

FBI Raids Church of Scientology

Hollywood

FBI agents raided Church of Scientology headquarters in Hollywood and Washington at dawn yesterday.

They seized some of the 150 documents allegedly stolen from the U.S. Courthouse in Washington in a series of burglaries last year.

The simultaneous raids were conducted on the basis of information provided to the FBI by a onetime high-level official of the church who has admitted taking part in the burglaries in May and June, 1976.

An FBI affidavit accompanying the search warrants states that the church official, Michael James Meisner, escaped three weeks ago from Scientologists who had him under "house arrest" since April. Meisner is now cooperating with authorities.

No arrests were believed to have been made in the raids at two

Back Page Col. 5

FBI RAID

From Page 1

churches in Hollywood or at a third in Washington. The affidavit reveals, however, that the FBI suspects the highest officials in the church of planning not only the burglaries, but plotting to infiltrate the Internal Revenue Service to steal other documents.

FBI and Justice Department officials refused to comment on the raids. But the raids clearly signaled what is expected to be an intensive investigation of the already controversial church.

Dozens of federal agencies have kept voluminous files on the church, which was founded in 1950 by writer L. Ron Hubbard, who remains the church's spiritual leader.

Scientology claims 3.1 million adherents around the world. It embraces a philosophy which seeks, through the use of controversial counseling measures, particularly the "E-meter," a lie-detector like device, to aid its followers gain self-knowledge and self-awareness.

In recent years the church has employed the federal Freedom of Information Act and the Privacy Act to obtain thousands of files kept on the church by such agencies as the FBI, Central Intelligence Agency, Internal Revenue Service and the Drug Enforcement Administration.

But many documents have been withheld by using exemptions from disclosure in the acts.

The FBI affidavit states that in early 1974 the church decided to launch an "all-out attack" on the IRS through the filing of suits, a public relations assault and actual infiltration by church members of the IRS to obtain files the church was unable to obtain through legal channels.

Gerald Bennett Wolfe, a reported church member, did get a job as a clerk typist with the IRS and on May 13 pleaded guilty in Washington, D.C., to charges of false use of a government seal.

He was arrested again last August for allegedly taking part with Meisner in at least three separate unauthorized entries into the U.S. Courthouse in the nation's capital and specifically the office of an assistant U.S. attorney that contained a myriad of confidential records withheld from the church.

Meisner has told authorities, according to the affidavit, that Wolfe's guilty plea was part of an elaborate coverup by top level church officials to conceal the church's alleged involvement in the breakin.

Initially, Meisner said, the plan was to only sacrifice Wolfe, since Meisner was national secretary of the church. When a warrant for Meisner's arrest was issued last August, however, he officially was stripped of his title although he remained an unofficial adviser to the church.

Meisner remained a fugitive but in April, he told authorities, he planned to turn himself in and that is when he was placed under "house arrest" by church members and subjected to "auditing," a mind control technique allegedly used by the church.

Meisner has said he believes Scientologists will try to kill him and he has been placed in protective custody. He has not been granted immunity from prosecution in exchange for his cooperation.

The church consistently has denied that it has ever used mind control techniques and has maintained for years that the federal government has been unjustly ha-

assing the institution and its members.

The IRS is known to have been regularly reviewing the church's activities to determine if it deserves its tax exempt status.

Los Angeles Times