

Sect points accusing finger at critic Flynn

By GEORGE-WAYNE SHELOR
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The Church of Scientology brought a transcontinental traveling press conference to the steps of Clearwater City Hall Wednesday to publicly denounce outspoken Scientology critic Michael Flynn.

Sect officials claim Flynn, a Boston attorney and longtime adversary of Scientology, orchestrated an elaborate but abortive scheme two years ago to forge a \$2 million check drawn on a bank account of sect founder L. Ron Hubbard.

The accusations made by the Clearwater-based sect are based on the declaration of a man a Scientology investigator acknowledged "is a master criminal (and) con man," who is currently incarcerated in an Italian jail.

Eugene Ingram, a California private investigator and former Los Angeles policeman, said Wednesday he paid Ala Fadili Al Tamimi \$25,000 for his statement, which names Flynn as a co-conspirator in a criminal conspiracy.

Flynn, who organized the May 1982 Clearwater hearings into the alleged criminal activities of Scientology, scoffed at the sect's charges Wednesday, calling them "absurd and outrageous."

"They've been traveling around the United States making those claims, and there's not a bit of truth to their charges," Flynn said. He said sect claims are "the response to the recent court rulings against the Church of Scientology around the world. And they're following Hubbard's line of attacking the attacker."

Court rulings against the sect in California and England in recent weeks have characterized Scientology as "corrupt, dangerous, immoral and sinister" and an organization which "clearly is schizophrenic and paranoid."

"Whenever they are faced with this type of exposure, they pick out their enemy and go after him," said Flynn, who has been involved in more than 25 lawsuits against the sect in the past five years.

Scientology President Heber Jentzsch, who has taken the press conference from Los Angeles to Boston, New York and Washington, D.C., dismissed Wednesday the recent court findings as "one per-

son's opinion."

"What I think is important is that Mr. Flynn was involved and is involved ... in organized crime," Jentzsch said to a small gathering of Scientologists and reporters on the steps of City Hall. "Mr. Flynn accuses others of the crimes he has committed, and I think it is time now to realize the problems Mr. Flynn has caused for the citizens of Clearwater."

Last January, Engram, who is paid by the Church of Scientology, bought several ads in the *Boston Globe*, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* offering \$100,000 reward to anyone who could provide information that would lead to the arrest and conviction of the person or persons responsible for the forged check scheme. Several weeks after the ads appeared, Engram acknowledged to a *Clearwater Sun* reporter that Flynn "is one of a number of suspects."

In his declaration, entered three weeks ago in a California Scientology court case, Tamimi swears:

He was to be paid \$400,000 to work with his brother to have a check forged and passed on one of Hubbard's accounts. Tamimi charges that Flynn "illegally obtained sample checks" from an unnamed employee of the Bank of New England, which were turned over to him to have duplicated. Hubbard's signature was then forged on the check, which was to be cashed.

The purported operation evolved, Tamimi states, when a man named Wayne Hollingsworth approached him in March or April 1982, and said that Tamimi's brother, Amer, had lost about \$40,000 gambling. Hollingsworth told Tamimi that "the boys in town are very mad (at his brother) and they can break his legs."

Tamimi said Hollingsworth subsequently told him the gambling debt could be taken care of if Tamimi would do "some business with the boys in town"—business which involved millions of dollars, of which Tamimi would get 20 percent.

To this Tamimi agreed.

Several days later, Tamimi claims, he
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* Flynn

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met with a number of people, including Flynn, at a Boston restaurant for breakfast at which point Flynn reportedly outlined an elaborate scheme for the passing of a forged check.

But the purported scheme to pass the check at the New York branch of the Middle East Bank was aborted when Tamimi's brother could not identify himself to bank officers and, the documents state, the brothers fled the country.

The *Clearwater Sun* has learned that Tamimi, a citizen of the United Arab Emirates, is currently awaiting extradition to the U.S. where he is under federal indictment for suspected mail fraud, wire fraud, interstate aid of fraud and perjury. He is also a wanted in other countries.

"But we didn't accept his testi-

mony alone," Engram told reporters Wednesday. "It bothered me that I was to trust a con man, so I told him if his statements were true and could be corroborated, he would be paid \$25,000."

Engram said five other private detective agencies have corroborated Tamimi's accusations, and that all evidence has been turned over to federal authorities.

However, Boston Assistant U.S. Attorney Brackett Denniston said he could neither confirm nor deny an investigation into Flynn's alleged activities.

"All I can tell you is that (investigators) met with representatives of the church several weeks ago. You know that the church has made some serious allegations, and they have indicted by name, Michael Flynn," Denniston said. "However Mr. Flynn vehemently denies such allegations.

So, under those circumstances, it is particularly necessary for us to withhold comment."

But the Church of Scientology is the subject of criminal probes from Tampa to Canada and Europe.

Clearwater City Attorney Thomas Bustin said Flynn's background was "thoroughly investigated" by the city and the Massachusetts Bar before the attorney was paid about \$150,000 for the series of hearings in 1982.

"I might believe this of Flynn when I see snow falling out here tomorrow," Bustin said wryly. "Frankly, I don't know how that man endures what he has to endure."

Flynn said Wednesday that he has filed criminal charges against those who have accused him of criminal activity.

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Heber Jentzsch, international president of the Church of Scientology.

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