

# Watergate Investigators Say They Find No Evid

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 24 — The Senators on the Watergate committee were told yesterday by their investigators that no evidence had been developed to contradict the contention of Charles G. Rebozo that he kept \$100,000 in his safe-deposit box for three years before returning it to agents of Howard R. Hughes.

Nonetheless, Samuel Dash, the committee's chief counsel, said today that Mr. Rebozo, a close friend of President Nixon,

would definitely be called as a witness when the panel's public hearings resume next week.

The committee met for more than three hours yesterday in closed session and heard a report from the staff on evidence gathered since the committee went into recess before Thans-ving.

After hearing the staff report, the Senators, voted, 4 to 3, with all the Republicans objecting, to begin at least six days of hearings next Tuesday.

According to persons who attended the meeting yesterday, the following unannounced actions were also taken:

¶ Senator Sam J. Ervin Jr., Democrat of North Carolina, the chairman, decided that the committee would not hear public testimony on the relationship between the Hughes organization and F. Donald Nixon, the President's brother.

¶ Mr. Ervin also decided against further testimony on a proposal by formr White-

House officials to break into the office of Hank Greenspun, the Las Vegas publisher.

¶ Senator Howard. Baker Jr., of Tennessee, the committee's ranking Republican, told his colleagues that he was conducting a separate, private investigation into allegations of military spying within the White House.

¶ The committee agreed unanimously to turn over evidence concerning Robert L. Vesco, the fugitive financier, to Federal prosecutors in New York City.

### Nixon Bars Meeting

In another development, the White House press secretary, Ronald L. Ziegler, said today that President Nixon would not agree to a personal meeting with the Senate Watergate committee. The committee voted yesterday to seek such a meeting.

Mr. Ziegler did not respond directly to a question about whether the President would

answer written questions submitted by the committee.

The first three days of hearings are to deal with the Hughes-Rebozo transaction. From accounts today by Senators and staff members who attended the meeting yesterday, it was possible to piece together an outline of some of the evidence that the staff has developed.

The Senators were told Mr. Rebozo had sworn that in 1970 he received \$100,000 in hundred-dollar bills from associates of Mr. Hughes, the billionaire industrialist, and that the money was intended to be a contribution to Mr. Nixon's 1972 re-election campaign.

Mr. Rebozo reportedly said that it had been a mistake for him to leave the money in a safe-deposit box. But he said that was what he had done and that it was not until after he was visited by Internal Revenue Service agents last Money.

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## ence Contradicting Rebozo on Funds

Mr. Dash was quoted by one person at the meeting as telling the Senators, "At this point, we have no proof that it left the safe-deposit box, but we do have conflicting testimony on why it was there."

The Senators were also told there was no direct evidence that Mr. Nixon knew of the money given to Mr. Rebozo. Mr. Rebozo insisted that he had never told the President, although there was sworn testimony that Mr. Nixon attended a meeting in the summer of 1968 at which the possibility of a Hughes donation was raised.

The staff members reportedly indicated that they would advance a theory in the public hearings that the payment had been made in return for a decision by John N. Mitchell, then Attorney General, to permit Mr. Hughes to purchase the Dunes hotel in Las Vegas.

According to the investigators, Richard W. McLaren, who was then in charge of the Justice Department's Antitrust Divi-

sion, advised that the purchase would violate antitrust laws, and the late J. Edgar Hoover, then director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, sent Mr. Mitchell a Stong memorandum objecting to the purchase.

Nevertheless, Mr. Mitchell agreed in March, 1970, to permit the acquisition.

Republican staff members reportedly argued at the meeting that there had been no relationship between Mr. Mitchell's decision and the \$100,000 contribution. They noted that there was no evidence that Mr. Mitchell knew of the specific contribution, and noted that the Hughes interests eventually abandoned plans to add the Dunes to the other casino they owned.

### Vesco Trial Cited

Senator Lowell P. Weicker Jr., Republican of Connecticut, said today that he feared the public hearings would prejudice Mr. Mitchell's chances for a fair trial in the Vesco case and that the former Attorney General would be placed in

a position where, because of the trial scheduled for next month, he could not answer public charges against him.

Mr. Dash said that Mr. Mitchell would be given the opportunity to file an affidavit with the panel responding to the charges.

Senator Ervin was said to have decided not to allow hearings concerning F. Donald Nixon because he thought that to do so would open the committee to accusations of attacking the President by harassing his family.

The committee's investigators told the Senators they were convinced that F. Donald Nixon's telephone was tapped by the Secret Service because he and an agent of Mr. Hughes had gone to the Dominican Republic to negotiate an oil and mining lease with the Government there.

The Senators were told that the staff had a document showing Mr. Mitchell was the "action officer" on matters concerning the President's brother.