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# Discovery's 'The Presidents' Gatekeepers' Reveals Secrets of the White House

The four-hour documentary includes interviews with all 19 living chiefs of staff who offer behind-the-scenes stories of the toughest job in politics.

BY **MARISA GUTHRIE** JANUARY 5, 2013 12:56PM



"On behalf of the entire Emanuel family, we apologize for Ari. You know him as an agent, we know him as a brother. We believe we got the worse end of the deal."

SCOTT OLSON/GETTY IMAGES



**Chris Whipple** agree that **Rahm Emanuel** – President **Barack Obama**'s first chief of staff and the current mayor of Chicago – was the “most challenging.”

Most interview subjects, including **Dick Cheney** and **Leon Panetta** (who were chiefs of staff for presidents **Gerald Ford** and **Bill Clinton**, respectively) sat for three or four hours. But Emanuel, said Whipple, “did a three-hour interview in about an hour and 15 minutes.”

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The famously combative Emanuel is also an expert at evading questions, said the filmmakers, though he's a compelling storyteller.

“Rahm was just a challenge throughout, but he told us some amazing stories, including his very first day on the job when he arrived with the world economy in free fall, Detroit about to go belly up and two wars raging,” said Whipple, “and he has to go straight to the situation room to deal with a terrorist threat on the south lawn. Just another day at the office.”

*The Presidents' Gatekeepers* will bow in July on Discovery. The filmmakers shot about 70 hours of interviews that have been whittled down for two two-hour installments on the network. But Discovery is planning a robust online presence that will include outtakes and additional content.

The film is rife with revealing behind-the-scenes stories, all the more surprising considering the chief of staff's paramount objective is to protect the president and keep his secrets. In the documentary, Cheney notes that the chief of staff is closer to the president, and has more power, than the vice president. The documentary features **Jack Watson** – President **Jimmy Carter**'s chief of staff – talking about the Iran hostage crisis and **Marvin Watson**, President **Lyndon Johnson**'s chief of staff, recalling how Johnson “narrowly averted World War III” during the Arab-Israeli six-day war in 1967.

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And the documentary advances a **story** that first surfaced in the days following the 2011 White House Correspondents' Dinner during which President Obama and his staff kept their poker faces while the raid that killed Osama Bin Laden was underway. *Modern Family* star **Eric Stonestreet**, who was sitting at the ABC News table with **Bill Daley**, Obama's chief of staff at the time, was disappointed to receive an email informing him that his White House tour scheduled for the next day was canceled. According to Whipple, Daley told Stonestreet it was "a broken pipe." Said Daley: "It's an old building, Eric. Calm down, I'll give you a tour on Monday."

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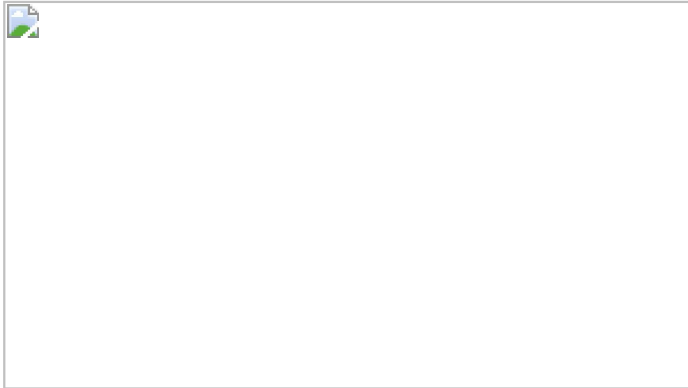
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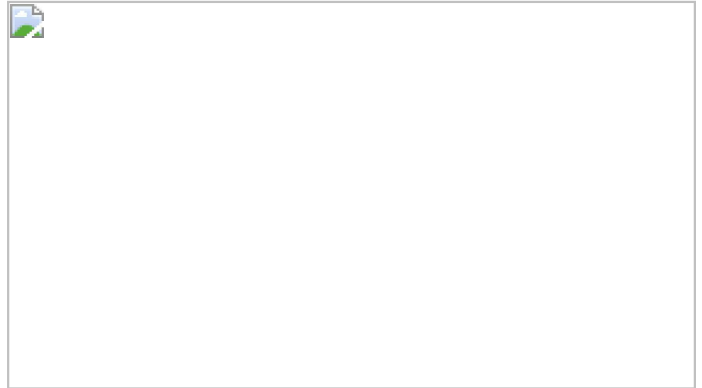
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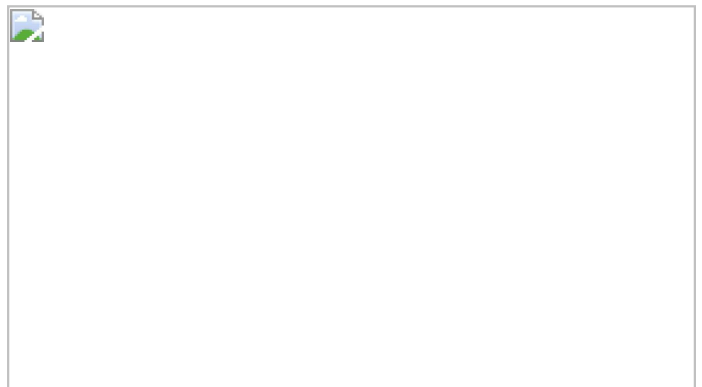
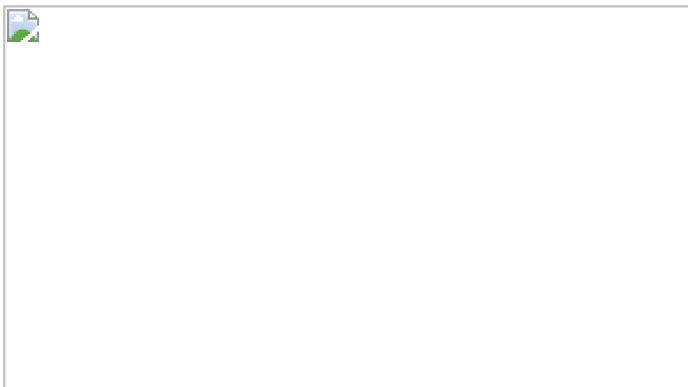
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