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## Scientologist denies police report he was detained by sect members

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CLEARWATER — Calling a police account a lie, Scientologist Daniel Cotrino said at no time did any church members try to physically detain him at the sect's headquarters last week.

Cotrino, 30, of Brooklyn, N.Y., told a completely different story from the account police released last week and accused three officers of lying in their report.

"We have his statements on tape," said detective Ken Fairchild. "The report was written from those statements."

ASKED WHY he believed police would lie about such an incident, Cotrino responded: "I don't know why. I don't know. I'm pretty sure people in that area don't like Scientology."

Richard Haworth, Scientology spokesman, also said the

account was not true.

According to police, at 9:40 p.m. March 5, Sgt. Jeff Kronschnabl, on patrol, saw a man trying to flag him down at Fort Harrison Avenue and Cleveland Street. He was Cotrino. Kronschnabl reported Cotrino was "being held by the arms by two white-shirted Scientologists," but that the restraint "was not forceful enough to warrant alarm but did seem unusual."

The two Scientologists holding onto Cotrino walked back to the hotel at 210 S Fort Harrison Ave. and Cotrino was taken to the police station, Kronschnabl reported.

Kronschnabl was driving an unmarked car but was in uniform, police said.

"I was taken to the police station without my request," Cotrino said during a phone call from New York. "I got into the car because it was unmarked, and I thought it was a car service like we have here in New York. They help you get to

a taxi.

"I told the policeman I wanted to go to the airport or a taxi stand. He said don't worry I will take you to the airport and he took me to the police station."

Then, Cotrino said, the officer told him he would have to wait for someone to take him to the airport. He said he waited 30 minutes, and then Fairchild showed up.

"HE STARTED questioning me," Cotrino said. "They asked me a bunch of questions: Have I seen (church members) give drugs to (other) Scientologists. They asked me if I have seen any weapons. The only time I've seen a knife is on the dinner table. They asked me if I have seen anybody get physical.

"Then they asked me about how much money I paid for this course," he said. "I told them. Three times they offered to help me get my money back and I said no." He said the questioning caused him to miss his flight back to New York.

Fairchild told a different story.

"He was upset because he had paid \$7,000 for a course years ago and when he arrived he was told he would have to pay more money for a course he didn't plan to take," Fairchild said, "I asked him what he wanted us to do because he

was so upset about it. He said he would take care of it and then asked for the state attorney's number. I gave it to him and my card.

"There was something else," Fairchild said. "I don't know about how they (the church members) know things about you. His words were 'like a psychiatrist would know'."

Cotrino said none of that was true.

ABOUT THE mixup on the course, "I told them (the church members) when I got there I would have to take another course, but that I didn't have enough money to take that now," Cotrino said. "I plan to come back down there in a month or so."

Cotrino never wanted a police report written and had no intention of ever pressing charges, he said.

At no time, he insisted, did any member of the church ever pressure him to change his story, he said. "Nobody ever pressured me, nobody used mind control," Cotrino said. "What the police report said is a very serious lie."

Asked why Cotrino would change his story, Fairchild responded: "I could speculate, but right now I'd rather not say."