

Gingrich's defense in turmoil

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WASHINGTON (AP) - Indicating a defense strategy in turmoil, Speaker Newt Gingrich has hired a legal malpractice lawyer to represent him in an investigation of his ethical conduct. His former attorney said Wednesday he refused to handle the speaker's defense any longer.

Mr. Gingrich hired Randy Evans, a longtime Atlanta supporter of the speaker, according to congressional sources who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Mr. Gingrich's former lawyer, Washington attorney Jan Baran, said he dropped the speaker as a client last Saturday - a day after a House ethics panel ended an intensive week of closed-door meetings. The investigative subcommittee is investigating tax implications of a college course taught by Mr. Gingrich and the accuracy of the speaker's statements to investigators.

Mr. Baran indicated to The Associated Press that conflicting state-

ments by himself and Mr. Gingrich had been given to the ethics investigative subcommittee. One possible defense for Mr. Gingrich is to contend that Mr. Baran misled the committee.

"I wish to make clear that my firm did not submit any material information to the ethics committee without Mr. Gingrich's prior review and approval," Mr. Baran said in an interview.

"I strongly believe that is the committee's view as well.

"We advised Mr. Gingrich on Saturday, Dec. 14, that we could no longer represent him before the ethics committee. We wish him well."

Gingrich spokesman Tony Blankley declined to comment on the development.

The ethics subcommittee appears to be near the end of its preliminary inquiry of Mr. Gingrich, the Georgia Republican who expects to be reelected speaker on Jan. 7.