

Civiletti Warns Against Leaks

AP
Associated Press

Attorney General Benjamin R. Civiletti, angered by what he called a flood of leaks, told Justice Department employees yesterday they will be fired if found to have given reporters confidential information from criminal investigations.

Speaking to more than 800 employees at two special meetings, Civiletti said, "I condemn severely those few who have caused these leaks and violated the trust placed in them."

He said he was convinced that 99.9 percent of department employees did not violate the regulations against leaking such information.

He specifically cited the leaks in the FBI's Abscam political corruption investigation that has implicated eight members of Congress. Their names have been published on the basis of leaked information, although no charges have been brought against them.

Civiletti read the regulations against such leaks to the audiences and said no employee could protest that he or she was unaware of them because the entire text had been circulated to everyone in the department by his predecessor, Griffin Bell, last July 3.

"If any department employee leaks confidential information from an investigation, if found, he or she will lose their position," Civiletti said. "If not found, at least that employee will lose honor and self-respect."

Civiletti said he would send videotapes and transcripts of his 25-minute address to Justice Department offices around the country.

He told the employees that leaks jeopardize the investigations the department is conducting, run the risk of harm to informants, witnesses and department employees, jeopardize the right to a fair trial and sometimes injure innocent people.

He said the blame for leaks could not be laid on news reporters. He said reporters' appeals to department employees for such information are "proper," although those appeals may be based on an effort to capitalize on the employee's fear, pride, envy, anger or patriotism.