

F.B.I. Man Appears To Contradict Nixon On Hughes Funds

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 19—An agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation has given his superiors an account that appears to contradict President Nixon's version of how a secret \$100,000 gift from Howard R. Hughes, the billionaire industrialist, was handled.

Mr. Nixon reportedly told a group of Representatives last week that his confidante and sometime business partner, C. G. Rebozo of Miami, "had the F.B.I. check it out."

The F.B.I., Mr. Nixon reportedly said, had the 1,001 \$100 bills fingerprinted and the serial numbers checked to make sure that the money originally given to Mr. Rebozo for Mr. Nixon was the same money that was returned.

"So maybe Mr. Rebozo isn't so dumb," said the President, according to notes made by Representative Charles W. Whalen Jr., an Ohio Republican.

Mr. Nixon made his comment after reports that the Watergate committee was investigating the \$100,000 to see if it had been used for other than campaign purposes.

Kenneth Whitaker, the spe-

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cial agent in charge of the Miami field office of the F.B.I. who is the agent to whom Mr. Nixon reportedly referred, has told his superiors that Mr. Rebozo asked him to verify that the \$100,000 returned to Mr. Hughes was the same money he had been given.

Mr. Whitaker, a personal friend of Mr. Rebozo, said he could not do it.

He said that the serial numbers on the bill that he saw were not consecutive nor were the bills new.

Mr. Whitaker, called to Washington to be interviewed by the Watergate committee staff, told superiors in the Justice Department that Mr. Rebozo showed him the money about six months before it was returned.

Mr. Rebozo had the money in safety deposit boxes in his Key Biscayne Bank and Trust Company, where President Nixon and members of his family maintain checking accounts.

Mr. Whitaker declined comment.

However, sources said he had been asked to explain why he had such a conversation with a private citizen without reporting to his superiors, and why he did not immediately report having seen the \$100,000.

Mr. Rebozo has told The Miami Herald that he did not take an inventory of the bills or take down their serial numbers until he decided to return them. He told the Herald that this was after the Senate Watergate committee had begun its investigation. It is not known if the Hughes Organization has a record of the serial numbers on the bills that were given to Mr. Rebozo.

The money was sent to Mr. Rebozo for Mr. Nixon in 1970 in two shipments of \$50,000. A former aide of Mr. Hughes, Robert Maheu, has said half the money was supposed to bring a favorable ruling on an antitrust problem.

Different Stories

Robert Danner, the manager of a gambling casino and hotel owned by Mr. Hughes, who delivered the money, said in a deposition that it was for the 1970 Congressional elections.

Mr. Rebozo has said he put the money in safe deposit boxes to hold for the 1972 Presidential election and did not tell Mr. Nixon about it.

In a news conference on Oct. 26, Mr. Nixon praised his friend's handling of the money.

"Let me say that he showed, I think, very good judgment in doing what he did," the President said. "He received a contribution. He was prepared to turn it over to the finance chairman when the finance chairman was appointed.

"But in that interlude after he received the contribution and before the finance chairman was appointed, the Hughes company had an internal fight of massive proportions, and he felt that such a contribution to the campaign might prove to be embarrassing."

"At the conclusion of the campaign he decided that it would be in the best interests of everybody concerned, rather than to turn the money over then to be used in the '74 cam-

paigns, to return it intact.

"And I would say that any individual, and particularly a banker, who would have a contribution of \$100,000 and not touch it because it was turned back in exactly the form it was received, I think that's a pretty good indication that he is a totally honest man.

"Which he is."

Mr. Danner, a one-time F.B.I. agent and former city manager of Miami, said he delivered half the money to Mr. Rebozo at the Key Biscayne Bank, and the other half at President Nixon's home at San Clemente.

He said he could not remember which delivery was made first, but he said he told Mr. Rebozo when he visited the bank "here is the first or the second installment as the case may be."

All the money was in cash. In a copyrighted interview

with The Miami Herald. Mr. Rebozo discussed the Hughes gift at length.

"In the beginning, Danner had called me and wanted me to come to Washington or New York," Mr. Rebozo said.

"I'm not sure which city. They wanted to contribute \$50,000. Danner was not with Howard Hughes at the time. This was during the 1968 campaign.

"He introduced me to an attorney there in Washington who wanted to give the money directly to the President and I told him there was no chance of that.

"The President has never handled money . . . even his personal money, he doesn't handle.

"The attorney was Ed Morgan. Now, this isn't to be confused with Ed Morgan who was later an advance man.

This is Morgan from the law firm of Welch & Morgan.

"The more I talked with him, the more I felt disinclined to accept it. I notice in the press that Danner says in his deposition that Don Nixon was involved.

"I don't recall that. Don Nixon may have been in town, but I don't recall that as being the reason.

Mr. Rebozo said at first he refused to accept money from the Hughes people because of the embarrassment suffered by Mr. Nixon after his brother borrowed \$205,000 from a Hughes corporation in 1958.

At one point, "Danner even got mad," because he wouldn't take money for Mr. Nixon from the Hughes group, Mr. Rebozo said.

Finally, he said, he relented and agreed to take the money. The first \$50,000 was delivered

in July, 1970, and the second \$50,000 some months later, he said.

The money, all in cash, was stored in safety deposit boxes in Mr. Rebozo's bank on Key Biscayne.

"The reason I put it in the vault was that we had no finance director at the time and I was waiting for him to be named," Mr. Rebozo said. "In the meantime, something happened between Maheu and Hughes and they had all that flap out there and I began to get memories of that \$205,000 situation."

"I thought I would just sit tight and wait to see if this blew over, and then use it. It didn't get any better, so then I thought, well maybe it will still quiet down and we can use it in the '74 Congressional race, because heaven knows he'll need more help than ever

before. But it just got worse and worse, and I gave it back."

Mr. Rebozo said he and one of his attorneys had access to the boxes with the \$100,000 and said he had told Rose Mary Wood, Mr. Nixon's personal secretary, "just for insurance."

After the 1972 Presidential election, Mr. Rebozo said he decided he ought to tell the President about the money.

Mr. Rebozo said he returned the money on June 5 of this year after the Watergate committee began inquiring about it.

Mr. Rebozo said the money returned was the same money he had received.

"I wanted to make absolutely sure that there was no question about it being the identical bills. It wasn't good judgment on my part.

"It was more, as it turned out, stupid luck."