
Gingrich gave false information

FP at 12/20/96

WASHINGTON (AP) - Newt Gingrich gave false information to the House ethics committee, one of his closest confidants conceded Thursday. The colleague blamed it on a lawyer who recently left as the leader of Mr. Gingrich's defense team.

Rep. John Linder said documents signed by Mr. Gingrich and submitted to the committee by the lawyer obviously conflicted with statements Mr. Gingrich had previously made to the panel.

But he said that if Mr. Gingrich had intended to mislead the committee, "this would be a pretty dumb way to do it."

In another twist late in the day, the lawyer, Jan Baran, and Mr. Gingrich's press secretary, Tony Blankley, issued a statement declaring that the lawyer continued to represent the speaker, though not directly before the ethics committee.

Mr. Baran and his firm "are continuing to assist Newt and others in that proceeding," the statement said, but did not say who else was being aided.

Mr. Baran's sudden exit last Saturday as Mr. Gingrich's chief attorney in the case followed a week of private meetings by an ethics subcommittee that is considering whether to charge Mr. Gingrich with violating House standards of conduct.

The panel is investigating whether Mr. Gingrich ran afoul of tax law in financing a college course, and whether he gave accurate and complete statements to investigators.

The House election for speaker will be on Jan. 7, and Mr. Gingrich hopes to become the first Republican to succeed himself in that post since 1929.

Mr. Baran defended himself on Wednesday, commenting: "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."
