



STATEMENT DC567

Weapons Arrests and “Doomsday Talk” Shrouds Church Universal and Triumphant

Since early July, three high-ranking Church Universal and Triumphant (CUT) members have been arrested on weapons offenses. In each case, the members were attempting to stockpile weapons in preparation for an anticipated nuclear holocaust.

One of those arrested was Edward Francis, the husband of sect leader Elizabeth Clare Prophet. Francis was sentenced on December 15, 1989 to one month in jail and three months' house detention for his role in a conspiracy to buy enough weapons and paramilitary supplies to arm a 200-member church army.

Law officials say they broke up the plot on July 7 when Vernon Hamilton, the former chief of the church's Cosmic Honor Guard (i.e., its security), was arrested in Spokane, Washington after purchasing weapons under a false name. He was apparently planning to ship them to the sect's 33,000-acre encampment in Park County, Montana. According to the December 10, 1989 Sunday *Oregon fan*, police found "about \$28,000 in cash and gold Krugerrands, 15 military-style assault rifles, two pistols, and 120,000 rounds of tracer and armor-piercing ammunition in [Hamilton's] pickup and a storage garage. Seven of the rifles were .50-caliber semiautomatic Barretts, which fire 6-inch cartridges that can penetrate light armor." He was sentenced to three years' probation for using false identification and fined \$1,000. His weapons and money were confiscated.

Later, on October 13, CUT staff member Frank Black was arrested transporting two more Barrett semiautomatic weapons to Montana. Authorities say the purchase was illegal because Black had given a false address. Charges were later dropped against him, but his weapons were confiscated.

Although Mrs. Prophet and CUT officials claim they didn't have anything to do with the attempted weapons purchases, published reports — and statements by Francis — make clear that it was Mrs. Prophet's "revelations" of a coming nuclear war with the Soviet Union that incited the attempted purchases. In recent months, many sect members have been moving to the sect's compound in Paradise Valley, Montana (which is near the North Entrance of Yellowstone National Park), where they have been busily engaged in building \$300,000 bomb shelters and stockpiling large food supplies.

But in mid-November, the church succumbed to media pressure and gave reporters a tour of one of the underground shelters. Ten of them, capable of holding about 1,400 people, were nearing completion, according to the November 19, 1989 *Seattle Times*.

Mrs. Prophet, often referred to as "Guru Ma" by her estimated 150,000 followers, has had difficulty pinpointing the date of the supposed apocalypse. According to Mrs. Prophet's doomsday scenario, the U.S. will be victimized by an

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all-out Soviet nuclear attack, followed by an invasion. The two dates she is said to have associated with the event — October 2, 1989 and December 31, 1989 — have both failed.

According to published reports, Mrs. Prophet arrived at the October 2 doomsday date through “El Morya,” one of many “ascended masters” (superhuman entities inhabiting a higher dimension) that are said to speak through her. When that date came and went, Mrs. Prophet said the prayers of sect members had postponed the event, and December 31 was the new date. But she added an immediate qualifier, according to the November 3 *Billings Gazette*: “Prophet emphasized she was not predicting war or any other catastrophe for that date — it was just a deadline for preparedness.”

All the talk of weapons and doomsday has further galvanized local residents against the sect; some have compared CUT’s presence in the area to the building of Jonestown in Guyana, or Rajneeshpuram in Oregon. And recently the residents gained a new ally in their nearly decade-long battle with the sect: Moira Lewis, Prophet’s 21-year-old daughter, who left CUT last year. Lewis has begun to publicly denounce her mother as a cult leader and has charged CUT with being a potentially dangerous organization that exercises mind control. On September 12, she appeared on the “Oprah Winfrey” show and debated her sister, Erin Prophet, 23, who has become a CUT spokeswoman.

CUT bought the 12,000-acre Forbes Ranch from recently deceased multimillionaire Malcolm Forbes in 1981, and in 1986 moved its headquarters there from Malibu, California. Meanwhile the church has purchased more land in Paradise Valley (see the Summer 1989 CHRISTIAN RESEARCH JOURNAL for more details).