

Hughes Airline Buy Is Probed

Washington

The Senate Watergate committee is investigating charges that President Nixon's brother helped get approval of the sale of an airline to billionaire Howard Hughes in 1969, it was learned yesterday.

Committee sources said two former associates of the billionaire, Robert Maheu and John Meier, claimed that F. Donald Nixon interceded with the President to approve the sale of Air West to Hughes. Donald Nixon denied the charges and a committee source said, "We consider the claims of Maheu and Meier to be allegations at this point."

A total of 16 persons who

currently work for Hughes have been subpoenaed and committee sources said it was likely that Donald Nixon, Maheu and Meier would all be called to testify next month when the hearings resume. U.S. District Judge John J. Sirica, acting on a committee request, has granted Meier immunity in the investigation.

The probe is tied to a \$100,000 cash contribution which Hughes associates gave to C. G. (Bebe) Rebozo, one of the President's closest friends, in 1969 and 1970. Rebozo has said he kept the money in a safe deposit box until he returned it to Hughes last June.

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