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PROGRAM ABC World News Tonight

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ABC Network

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CITY Washington, D.C.

SUBJECT Lie-Detector Tests for Government Employees

STEVE BELL: Congress began hearings today on proposed Administration regulations that would require lie-detector tests for government employees who handle classified information. Justice Department officials say there is just too much leaking. But many members of Congress worry that the restrictions may be too broad.

Richard Threlkeld has more on government leaks, a virtual art form in this city.

RICHARD THRELKELD: Frank Snapp is unemployed. He's an author who can't write a book or give a speech or teach a class without first clearing it with a government censor, ever, for the rest of his life. He used to be with the CIA, and he wrote a book critical of it without clearing it with the CIA censor, just in case he'd revealed some secrets. He didn't reveal any, but the Supreme Court decided he'd violated his agreement with the CIA and ordered him to turn over all his book and movie royalties, \$180,000, to the government. Now, he says, he feels like one of those South African dissidents -- banned.

FRANK SNEPP: When someone who cannot speak, talk, get a job because he's offended the regime, he's called banned. Well, that's what's happened to me.

THRELKELD: Last month the Reagan Administration started applying the Snapp rule to tens of thousands of Frank Snapps still in government, anybody with access to top secrets. They'll all have to take a pledge not to leak secrets and take a lie-detector test if they're suspected of it, and let the censors go over anything they ever write or say about their service.