

# A Scenario on Hughes' \$100,000



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**S**ENATE Watergate investigators have written a fascinating scenario of the Hughes-Nixon connection.

Early in 1970, Attorney General John Mitchell brushed aside the objections of his underlings and cleared the legal obstacles for billionaire Howard Hughes to purchase the Dunes Hotel in Las Vegas.

Later the same year, Hughes aide Richard Danner delivered \$100,000 in two separate \$50,000 bundles to President Nixon's closest friend, Bebe Rebozo.

A former Hughes aide, Robert Maheu, has testified that the second \$50,000 payment was connected with Hughes' attempt to acquire the casino-hotel.

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**T**HE SENATE scenario gives this chronology:

January, 1970: Danner was dispatched to Washington to confer with Attorney General Mitchell about the Dunes acquisition. "Mitchell told Danner he would let the boys look it over," related the investigators.

Early March: Mitchell called his antitrust chief, Richard McLaren, to advise him that Nevada's Governor Paul Laxalt wanted the Justice Department to let Hughes purchase the Dunes. Mitchell quoted the governor as saying "that the Dunes was hoodlum owned and if Hughes could buy it, he could clean it up." Laxalt told investigators that he had never spoken to Mitchell about the Dunes, that the hotel was not run by the Mafia and that he

would have opposed its acquisition by Hughes.

March 12: McLaren reported back to Mitchell that "the Dunes purchase would clearly violate the merger guidelines."

March 19: Danner dropped by Mitchell's office again. The Attorney General disregarding the warning of his subordinates, said "he could see no problem" that would prevent Hughes from buying the Dunes. The acquisition, said Mitchell, "met the guidelines." Danner immediately "communicated with Maheu and advised him that they had permission to purchase the Dunes Hotel."

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**M**ARCH 20: Danner and Maheu flew to Key Biscayne. Sometime during the next two days, Danner met with Rebozo. But Danner denied to the investigators that the Dunes was discussed.

March 26: McLaren saw an FBI memo reporting that Danner had claimed he had received permission from the antitrust division to purchase the Dunes. Indignant, McLaren wrote a two-page memo to Mitchell "reviewing their earlier conversations." McLaren noted in his memo his hope that Danner's boast "was an erroneous impression."

The investigators' document reported to the seven Watergate Senators: "We have interviewed all of the antitrust division personnel, who should have received the Dunes acquisition, and none of them have any recollection of seeing or hearing about the case . . ."