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COURTS POSTPONES HUGHES DECISION

Ruling on a Bench Warrant Put Off After Billionaire's Absence From Court

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RENO, Jan. 25—Lawyers for Howard R. Hughes successfully forestalled today the issuance of a bench warrant for their billionaire client—at least until next Wednesday.

Mr. Hughes, who has not appeared in public in more than two decades, was due in Federal District Court here today to be arraigned on criminal charges of stock manipulation, conspiracy and wire fraud. The charges, which relate to Mr. Hughes's 1968 purchase of Air West, are contained in a Federal grand jury indictment handed up Dec. 27.

The reclusive Mr. Hughes, as expected, did not appear in court but remained in his hotel, hiding place in the Bahamas. Although a battery of lawyers appeared on his behalf, Judge Bruce Thompson ruled that none was his official represen-

tative because none had submitted a signed authorization from Mr. Hughes.

United States Attorney V. DeVoe Heaton, noting that attempts to serve Mr. Hughes with a subpoena, had been unsuccessful, asked that a bench warrant be issued.

Moses Lasky, a San Francisco attorney who proposes to represent Mr. Hughes, objected. He said there was no need for a warrant until Judge Thompson ruled on his motion that the

indictment be dismissed. He declared that Mr. Hughes should be treated no better than any other citizen, but neither should he be treated any worse."

Hearing Set Wednesday

Denying requests for longer postponements, Judge Thompson set next Wednesday for a hearing of arguments on the motion for dismissal and indicated that he would rule on the bench warrant then.

Four co-defendants of Mr. Hughes named in the nine-count indictment did appear in court, but only Robert A. Maheu was arraigned. Mr. Maheu, chief officer of Mr. Hughes's \$300-million hotel and gambling operations in Nevada until he was dismissed in December, 1970, pleaded not guilty to all seven counts on which he was named. Judge Thompson ordered Mr. Maheu released upon the posting of a \$10,000 personal recognizance bond.

The other defendants are Chester C. Davis, chief counsel for Mr. Hughes's Summa Corporation; David B. Charnay, president of Four Star International, a Los Angeles television and motion picture production company, and James H. Nall, who is in charge of Nevada land acquisition for Mr. Hughes.

The motion to dismiss the indictments was filed earlier this week by the Summa Corporation on behalf of Messrs. Hughes, Davis and Nall. Judge Thompson said that should he find any merit in the motion, it would apply to all defendants.

Mr. Hughes's attorneys were also taking other legal moves. Judge Thompson read aloud a telegram from Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas denying a writ of mandamus sought by Mr. Hughes. And a

Hughes spokesman revealed outside of court that a motion had been filed in the Supreme Court of the Bahamas asserting that Mr. Hughes's civil rights as a resident of the Bahamas would be violated if he were arrested by the United States authorities.