

Hughes Gift**Possible Link
Of Rebozo to
Air West Deal****Washington**

The staff of the Senate Watergate committee has obtained information that tends to contradict public assertions by Charles G. (Bebe) Rebozo that no one from the Howard Hughes organization ever mentioned to him the billionaire's pending takeover of Air West, a struggling California-based carrier.

A partial draft report by staff investigators, which has not yet been made public, includes a hand-written expense statement from Richard G. Danner, a Hughes aide who delivered to Rebozo \$100,000 of the billionaire's funds between late 1969 and mid-1970.

A copy of the report was leaked to the New York Times.

The entry by Danner for the period of Feb. 3-5, 1970, reads as follows:

"To Miami, Fla., and Nassau, G.B. . . . contact with C. G. Rebozo re TWA suit, Air West matters. Meals and entertainment, \$125."

The Watergate committee has been investigating the possibility of a relationship between the \$100,000, which Rebozo has said he assumed was a contribution to President Nixon's re-election campaign, and government actions taken in connection with any of Hughes' varied financial interests.

In a rare interview last year with the Miami Herald, Rebozo, a Miami banker and longtime friend of Mr. Nixon, raised the suggestion that the money he received from Danner might have been tied to the Air West matter.

"Then there was the claim that Hughes bought Air West by contributions

through me," he said. "They never even mentioned Air West to me, Maheu or anyone else. They never mentioned any favors."

He referred to Robert A. Maheu, the former head of Hughes' Nevada operations who, as Danner's superior, arranged for him to pass the 1000 \$100 bills, in two equal installments, to the Florida banker.

Danner at the time managed the Hughes owned Frontier Hotel in Las Vegas, and now heads the Sands Hotel there, also a part of the Hughes chain.

Maheu was discharged by the reclusive billionaire in December, 1970, and is suing his former employer over Hughes public remark two years ago that Maheu "stole me blind."

The results of the Watergate committee's investigation of the Air West takeover by Hughes will be contained in a separate report to be completed later this week, committee sources said.

But they indicated that Rebozo, in confidential testimony, has not deviated from

his public assertion that he never discussed the matter with any Hughes employee.

Mr. Nixon approved on July 21, 1969, a recommendation by the Civil Aeronautics Board that Hughes be permitted to purchase the airline, now Hughes Airwest, then in severe financial straits.

But the merger was not consummated until April 3, 1970—exactly two months after Danner's expense records state that he discussed the Air West situation with Rebozo.

There are varying accounts of when the two \$50,000 payments passed between Danner and Rebozo, but Rebozo places the deliveries in July and August, 1970.

Maheu, however, who accompanied Danner to Rebozo's Key Biscayne home with one of the installments, has said he recalls that the visit took place around August of 1969, shortly after Mr. Nixon signed the merger order.

New York Times