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Scientology bizarre plot to get official

By Bruce Henderson
Herald Examiner staff writer

Church of Scientology members planned to discredit a high-level official in the California attorney general's office in Los Angeles with a bizarre undercover operation involving a pregnant woman, a phony nun and a fake bribery kickback, according to documents obtained by the Herald Examiner.

The church's records of "Operation Snapper" — part of the 100,000 pages of documents seized by the FBI in Los Angeles three years ago — identified the target as Lawrence Tapper, deputy attorney general in charge of the charitable trust unit.

These documents reveal a complex "three-channel" operation "to get Larry Tapper removed from his post in the AG's office so that he can no longer commit overt (sic)" against the worldwide church formed in 1954 by L. Ron Hubbard.

The Church has come under fire recently for similar operations to discredit public officials in Clearwater, Fla. But this is the first indication that group members planned undercover operations against local officials.

Heber Jentsch, a spokesman for the church in Los Angeles, confirmed the existence of the operation against Tapper. "I had heard of the 'Snapper' operation," said Jentsch. "It was a gross operation. I can't condone that kind of activity... Someone obviously got frustrated and decided to carry out their own scenario. It should never have happened."

Jentsch said he had no idea who in the Church planned "Operation Snapper" or whether any phases of it were actually carried out.

Tapper became a target after handling consumer fraud complaints against the church in the middle and late '70s.

Tapper at one point advised one

of his superiors that the church is "long overdue" for a state investigation, and that interoffice memo — dated May 12, 1976 — was among the church's records.

It is unclear whether any elements of the operation were carried out. Tapper, who still serves in the same position with the attorney general's office, declined to com-

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ment because the church has an ongoing \$1 million lawsuit against him and other public officials charging "illegal infiltration" of the church.

The well-planned operation against Tapper was outlined in a lengthy church memo.

Channel 1 had two phases. The first: "Recruit a very tough (woman) that is obviously pregnant and that is a good actress... she does a practice run on the AG's office to ascertain the best place in (Evelle) Younger's office (former attorney general) to do the action.

"Pregnant woman simply walks into the AG's office (Younger's) in Sacramento and says in so many words: 'I told Larry I wouldn't do this but he gave me no choice (sic). I don't care about his career anymore! I mean look at me! I'll go to the press even if it does ruin my family's reputation. I won't have an abortion!'"

After creating a scene and crying, the woman was to leave, saying, "Oh, never mind, nobody will help me anyway."

The second phase: "Recruit trusted male... must be able to talk angrily (sic) and sound about 45 to 50 years old over the phone.

"He is the father of the pregnant girl. He calls up the two areas his daughter visited and gives them hell (from an outside phone), says, 'My daughter came into your office yesterday. The pregnant girl. Well, I don't know what you people said to her but she is terrified... talks of suicide... this guy is Larry Tapper. Who is he? My daughter tells me he is the father of her child.

"And he's threatened to have her committed if she reveals this... You can only protect bastards (sic) like Tapper for so long and then you'll get a Watergate."

Five days later, Channel 2 was to be carried out. The first phase: "Recruit a trusted female with alot of courage. Find out what's the biggest order of nuns in the area, and what habit they would be wearing during this season... Rent one of these outfits... Recruit a reliable person who can actually take professional photograph (sic) indoors."

The woman dressed like a nun goes into AG's office and asks a receptionist what the proper procedure is for filing a complaint against someone in the AG's office. The photographer, who has come in independently of the "nun," overhears this.

The plan then calls for the photographer to say: "Holy cow! What a story," so that the receptionist can hear him. "Excuse me sister, I couldn't help overhearing you, are you filing a complaint?"

"Pressure is quickly put on the nun, forcing her to stammer out... He uses his position to attack anything that's not Jewish... Well, if you must know, it's Lawrence Tapper. Oh, I shouldn't have said that."

The photographer takes her picture, showing the receptionist in the background. "Nun covers her face completely. She says please don't. No! Oh God. I shouldn't have come here. Nun leaves very upset. Photographer asks receptionist who was that... and leaves."

The second phase: The next day, a man posing as a newspaper reporter is sent back to the same office. He asks questions like: "Is it true a nun came in here yesterday and accused Younger of protecting Lawrence Tapper... Any statements on this. Is Younger protecting Tapper on this? What's it all about?"

Also, the photographer's picture is developed and sent to various minority newspapers. "Telephone bigger papers to see if they would be interested... The headline would read something like 'Mysterious Nun Claims Prejudice In AG's office.' GET ARTICLE PUBLISHED. The article will cast aspersions on the charity fraud area and Tapper."

One week later, Channel 3 was to go into operation: "Find out where Tapper banks... Obtain the name and address of the San Diego Mental Health's executive who just got busted for dealing in drugs.

"Recruit a 30-year-old tough looking male... He will be taking five \$20 bills (\$100) and depositing them into Tapper's account. He'll ensure no prints of his are on any papers... He should wear glasses and some sort of hat so he can't be recognized again... He reports back with receipt."

The receipt is delivered by another field agent — "an upstate banker type male" — to Younger's office. The note names the San Diego official and explains that the deposit is proof that Tapper is receiving "payoffs from some rather strange areas." The "banker" leaves without giving his name.

"The above channel workable (sic) is derived from the fact that Younger has been involved with bad PR concerning bankers and banks. This should... have Younger put alot of attention on this caper."

Tapper, who is still in charge of charitable trusts in the attorney general's office, was reportedly recently informed of the operation against him by Henrietta Crampton of Redondo Beach, director of the Citizens Freedom Foundation, a group composed largely of parents whose children are members of various cults.

"When I told him about it (by phone)," Crampton said, "he was quiet for a moment, and then he asked if it had anything to do with a pregnant woman. I told him it did and that I had it in writing. He said, 'You've made my weekend,' and asked me to send him copies."

Tapper confirmed his conversation with Crampton to the Herald Examiner but refused further comment on "Operation Snapper."

Tapper and former Attorney General Evelle Younger and City Attorney Burt Pines are defendants in the million-dollar suit filed by the church in 1976 alleging "illegal infiltration" by state officials. The suit has not yet gone to trial.

"The church has hit us for talking to the press (before)," said Robert O'Brien, an assistant attorney general who is defending Tapper in the suit. "I not going to have a million-dollar judgment slapped against Larry Tapper for talking to the press about this."

Younger, who said he has "never taken this (the church's) suit very seriously," had no knowledge of "Operation Snapper."

"I do know that group (Scientists) had among its targets our office," said Younger. "But I have never heard of that particular operation. If it was carried out, it was not brought to my attention. Mr. Tapper's reputation is unsullied as far as I'm concerned."