
Facts Behind Terror

The Hare Krishna: a synthetic cult

by Jeffrey Steinberg

Under a perversion of constitutional guarantees of the First Amendment, members of the Hare Krishna cult can be found soliciting funds as a “religious” organization—and frequently assaulting unsuspecting travelers at major airports around the country.

A series of arrests of leading members of the Hare Krishna has produced evidence that the Hare Krishna is not a religious, nor even an Indian, organization. There is considerable evidence indicating that Hare Krishna is a classic cult, developed by British intelligence as a component in international drug trafficking and terror.

The real nature of the Hare Krishna, formally known as the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, has been increasingly exposed in recent years through arrests of their members on charges ranging from credit-card fraud and drug trafficking to illegal weapons possession and murder. Besides reporting numerous incidents of assaults on citizens, law-enforcement officers speculate that soliciting by the Krishna at airports may be simply a cover for prostitution and credit-card theft.

The Krishna cult originated in the East Bengal section of India, where British opium production operations have been based for over 100 years. Beginning as a front to exempt a wealthy Brahmin family from taxes, the cult was geared up in the 1950s and early 1960s to be used in destabilization operations against the Indian government. A leading member of the cult, A. C. Bhaktivedanta, was also dispatched to the United States to participate in the MK-Ultra mind-control project run by British intelligence.

Arriving in the United States in 1966, Bhaktivedanta was sent into New York’s Lower East Side, one of the major drug-counterculture laboratories—along with Haight-Ashbury—used by MK-Ultra operatives. Recruiting from drugged hippie layers, the Krishna cult set up operations in every part of the country. In 1977, Bhaktivedanta died, leaving the cult’s international crime empire in the hands of 11 disciples, who run Krishna’s operations to this day.

Since 1978, a revealing picture of the Krishna’s vast criminal operations has emerged from discoveries by

law-enforcement agencies in the United States:

- In early 1978, Krishna leader Alexander Kulik, a director of the Krishna holding company Prasadam Distributors, Inc., was arrested and charged with the murder of another Prasadam employee, Steven J. Bovin. Kulik had hired three “Mafia hitmen” to kill Bovin, allegedly for embezzling from the company.

When police arrested Kulik, they found one pound of pure heroin in his car. He was driving a \$100,000 Stutz-Blackhawk antique car, and lived in a \$450,000 beach house. Within hours of his arrest, Kulik had raised the \$500,000 bond required for his release.

The Prasadam Company (named for the Krishna word for food) was identified as the holding company for a number of other Krishna businesses, including Bionic Bit Cookie Co. and Delthic Auto Dealers. Police at the time speculated that Prasadam was used to set up front companies for laundering illegal drug profits.

- In January 1980, Krishna leader Joseph Shelton Davis and two other Krishnas were convicted on charges of operating a multimillion-dollar drug traffic. The three cult members were caught by U.S. Customs agents smuggling hashish oil from Pakistan.

- Shortly afterwards, Hans Kari, a.k.a. Srila Hansadutta Swami, one of the 11 disciples who run the cult, was arrested for illegal weapons possession after police found a submachine gun, two handguns, and two high-powered rifles in his car in Berkeley, Calif. Kari, a West German citizen, had the charges dropped when a low-level Krishna member “confessed” to being the owner of the weapons.

- In the spring of 1980, California police raided a Krishna-owned ranch in Lake County, in search of Michael Pugliese, a.k.a. Gover Dan, wanted for credit-card theft. At the ranch, known as Mt. Kailasha Farm, police found a rocket launcher, assault rifles, and thousands of rounds of ammunition.

Pugliese is a former aide to Hans Kari and is still wanted in California for credit-card theft, forgery, and assault. Additionally, police in Tokyo have issued three warrants for Pugliese’s arrest for jewel theft.

- Soon after the Mt. Kailasha raid, police raided a gun shop in El Cerrito, Calif., searching for more stolen credit cards. The shop, named Sgt. Pepper’s Guns, is owned by Ronald Ray Walters, another West German citizen. In the raid, police found over nine tons of gunpowder, tens of thousands of shell casings, and slugs for manufacturing ammunition.

- Krishna member Walter Bernstangle, who had access to the Mt. Kailasha arms cache, is currently wanted for grand theft in Mendocino County, Calif.

- Peter Kaufmann, another member with a long record of illegal arms-possession charges, is also known to have access to the arms cache.

These important pieces of evidence show only the top layers of a much greater—and dirtier—operation.