

News Leaks From The White House



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THE WHITE HOUSE howls about news leaks have moved us to relate for the first time how those same horrified gentlemen have tried to use our column to leak unfavorable stories against their political foes.

First, the White House tried to establish a direct pipeline into our office. This was shut down after our exposes of the Nixon Administration landed us on the White House "enemies list."

Thereafter, the President's men used indirect approaches to plant stories with us, once routing information through the Virgin Islands.

Early in 1969, President Nixon's political tutor, the late Murray Chotiner, called on us to say that the new President wanted friendly relations and that the resources of the White House would be available to us for hard-to-get information. We don't know whether Mr. Nixon himself was a party to this arrangement.

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THROUGH THE Chotiner channel, we received only half-a-dozen stories, including the Justice Department's file on the tax investigation of George Wallace and his brother, Gerald. This was at a time when the White House feared the Alabama governor would run for President as an independent in 1972 and drain votes away from Mr. Nixon.

We always double-checked the White House leads and seldom gave the facts the emphasis Chotiner wanted. When we also started publishing Nixon scandals, the ol-

ive branch was withdrawn and the Chotiner leak dried up. But we learned that the White House still kept trying to plant stories with us indirectly.

We have obtained the confidential White House file, for example, on Senator George McGovern's campaign treasurer, Henry Kimelman. The file shows how the White House tried to slip us derogatory information about Kimelman.

On May 12, 1972, presidential aide W. Richard Howard wrote to a White House colleague, Fred Fielding, alleging that Kimelman "was nearly indicted last year because he is a liquor importer in the Virgin Islands and apparently he really rakes off the profits."

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THE ALLEGATION, it turned out later, was erroneous. But the memo continued: "We believe there must be material at Justice and Interior on this sleezy character that we would like to obtain through your fantastic sources. . . "The memo was stamped "Confidential — Eyes Only."

The Kimelman file shows that several Watergate figures — ex-Attorney General John Mitchell, ex-White House counsel John Dean, ex-presidential aide Charles Colson and a few others — tried to dig up dirt on Kimelman.

The results can be summed up in a June 5, 1972, memo from Dean to Howard. "To date," wrote Dean, "we have been unable to come up with any material on Kimelman that might be used to illustrate the true nature of the money man in McGovern's life."