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Description

NBC's Judy Woodruff reports on the theft of President Jimmy Carter's briefing book before the second 1980 presidential debate. The Carter campaign claimed that access to its plans gave Ronald Reagan an unfair advantage in the debate.

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Transcript
Justice Department Looks Into Reagan Campaign Theft of Carter Briefing Book

TOM BROKAW, anchor:
When Ronald Reagan debated Jimmy Carter in the ‘80 campaign it was a big night for Reagan, most analysts thought that he had won. Well, now it turns out that Reagan had some help. His staff had a copy of Carter briefing papers, and those papers are getting a lot of attention in Washington. Judy Woodruff has come up with some copies of the paper and she has the latest.

JUDY WOODRUFF, reporting:
Three days after he called the flap over the Carter Debate Briefing book, ‘much-ado about nothing,’ the president today asked the justice department to pursue the matter vigorously.

A spokesman said Mr. Reagan wants the department to monitor the development of information and, if evidence of illegality is produced, take further appropriate action promptly. However, a source at justice said later there is no investigation underway. A woman who works for former Carter campaign advisor Patrick Cadell delivered a copy of the briefing book to the White House today after Reagan officials requested that they be given what had already been given to a number of reporters in Washington.

The several hundred pages in a loose-leaf binder are titled ‘Debate Briefing Materials,’ they include possible questions and answers, suggested rebuttals to Reagan statements, and eight objectives for Mr. Carter, including a recommendation that he focus on what is called the “substantive weaknesses and unrealities of Mr. Reagan’s positions.” On an issue like national health insurance, the book urges Mr. Carter to point out that Mr. Reagan also opposed Medicare. When Mr. Carter did just that during the actual debate in October 1980, Mr. Reagan was ready.

President JIMMY CARTER: Governor Reagan again, typically is against such a proposal.

MODERATOR: Governor:

Former Governor RONALD REAGAN (R - California): There you go again. When I opposed Medicare,
there was another piece of legislation meeting the same problem before the Congress. I happened to favor
the other piece of legislation.

WOODRUFF: Last Friday Mr. Reagan said he had no knowledge of any Carter briefing book.
Late this afternoon the White House released a statement saying that a preliminary review indicated that
what they have today appears to be more sensitive than what they had in 1980. Persuading the public of
that may be just as important as persuading people that this sort of thing goes on in politics all the time.