

# Nixon's Confidence in Rebozo

## Washington

The White House said yesterday that President Nixon is confident that his friend C. G. Rebozo acted properly in receiving a \$100,000 gift from Howard R. Hughes, the billionaire recluse.

Presidential spokesman Gerald L. Warren made the statement toward the end of a heated and prolonged exchange with reporters on the propriety of the gift, which Rebozo has said was intended as a campaign contribu-

tion for the President but was kept in a safety deposit box, unused for three years, and then returned.

After refusing to answer several questions as to whether Mr. Nixon thought his friend and neighbor in Key Biscayne, Fla., had acted properly, Warren finally said:

"I thought this need not be spoken but, of course, the President is confident that Rebozo acted in the proper fashion."

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Warren had said Tuesday,

without supplying any detail, that the President had learned earlier this year of the gift, made in two payments, the last in 1970.

Under a barrage of questions yesterday, he said the President learned of the gift before Rebozo returned it and also was informed when the money was sent back to the donor. But he would not say whether Nixon ordered the money returned.

Existence of the donation was disclosed recently in testimony in a civil suit in

Los Angeles in which a former Hughes executive, Robert A. Maheu, is suing Hughes on a libel charge. Maheu said the money had been provided for the use of the President.

Rebozo, a millionaire businessman who assisted Mr. Nixon in the purchase of his homes in Florida and San Clemente, Calif., told investigators for the Senate Watergate committee that the money had been intended for the 1970 congressional campaigns.

The statement by Warren yesterday that Mr. Nixon is confident that Rebozo had acted properly was considered significant because a number of questions have been raised about both the legality and the propriety of the gift.

There are at least three possibilities that the gift could be illegal, if Rebozo's account is true:

1 -- If it was all in corporate funds, the donation would have been in violation

of the federal campaign contributions by corporations.

2 -- If it was an individual donation, a gift tax should have been paid on everything above \$3000.

3 -- Unless the gift was to a campaign committee operating only in one state, it should have been reported and made a public record as part of the campaign reporting requirements.

As far as anyone knows, Rebozo has never held any position on a campaign committee for a party or an indi-

vidual. Further, at the time the gift was received, the Hughes empire was contemplating hotel-casino acquisitions that would require government approval.

*New York Times*