

The New York Times

7 JULY 1978

Judge Upholds F.B.I. Raids on Scientology Church

LOS ANGELES, July 6 (AP) — The Government won a major victory in its battle with the Church of Scientology when a judge ruled yesterday that the Federal Bureau of Investigation's seizure of thousands of church documents was legal.

Federal District Judge Malcolm M. Lucas rejected allegations by church attorneys that the F.B.I. had exceeded the scope of a search warrant in the seizures last July 8.

Federal attorneys said that the ruling, unless appealed, cleared the way for the documents to be presented to a Federal grand jury in Washington, D.C., that is considering Government charges against the church of conspiracy, theft and obstruction of justice.

But attorneys for the church said they would file an appeal seeking a stay of the ruling.

The bureau's raids were carried out in

a Federal investigation into Government allegations of a church conspiracy to infiltrate Government agencies, burglarize Government offices and "bug" Federal property.

Church officials, however, contended that the raids on church offices in Los Angeles and Washington were only an extension of an alleged 20-year program of harassment by the Government because the church was attempting to uncover alleged Government misconduct.

The Rev. Heber Jentsch, the church's chief public relations officer in Los Angeles, condemned Judge Lucas's ruling and predicted that it would "complete the rape of the First Amendment that started with the Supreme Court's decision that allowed police to raid newspaper offices."

In a formal statement, the church asserted that Judge Lucas's order "kicked the First and the Fourth Amendments in the teeth."

The ruling, said a church spokesman, Gregory Layton, in Washington, "means the police or F.B.I. can now smash their way into any group formerly protected by the First Amendment, wander about at will and search through every piece of paper in a massive but authorized fishing expedition."

However, Judge Lucas found the church had "completely failed to demonstrate that the searches and seizures in question were improper in any way."

He ruled: "The court finds that the searches and seizures, even though directed at a church, were reasonable and properly limited under the circumstances."

The church claims four million followers and lists active organizations in United States cities and a dozen other countries. It calls Scientology "the spiritual heir of Buddhism in the Western world."