describe him as a Mormon, quiet, easygoing and clearly attached to Hughes. They say he told them his salary was between \$2,500 and \$3,000 biweekly, plus expenses.

The third aide, Eric Bundy, was described by investigators and others close to the case as “self-assured, intelligent and clearly in charge.” The Mexican doctor called in on Hughes' last morning said Bundy was “apparently in charge” and “obeyed by everyone.”

Bundy is quoted as saying he had worked for the Hughes organization 24 years but that he had had personal and direct contact with his boss only during the past eight years. As Hughes' secretary, the documents say, his duties included taking care of correspondence and files.

By his own testimony, Bundy “saw Hughes every day [but] never talked directly with him. Direct contact, he is quoted as saying, “was not permitted by other aides . . . who took turns in attending to Hughes.”

The mysteries surrounding Hughes' passage here do not end, Mexican authorities say, with his departure. The first flight plan filed for the blue-and-white hospital jet that whisked him away showed the destination as Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. Half an hour before departure, that was changed to New Orleans, via Mexico City and Tampico, with Mobile, Ala., listed as an alternative landing site.

Police say they were surprised to learn that the plane carrying Hughes' body had landed, instead, at Houston, Tex.

When Dr. Wilbur Thain, described as Hughes' chief physician, flew in to join two American doctors and one Mexican doctor, already in attendance, his suitcase full of medicine was held at the airport by Mexican customs authorities.

Clyde Crow, a Hughes aide who said he was paid about \$250 a week for such general services as driving and garbage collection, testified later that he was sent off with a “gratuity” to retrieve the suitcase.

According to a deposition Crow gave officials investigating for the Mexican attorney general, he paid the “gratuity” but does not recall how large it was.

Police describe Crow as “a simple sort of a man” who spoke of Hughes with affection. Sixty-six years old, he was the lowest-ranking of the three Hughes aides detained by police