

# Scientists conceal cameras while counseling

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**CLEARWATER** — Church of Scientology officials are installing concealed cameras and microphones in at least 39 counseling rooms where church members reveal their innermost thoughts, a church spokesman confirms.

What transpires behind the closed doors of an auditing session — one-on-one counseling — is as confidential as a confession from a parishioner to a priest in the Roman Catholic Church, said Scientology spokesman Richard Haworth.

It's subject to what's called the priest-penitent privilege," Haworth said.

Occasionally, he said, sessions are videotaped to be reviewed by a senior auditor. That review helps the auditor perfect his techniques. The person being audited must consent to being taped, he said.

"It's quality control — it's not an unusual thing," Haworth said.

Clearwater's downtown Fort Harrison Hotel is home to the international spiritual headquarters of the Church of Scientology, a religion founded by the

late science-fiction writer L. Ron Hubbard.

None of the current auditing rooms on the first floor of the hotel is equipped for video or audio taping. A video recorder must be wheeled in, Haworth said, and that can be an obtrusive presence.

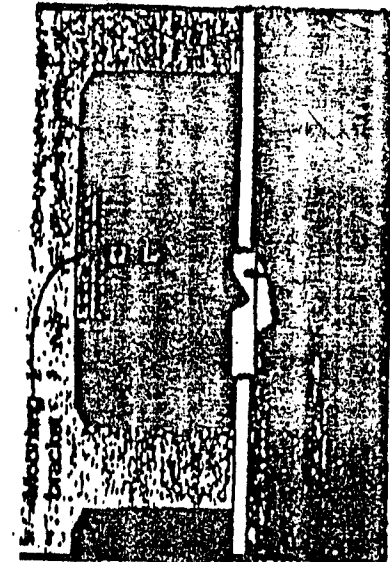
That's why the video cameras — two in each room — will be hidden above the ceiling and the microphones will be placed in the molding along the walls of auditing rooms being fashioned from former hotel rooms on the fourth and fifth floors, Haworth said.

"Somebody sticks a microphone in front of you and you're inhibited," Haworth said. "The reason the rooms are being re-done is so they're a better physical environment for the counseling to take place."

Blueprints on file with the city's building code division show detailed plans for an extensive electronic audio-visual system at the hotel and at the downtown Clearwater Building, also owned by the church.

To people in the auditing room, the cameras con-

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## "Look/Listen in rooms"

Blueprints of remodeling plans for the Church of Scientology's Fort Harrison Hotel and the Clearwater Building show that color and black-and-white cameras will be installed above the ceilings in what the church calls "Look/Listen in rooms" used for counseling with members. Microphones also will be installed 36 inches above the floor in a chair rail or wall molding or under a desk.

Source: City of Clearwater

Video Illustration

The Tampa Tribune, Saturday, September 18, 1993

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cealed above the ceiling would appear to be a light fixture, city Building Code Analyst Kevin Garrlott said as he examined the blueprints.

In the Clearwater Building, one camera would be aimed at a chair; the other at both the auditor and person being audited from a profile position, blueprints show.

The Fort Harrison blueprints show how the cables from all the auditing rooms on the fourth and fifth floors hook up to VCRs and television monitors on the third floor.

Officials at the city's building department approved the plans because they violate no city codes.

"I have never heard of this before, other than in a bank or in a grocery store," said Clearwater Planning and Zoning Director Jim Polatty.

Plans for the Clearwater Building, which the church also is remodeling, call for at least four "Look/Listen in System" auditing rooms on the second floor with hidden cameras and microphones mounted under desk tops.

Videotaping people without their consent is legal in Florida, experts say. Banks and supermarkets use hidden cameras.

Audiotaping someone without consent would violate state law, said David Audlin, chief assistant statewide prosecutor in Tallahassee.

Haworth said he didn't know if written consent forms are used, but people give at least verbal consent before being taped.