

News Leaks and The White House



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PRESIDENT NIXON has lived by the leak, just as he has been brought low by the leak.

In his attempt to control the flow of underground information from the White House, he has employed both plumbers and leakers.

We have made a careful study of presidential leaks, which are known in the backrooms of the White House as "Nofziger Jobs," after former presidential aide Lyn Nofziger who was a master of the leak.

Not long after taking over the White House in 1969, President Nixon himself fashioned his public relations strategy in a series of eight secret memos to his staff chief, H. R. Haldeman.

In a typical memo, dated Sept. 22, 1969, the President called his aides' tactics "inadequate" and "amateurish" and urged them to show more "bulldog" determination against people like Senator Ted Kennedy (Dem-Mass.).

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AS FORMER AIDE Jeb Stuart Magruder has confided: "The most sophisticated student of public relations in the White House was . . . the President himself."

The President's strategy included the adroit use of the leak. He favored staffmen Lyn Nofziger and Pat Buchanan, because of their excellent press contacts; to plant the stories the White House wanted sneaked out.

The President's favorite target was always Senator Kennedy. In an attempt to

link Kennedy with Hanoi, for example, the President instructed Haldeman: "Buchanan's prudent primary group might get a major mailing out to editors and columnists in Massachusetts, and perhaps even nationally, just setting forth the Hanoi quote . . . Buchanan also should be able to get a columnist or two — and Nofziger could help in this respect—to pick up this line."

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FORMER White House special investigator Jack Caulfield has also told senators behind closed doors how he tried to float out a false story that the Kennedy family foundation had financed a newspaper series criticizing presidential pal Bebe Rebozo.

Caulfield told the senators that he recommended "an oblique Nofziger, an immediate drop vis-a-vis the Kennedys. . . ."

The bewildered Senate Watergate staff didn't understand. "What did that mean?" Caulfield was asked.

He explained: "Well, what I meant was that consideration be given to have Lyn Nofziger speak with friends that he had read in the media about whether or not the Newsday article was financed by the Kennedy Foundation."

Nofziger told us he did not leak the story. But someone did.

At the same time that President Nixon had made skillful use of leaks to smear his political foes, he went to elaborate, even illegal lengths to stop leaks about himself. He was a man haunted by dark secrets which he feared might leak out and drive him from public office.