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SUBJECT Guidelines for Handling Secret Documents

DAN RATHER: President Reagan's new National Security Adviser today imposed strict new guidelines for handling secret documents. The avowed purpose is to plug the flow of leaks that has alarmed the White House.

Robert Schakne has the story.

ROBERT SCHAKNE: To control leaks, the new guidelines issued by National Security Adviser William Clark would limit the number of officials with access and require such officials to agree in advance to cooperate with lawful investigations of leaks. A spokesman says the Attorney General will decide whether such investigations will include lie detector tests.

The new ground rules eliminate a controversial requirement that officials get prior approval before they discuss national security matters with the press. Presidential counselor Edwin Meese says the Administration is simply trying to protect legitimate secrets.

EDWIN MEESE: The unauthorized or illegal disclosure of classified information could actually harm our nation's security.

SCHAKNE: But today's guidelines on national security leaks are just the latest in a whole series of Administration proposals and actions that appear to restrict the flow of information. The Administration has proposed cutting back the use of the freedom of information law, among other things, substantially exempting even the unclassified files of the FBI and CIA. The Administration has proposed legislation providing prison terms for journalists who disclose the identity of under-

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cover intelligence agents. And the Administration has drafted new guidelines expanding the right of the government to classify documents and making it harder to declassify them.

MEESE: What you're talking about in the chronology that you mention is a series of isolated acts of various areas of the government that are being strung together to try to make it appear as something that it is not.

MAN: What you have emerging is a very clear pattern supporting censorship, restricting the flow of government information.

SCHAKNE: Critics charge that there will be problems. They argue that many of the exposes of FBI, CIA, and other government agency wrongdoings were made possible only by the laws and policies that the Administration now wants to change.