

Charges of scheme to bilk church of \$2M take new twist

By RAYMOND HOWELL
Sun Staff

BOSTON — An international con artist has been charged in a scheme to bilk the controversial Church of Scientology out of \$2 million, adding a new layer of intrigue to a Byzantine case that already involves a reputed organized crime figure, a disbarred lawyer and a financial swindler-turned-FBI-informant.

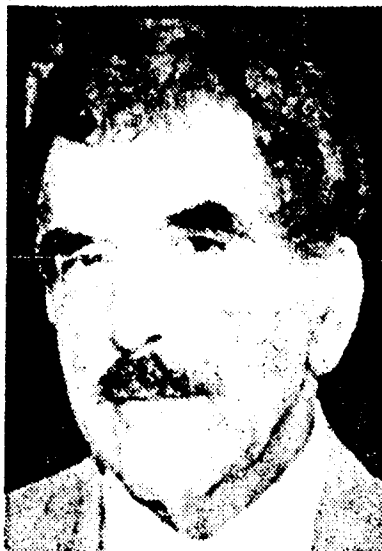
Ala Fadil Al Tamimi, a naturalized U.S. citizen born in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), was arraigned Tuesday in U.S. District Court in connection with the scam against L. Ron Hubbard, the late and reclusive Scientology founder. He pleaded innocent and was detained without bail.

Last May, reputed organized crime figure George T. Kattar of Methuen and disbarred attorney Harvey Brower of Swampscott were indicted on charges of offering the church false information about the scam in exchange for a \$100,000 fee. Both are free on bail.

Kattar and Brower were implicated by Larry Reservitz, a disbarred Brockton lawyer, high-rolling gambler and convicted financial swindler who participated in the second alleged fraud as an informant for the FBI. He is in the federal witness protection program.

Extradited from Germany

Tamimi, 34, was indicted in the \$2 million scheme last November. But at the time, he was serving a prison sentence in Germany for a fraud in that country. He was extradited last Friday.



George Kattar

Also indicted in the case was Tamimi's brother, Akil Abdul Amir Al Fadil Al Tamimi. But Akil Tamimi is believed to be in the UAE, which does not have an extradition treaty with the U.S., according to Assistant U.S. Attorney Gary Crossen.

A federal grand jury continues to investigate the \$2 million scam. "Our belief is there are other conspirators and there is therefore an ongoing grand jury investigation," Crossen said yesterday.

Harry L. Manion III, a church attorney and spokesman, said: "Church officials wonder why at this point Ala Tamimi's co-conspirators have not also been indicted.

"The church will press on to expose this conspiracy wherever the web of the conspiracy may lead and to expose whoever may be caught up in it," he said.

Ala Tamimi also faces trial on fraud charges stemming from his dealings as president of a

company called First Boston Arabian Corporation in 1981.

Promised lavish loans

The company purported to find Arab sheiks willing to make lavish loans at low interest rates to real estate developers and other businessmen in the U.S.

Tamimi required borrowers to pay him advance finder's fees, but he had neither loan commitments nor funds, the government charges.

His clients included a German national named Wolfgang Jurgens, for whom Tamimi purportedly arranged a \$75 million loan.

Tamimi's fee was \$2.5 million and he allegedly demanded \$870,000 in advance of the closing. Jurgens paid it in the form of 1.7 million German Deutschmarks, two Mercedes-Benzes, two BMWs, \$12,000 in U.S. currency and an \$8,000 Rolex watch.

Tamimi was indicted in the First Boston Arabian case in March 1983. But in June of that year, he jumped bail.

Shortly afterward, he was arrested for fraud in Sicily, according to an FBI affidavit and Tamimi's attorney, John C. McBride of Boston.

Tamimi spent two and a half years in an Italian jail. Upon his release, he was transferred to Germany, where he was wanted for fraud and where he ended up serving nine months in jail, according to McBride.

In March 1984, while he was incarcerated abroad, Tamimi was secretly indicted for perjury in connection with statements he made in court before he jumped bail in the First Bos-

ton Arabian case.

Court documents indicate that during bail hearings in that case, Tamimi claimed to have two passports — one from Jordan and another from the U.S. Both were eventually turned over to authorities.

But it was later learned that he possessed two other U.S. passports and used one of them in Italy, according to an FBI affidavit.

Tamimi cannot be tried on the perjury indictment, however, because the extradition agreement with Germany does not include that charge, said Crossen.

The German government was "disinclined to extradite him based on the perjury indictment," the prosecutor said.

It was also during his incarceration abroad that Tamimi was secretly indicted in the Scientology scheme.

The two-count indictment, returned Nov. 22, 1985, accuses Tamimi and his brother of conspiracy and interstate transportation of counterfeit checks.

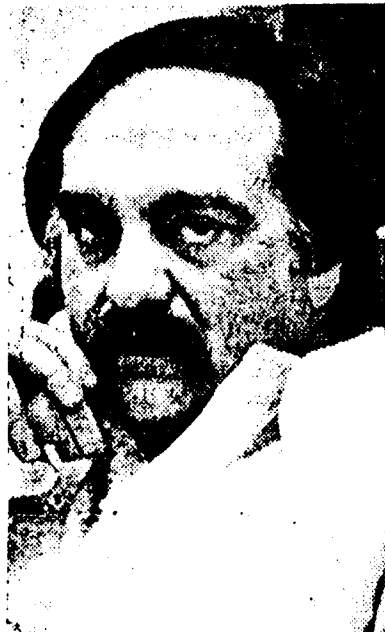
It alleges that in May 1982, they obtained a \$2 million forged check drawn on an account of Hubbard and a \$500,000 counterfeit check drawn on an account of a company called Indian River Foods Inc. Both accounts were at the Bank of New England in Boston.

The indictment further alleges that in June 1982, they transported the checks from Massachusetts to New York and attempted to deposit them in the Middle East Bank Ltd., where Akil Tamimi had opened an account under the alias of Aquil Abdulamir.

Suspecting that something was wrong, bank officials raised questions about the check and did not cash it.

Attorney McBride said yesterday: "We're going the whole route. The government can't prove its case."

Referring to the fact that the check was never cashed, he said: "The church was never defrauded out of any money. Mr. Hubbard never lost any money."



Harvey Brower

Although Tamimi had not been formally charged in the Hubbard check case until Tuesday, he has been linked to it as far back as 1984.

At that time, a private investigator hired by the church, Eugene Ingram, visited Tamimi in jail in Italy and brought back an affidavit in which Tamimi implicated himself and Boxford attorney Michael Flynn. The affidavit was turned over to the FBI and has been cited in civil litigation involving the church.

Flynn, who has been battling the church for years in numerous civil suits, has vigorously denied any involvement in the scam, denied knowing Tamimi and accused Scientology officials of trying to smear him.

Flynn was out of town and unavailable for comment yesterday, but an associate, Mike Tabb, said Tamimi has since sent telegrams to Flynn stating that the portion of the affidavit about Flynn is untrue.

Tabb also claimed that Ingram has been investigated by a grand jury for possibly having "procured perjury" from Tamimi.

"From our investigation, it appears that Mr. Tamimi was in-

involved in the Hubbard check, but Mike Flynn had no involvement in that," Tabb added. "...The government has never indicated that Michael Flynn is a target of a grand jury investigation or that he is seriously considered a suspect."

McBride, when asked about his client's affidavit, said Tamimi has since disavowed it. He also claimed that the Justice Department has "publicly" rejected the "credibility" of the affidavit.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Crossen said the government has not made any public declarations about the credibility of the affidavit. But he refused to comment further on it.

The names of Flynn and Tamimi have begun to surface in court documents filed in the case of Kattar and Brower, who allegedly schemed to bilk the church in 1984.

In two handwriting exemplars filed by Kattar's attorney, Michael Avery, during discovery proceedings, Kattar mentions Flynn and Tamimi as having been involved in the original check scheme.

The handwriting exemplars were requested by a grand jury in January 1986, along with photographs and fingerprints of Kattar, Avery said in an affidavit. Presumably, they were requested so they could be compared to identically worded notes already in the grand jury's possession.

Noting that Kattar and Brower have been accused of fabricating a story about the \$2 million scam, Tabb claimed the notes represented "the false story that Kattar told."

Tabb also pointed to an FBI affidavit which quotes certain conversations involving Kattar and Brower. In the narrative, the affidavit says: "In essence, they decided to falsely accuse several persons of complicity in the check offense, including a Boston lawyer (Michael Flynn)."

Neither Assistant U.S. Attorney Crossen nor Avery, Kattar's attorney, would comment on the handwriting exemplars.