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# Church of Scientology sued by present, former members

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LOS ANGELES — Hundreds of present and former Scientologists are suing the Church of Scientology for \$1 billion, alleging it improperly diverted \$100 million to foreign bank accounts and tried to compromise two Florida judges.

The class action filed Wednesday says information obtained during purportedly confidential church counseling or "auditing" sessions is used "for purposes of blackmail and extortion."

It seeks an injunction and \$1 billion in punitive damages plus unspecified general damages and alleges fraud and breach of fiduciary responsibility.

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 individuals, most of them unnamed "John Does."

"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.

He said that to him the suit resembles a reshuffle of a probate case

filed in November 1982.

"All these claims and allegations are utterly false, and have already been proven false," Hoden said.

Jentsch, president of the Church of Scientology International, was out of town Wednesday and unreachable for immediate comment, Hoden said. A secretary said Miscavige also was away from his office and unreachable.

The suit describes a purported November 1981 struggle to control church assets in which Miscavige allegedly locked up church leader William Franks "in a room for several weeks while Miscavige assumed control of all corporate bank accounts and other assets."

"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, Fla.) 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 Wednesday, telephone recordings said.

In March 1983, the suit says, Miscavige and his attorneys ordered the payment of more than \$1 million to "set up" and frame Boston

attorney Michael Flynn, a longtime courtroom foe of Scientology. Flynn also was unreachable for immediate comment, his office said.

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

"Ben Krentzman is a respected judge," Peterson said then. "There is no way we would ever in our

wildest imagination dream that Ben Krentzman would get on a boat with drugs and prostitutes."

On Wednesday, Peterson said of the suit: "I think it's ridiculous. ... Frankly, I don't think it's a proper class action either. They'll have a lot of trouble getting it certified."

Krentzman had ordered the sect to reveal the whereabouts of Hubbard.

The lawsuit alleges that the church misrepresented Hubbard's background to suggest he was a nuclear physicist who had no interest in exploiting Scientology for personal gain.

The suit said Hubbard had failed his college physics course, had a

mail-order degree from a "college which he created or owned" and formed various Scientology organizations "to solely make money through deceit and misrepresentation." The suit said Hubbard, who died last January on his San Luis Obispo County ranch at age 74, defrauded the church of more than \$100 million.

Plaintiffs Mary Maren, Franklin Freeman, Manfred Stansfield, Valerie Stansfield and Jerry Whitfield contend in the suit that they each paid more than \$10,000 to the church based on such fraudulent representations. Plaintiff Hana El-tringham Whitfield says she spent \$5,000.

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