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SUBJECT Carter's Briefing Papers for 1980 Debate

DIANE SAWYER: Let us return to October 28th, 1980, the day of the Carter-Reagan debate.

Somehow the Reagan campaign had got ahold of some of Carter's -- Mr. Carter's background material for the debate. Reagan aides now admit that. But, as Bill Plante tells us, a big question remains. How did they get it?

BILL PLANTE: The Carter-Reagan debate during the 1980 campaign, a lot at stake for both sides. But, according to a new book, the Reagan staff had quite an advantage, President Carter's briefing papers covering all the main points he intended to make in the debate.

Author Lawrence Barrett says the papers were filched by a Reagan mole in the Carter White House. Four Reagan aides who ran the campaign and prepared him for the debate answered questions about the episode in letters to Democratic Congressman Don Albastro.

David Stockman: It was apparent to me at the time that they had in some way come from the Carter campaign. I have no recollection of asking about or being informed as to how.

James Baker: It is my best recollection that I was given the book by William Casey. It is not uncommon for such material to be given or sent for a variety of reasons by a host of people.

But Casey has no recollection of a set of papers which

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laid out the Carter debate plan.

Former Carter staff members describe the letters as a tremendous attack of amnesia, and claim that contrary to what the Reagan people say, the papers were significant.

MAN: It's like having our game plan for the Super-bowl.

PLANTE: Top White House aides swear privately that no one knows where the briefing papers came from. That element of mystery means the controversy cannot be resolved until those same people are willing to swear to it publicly.

Bill Plante, CBS News, the White House.