

# Largo Sentinel

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## Scientists review 'false reports' data

Government intelligence agencies have created and distributed false reports on the Church of Scientology for more than two decades, according to a 20-month study by an investigative panel within the religious group.

Citing a documented, 380 page submission to the Church's Board of Directors, the Special Task Force on Religious Defense has charged the government with "malicious interference in the Church's affairs and with violations of its First Amendment rights," according to Kathleen Heard.

The materials studied by the task force included several thousand pages of government documents obtained through the Freedom of Information Act from more than 20 government agencies. The submission highlighted numerous documents containing false reports by the CIA, FBI and the IRS.

One of the documents involved "misrepresentation" from the IRS to the Department of Labor. The unsubstantiated charges based on a single telephone conversation with an IRS employee, became part of a 1967 Labor Department memorandum which was used until recently as a basis for denying admission to the United States for alien ministers of the church.

"The memo claimed, among other charges, that the church employed drugs as part of its religious practice. This report was distributed to several other government agencies, including the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

"Not until last December, after the church obtained the document through the Freedom of Information Act, were the memo's allegations retracted.

In a letter to the church, the Labor Department said the information had been determined to be irrelevant, unverified and based on hearsay," said Heard. A local Scientology representative emphasized that it took approximately five months of visits, phone calls, and letters to get it to this point.

"The Labor Department memo is typical of many of the documents we studied," said Mrs. Heard. "The Church's prohibition of non-medicinal drug use by its parishioners is widely known and well documented, yet the memorandum reported groundless allegations to the contrary. The document was then distributed to other agencies who acted on the report without verifying its content. And is kept secret by the government even through a court case involving the immigration of

one of our ministers."

Numerous visits have been made by Church representatives to government agencies in the correction of these "false reports." One such representative, in his personal account contained in the submission, states that "it is unusual to find the source of a false report. The bureaucracy hides itself and one of the most difficult aspects is to even find someone who will listen," said Mrs. Heard.

Another set of documents reveals that in 1961 the Air Force attempted a character assassination of Scientologists through false reports including the charge that they study a "Russian textbook on brainwashing." Yet another Air Force document shows that, not only is the identical text used by the Air Force Counterinsurgency schools, but one of the schools had commended the Church for distributing the manual as a public service as it is clearly anti-brainwashing, according to Mrs. Heard.

The Church of Scientology received national attention when it was found to be one of 99 groups on a Nixon Administration "Enemies List" maintained by the IRS. Since that time, the church has filed more than 1500 Freedom of Information requests and has brought 18 law suits against government agencies for un-

lawful withholding of files.

Earlier this month, Victor Marchetti, a CIA official from 1955 to 1969, and author of the controversial best seller "The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence" accused the government of "sloppy and inaccurate investigation and analysis" and of making false reports about the church.

He was supported in his charges by military intelligence expert Maj. James Walton (Ret.) and by noted Pentagon official A. Ernest Fitzgerald, after the trio reviewed several thousand pages of government intelligence documents on the church.

Among the recommendations made by the Task Force is that all congregation and church staffs should expand their public education programs via conference and the media regarding the effects of false reports on individuals in this society.

Mrs. Heard stressed that the churches' primary action should be to take greater responsibility for what they termed the "dossier" society.

The Church of Scientology has gained recognition for its reform activities in the areas of the aged, drug abuse and the right to privacy, and claims that social reform is one of the oldest traditions of organized religion.