

Satanism Probe Comes Up Empty

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An investigation by the Utah Attorney General's Office has failed to uncover any evidence of a satanic conspiracy to abuse and murder Utah children.

Investigator Mike King told KUTV that a report due to be released next month will say no evidence was found to justify prosecution for alleged crimes.

King and another investigator screened 225 cases and gave close scrutiny to 125 of them during 2 1/2 years.

King said he talked to hundreds of victims who alleged they were raped, tortured, forced to perform horrible acts and brainwashed. Some said they saw babies murdered or were forced to participate in ritual murders.

"I really feel for these people and I would like to help them, but we just couldn't find the evidence," King said.

Investigation for the report, titled "Ritual Abuse in the State of Utah," was launched with \$250,000 from the Legislature in 1991 after numerous allegations of satanic ritual child abuse.

Among the allegations were those of Elder Glenn Pace, then a member of the presiding bishopric of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and now in the church's First Quorum of the Seventy.

In a memo to other church leaders, Pace said he knew of 60 victims of satanic abuse, and that there might have been as many as 800 in Utah. He charged that the satanic conspiracy included "members of bishoprics, LDS bishops . . . and members of the Tabernacle Choir."

Others alleged that general authorities of the church were abusing children as part of a satanic ritual. King said the investigation found the allegations involving church leaders to be "absurd."

Also in 1991, a University of Utah Medical Center psychologist said that there were 366 victims of satanic ritual abuse under treatment by therapists in Utah.

The investigation launched by then-Gov. Norm Bangerter and the Legislature was conducted by two full-time investigators who canvassed law-enforcement agencies, social-work offices and religious leaders to find cases of abuse.

King said some informants claimed to have participated in satanic rituals recently.

"They said there were at a ritual in the mountains the night before; we spent all day tracking around the hills and couldn't find anything. Then they said, 'I must have been given a drug or brainwashed to cloud my mind.'"

Jerry Lazar, head of the department of psychiatry at LDS Hospital, said allegations of satanic ritual abuse often are made by persons who believe they remember abuse years after it happened.

Sometimes the memories turn out to be true and sometimes they are false, Lazar said. In some cases, false memories are induced by therapists. He said he has never been able to independently verify memories of satanic ritual abuse.