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TAMPA TRIBUNE

## Scientology hit with suit for \$1 billion

LOS ANGELES (AP) — More than 400 current and former Scientologists filed a \$1 billion suit against the church Wednesday, alleging efforts to compromise or pay off two Florida judges and siphon \$100 million to foreign bank accounts.

The class action filed by attorney Lawrence Levy contends church officials or their representatives committed fraud and breached fiduciary duties. It says information obtained during purportedly confidential "auditing" sessions with a lie detector-like device is used "for purposes of blackmail and extortion."

The suit seeks an injunction and \$1 billion in punitive damages plus unspecified general damages.

Defendants include Scientology leaders Ken Hoden and Heber Jentsch; David Miscavige, chairman of Author Services which publishes the works of the late Scientology founder, L. Ron Hubbard; Mary Sue Hubbard, his widow; Hubbard's estate, and more than 100 other unnamed individuals.

"The real fraud is that a handful of disgruntled former members who asked to leave the church over three years ago because they were unwilling to lead moral lives are attempting to use the courts and the media to extort money from the religion," said Hoden, president of the Church of Scientology of Los Angeles.

"In April 1982," the suit alleges, "Miscavige ordered the payment of \$250,000 to 'set up' and frame United States District Judge Ben Krentzman (of Clearwater) in a scheme to compromise him with drugs and prostitutes."

It similarly contends that thousands of dollars were ordered spent to "pay off" Florida State Circuit Judge James Durden, then presiding over a Scientology case.

Krentzman's and Durden's offices were closed on New Year's Eve, telephone recordings said.

Clearwater Police Chief Sid Klein said in 1984 that his office was probing the alleged plot to compromise Krentzman and turning over material to federal agents.

Church attorney John G. Peterson of Beverly Hills, one of the defendants in Wednesday's lawsuit, denied any plot to lure Krentzman onto a boat with drugs and prostitutes, as the Clearwater Sun reported in 1984.

The church maintains a large retreat in Clearwater.

Hubbard, 74, died in January 1986 on his San Luis Obispo County, Calif., ranch after a brain hemorrhage, his doctor said.

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