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Church spies infiltrate health groups

WASHINGTON — (AP) — Leaders of the Church of Scientology considered the American Medical Association (AMA) and the National Institute of Mental Health enemies and infiltrated the AMA as part of an effort to discredit it, according to documents made public yesterday.

The documents released by a federal judge show that the church planted spies and had a "doom program" aimed at the AMA.

Church leaders also planned to "take over control" of the National Institute of Mental Health near Washington, the documents reveal.

Several medical organizations have criticized the church for its program of "dianetics," which the church calls a therapeutic technique to treat certain mental and psychosomatic illnesses.

Other documents reveal that Scientologists had copies of communications from former CIA Director William Colby and reports of confidential conversations among U.S. attorneys trying a civil case against the church.

Church leaders also had files on federal judges and copies of tax returns filed by Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley and singer Frank Sinatra, the records show.

The documents, seized in an FBI raid of two Los Angeles Scientology offices in 1977, were released

yesterday by U.S. District Judge Charles R. Richey.

Last Friday, Richey found eight church leaders guilty of conspiring to steal government documents. A ninth church member was convicted of a misdemeanor theft count.

A week ago, Richey released documents that provided details on the church's conspiracy and theft of documents from the Internal Revenue Service, the U.S. Attorney's office, the Justice Department and other agencies.

The Rev. Kenneth Whitman, the church's president, issued a statement saying the release of the documents "will tell nothing about the actual workings of the" church.

"We have said we do not condone violations of law or established church creed by our own members, but by these same standards we deplore the cover-up and nonprosecution of government agency criminal acts and conspiracy against our church and others who have been on 'government enemies lists,'" Whitman said.

In addressing the church plan in connection with the National Institute of Mental Health, a document said: "This program is addressing target 3 of the strategic planning program, which is 'take over the control of the NIMH (which is the fort of support for the National Mental Health Association).'"

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