

Cult City Tour attendee arrested after damaging Scientology cameras with laser

Robert Harris, 76, said he just wanted to tell Scientology “I see you” while on the new walking tour of downtown church buildings.



A Clearwater man was arrested on Monday and accused of using a laser to damage security cameras on three Church of Scientology buildings, including the Flag Building at 215 S Fort Harrison Ave. [MARTHA ASENCIO RHINE | Times]

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[2 as a way to demystify Scientology's presence downtown.](#) And Harris said even a lifelong Clearwater resident like himself was curious to learn more.

But Harris's laser allegedly ended up causing \$2,091 in damage to six security cameras on three Scientology buildings, according to Clearwater police.

Harris, 76, was arrested at his home on Monday and charged with one count of felony criminal mischief after admitting to the offenses that occurred on Feb. 26, according to an arrest affidavit.



Robert Harris, 76. [Pinellas County Sheriff's Office]

"I'm not going to fight the fact I did it," Harris said on Tuesday after being released on bond. "I will fight the fact I was not purposefully trying to hurt the cameras."

Harris said police showed him surveillance images provided by Scientology officials that were peppered with black dots, allegedly a result of burn damage to the camera lenses from the laser. They also provided images of Harris pointing the laser at the cameras.

According to the arrest affidavit, video surveillance also captured Harris getting into a vehicle, which was registered to him.

"They've got cameras all over downtown," Harris said. "They watched me walk and go into a restaurant. They watched me go to my car, then they got the license plate and looked up the license plate and directed the detective."

Scientology spokesman Ben Shaw did not respond to a request for comment on Harris's arrest.

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cult's cameras," according to a Feb. 25 post on the tour's website.

He leads his groups in a faux Navy jacket and hat, a play on Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard's exaggerated military record.

Since late February, Reinhard has also written now-deleted online comments about three businesses that falsely accused them of favoring Scientologists after those businesses did not embrace his tour.

During a discussion on Thursday, [the City Council described Cult City Tours as damaging to downtown revitalization efforts](#). All five council members said the name sends the wrong message to the public as the city tries to show there is more to downtown than Scientology.

Only council member Mark Bunker said the tours could be a positive way to ease people's fears about the church if Reinhard would stop mocking Scientology.

Reinhard did not respond to an email or voice message requesting comment on Harris's arrest.

Harris said he was surprised to see "some very nice officers" arrive at his door on Monday. He was unaware there was an investigation about his actions from a month earlier.

He said he usually carries a laser in his pocket to point at things, especially the night sky. But he said he never intended to damage Scientology's buildings and

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