

Nixon-Danner May Meeting Confirmed

By JOHN M. CREWDSON

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 25—The White House acknowledged today that President Nixon met last May with Richard G. Danner, a Las Vegas gambler who delivered a \$100,000 payment in 1970 from Howard R. Hughes to Charles G. Rebozo, Mr. Nixon's close friend.

In response to questions about reports of the meeting, Gerald L. Warren, the deputy White House press secretary, characterized it as a "courtesy visit" of five or 10 minutes by Mr. Danner to the President's Camp David, Md., retreat.

Mr. Warren said that the brief conversation had not touched on the Hughes money, a subject that Mr. Warren has previously maintained that Mr. Nixon and Mr. Danner never discussed.

The White House did not immediately comment on a related report in The New York Times today that Mr. Danner had told the Senate Watergate committee of an earlier meeting between himself and the President at Mr. Nixon's San Clemente, Calif., estate, just after Mr. Danner says he passed part of the Hughes money to Mr. Rebozo.

Version From Rebozo

Mr. Rebozo, who has said that he received \$50,000 from Mr. Danner at San Clemente in July, 1970, and \$50,000 more from him a few months later, maintains that he held the cash in a safe deposit box for three years but did not advise Mr. Nixon of the money until after his re-election to the Presidency in November, 1972.

Mr. Warren told reporters earlier this month that the President had never discussed any contributions from Mr. Hughes with Mr. Danner, who worked in Mr. Nixon's 1968 Presidential campaign and who now manages the Hughes-owned

Sands Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas.

Mr. Danner's secretary reached by telephone this afternoon, said that he had left the country and could not be found for comment on reports of his testimony about the meetings before a closed session of the Watergate committee last month.

The committee plans to call Mr. Rebozo and Mr. Danner as witnesses next week when it begins three days of public hearings on the circumstances surrounding the receipt, and eventual return, of the Hughes payment, and allegations that it was intended to bring favorable Government action bearing on some of Mr. Hughes's interests.

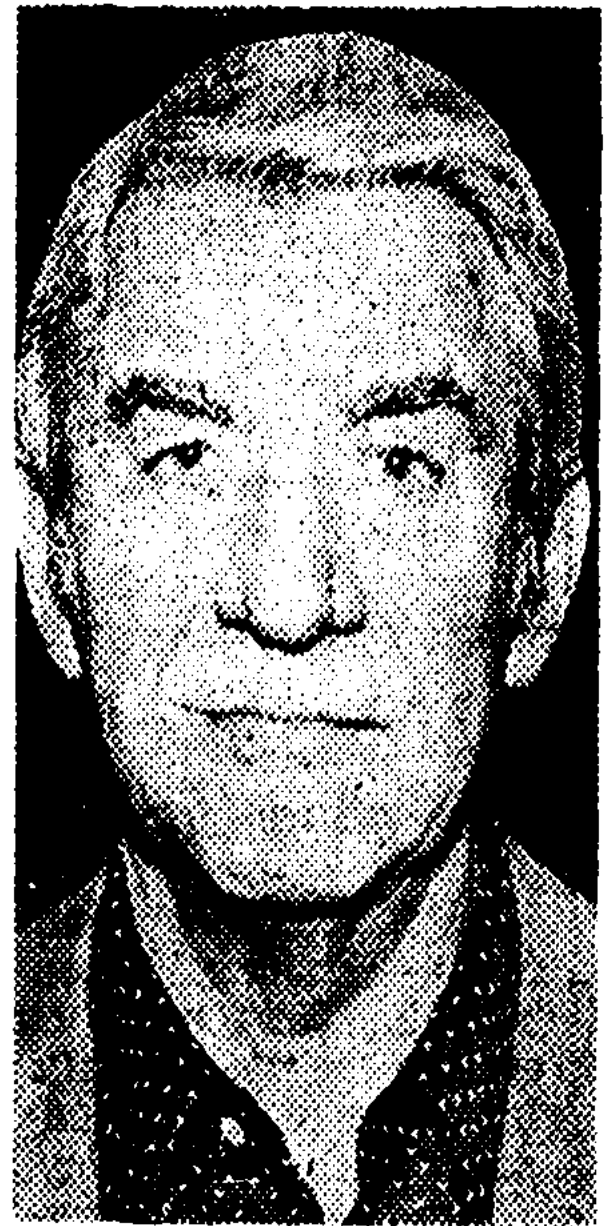
Mr. Danner is a long-time friend of the President who first introduced him to Mr. Rebozo 23 years ago.

According to sources close to the committee's investigation of the Hughes affair, Mr. Danner told investigators that the possibility of obtaining a contribution from Mr. Hughes was first mentioned at a meeting in Washington in the summer of 1968. Both Mr. Rebozo and Mr. Nixon, who was then the Republican Presidential candidate, attended the meeting, according to the committee report.

And both Mr. Nixon and Mr. Rebozo, Mr. Danner is understood to have recalled, discussed the desirability of such a contribution without mentioning a specific amount. Mr. Danner then reportedly made contact with a Hughes representative who expressed interest, but the arrangement is said to have fallen through when Mr. Rebozo balked at a request that any donation be acknowledged to Mr. Hughes by Mr. Nixon or on his behalf.

After Mr. Danner was hired by the Hughes organization in February, 1969, he was reportedly dispatched, on Mr. Hughes's behalf, on a number of missions involving Mr. Nixon or his Administration.

One such assignment, committee sources said, resulted in a Justice Department decision to reverse a ruling by its anti-



United Press International
Richard G. Danner

trust division that would have prevented Mr. Hughes from purchasing more than the five Las Vegas hotels he then owned.

This decision was said to have been made at a meeting with John N. Mitchell, then the Attorney General, in March, 1970.

Robert Maheu, a former Hughes aide, has alleged that Mr. Danner told him upon returning from this meeting that the Hughes empire had "incurred a political obligation."

But Watergate committee sources concede they had no evidence showing that Mr. Mitchell was aware that Mr. Danner would deliver \$50,000 to Mr. Rebozo at San Clemente four months later.

Mr. Danner reportedly has told the committee staff that, after he handed over the \$100 bills, Mr. Rebozo led him into Mr. Nixon's office, where he and the President talked not of the money but of how difficult it was becoming to book "clean" shows into Las Vegas hotels.

Mr. Danner and Mr. Rebozo have said that the second installment was delivered at Mr. Rebozo's Key Biscayne, Fla., home the following August.