

# Watergate Leaks Puzzle Committee

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The Senate Watergate committee staff has quietly begun an investigation of its own ranks to determine who, among them, might be responsible for leaks of committee information to news media.

Those on the staff willing to speak about it discuss the matter gingerly, obliquely — and they cringe when the question is asked as to whether or not the committee itself has set up a "plumber's operation."

"There's no goon squad within the committee to look after leaks," Rufus L. Edmisten, deputy counsel to the Watergate committee and right hand man to committee Chairman Sam J. Ervin, says.

Edmisten did say that he had designated one attorney on the committee staff yesterday to investigate what Edmisten termed "brazen leaks" to the New York Times last week of summaries of secret Watergate committee staff interviews with former White House aides H. R. Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman.

"Frankly, the leaking made Sen. Ervin very irritated. Frankly, he had not seen the staff interview with Haldeman and Ehrlichman (before it appeared in the newspaper)," Edmisten said.

Edmisten acknowledged that persons authorized to read staff summaries of such interviews must log in the time and date that they see the material and that this is one method in which a leak might be tracked down. He would not describe other methods the committee was using.

Only once, Edmisten said, has the committee been able to determine the source of one of the numerous, gushing leaks of supposedly confidential committee information—and that person was not a member of the committee staff. Edmisten would not identify that person.

The concern, Edmisten said, is that premature

leaks, especially of staff summaries of interviews of witnesses prior to their testimony could jeopardize the investigation. He cited the refusal of former White House aide Charles W. Colson to appear before committee staff prior to testifying as one known instance in which the leaks have harmed the investigation. (Colson had specifically cited the leaks in refusing to meet in secret session with committee staff.)

Fred Thompson, minority counsel to the Watergate committee, said in response to questions that he, too, was concerned about leaks of committee information and had made efforts to track them down.

What is he doing?

"Well, I, I . . . I don't want to blow my cover," Thompson said laughing, and walking away.

The Watergate committee has been so concerned about leaks that on one occasion early in its investigation when the committee talked with convicted burglar James McCord, those staffers who attended that session had to swear to an oath of secrecy, Edmisten said.

The White House, which the Watergate committee is now investigating, once also had a concern over leaks of in-house information and, according to President Nixon, a White House group was established in June, 1971, to plug them. The group was called plumbers. Two members of the unit's members were E. Howard Hunt and G. Gordon Liddy, both of whom were convicted as a result of their role in the Watergate break-in.

But, in a terse interview yesterday, Sen. Ervin said his committee had no "plumbers." "The plumbers have gone out of style," Ervin said jovially.

Asked if he was concerned about the leaks from his committee, Ervin said, "We have no way to stop it."