

Media Contacts

Press Edict for The Nixon Staff

Washington

The White House acknowledged yesterday that all members of the White House staff have been told to report all contacts with the news media to press secretary Ronald Ziegler.

Gerald Warren, the press spokesman, said in response to questions that an "agreement" to report all media contacts to the press office had been reached by senior staff members of the White House within the last ten days.

Warren said the new policy did not come in the form of a directive from President Nixon. He said it was not the purpose of the policy to "intimidate" White House staff members from talking to the press, nor was this to be construed as a form of "censorship."

The policy was adopted because the senior staff members thought it "would be helpful" for the press office to be kept abreast of the current "concerns" of the press, Warren said.

However, members of the White House press corps indicated by their questions that they feared the new disclosure policy would have an inhibiting effect on their news sources.

One correspondent asked if the reporting requirement would not have a "chilling effect" on staff officials sought out by the press. Warren replied that he did not think so.

No indication was given as to why the policy was adopted at this time. Warren denied that the agreement was related to the recent series of leaks about military spying on the National Security Council.

Veteran reporters at the White House said they could think of no precedent for a formal policy requiring the disclosure of all contacts between the staff and the news media.

The disclosure policy applies to all staff members, including — theoretically at least — such high officials as Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, who runs the National Security Council at the White House as well as the State Department; Alexander Haig, the President's chief of staff; Roy Ash, the director of the Office of Management and Budget, as well as to their subordinates.

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