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Scientology Search Warrant Upheld Riverside Hunt for Bank Fraud Evidence Legal, Judge Rules

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RIVERSIDE—A Superior Court judge here upheld a search warrant Tuesday used by authorities to raid the local mission of the Church of Scientology in search of evidence of possible bank loan fraud.

But at the same time, Judge Ronald Deissler delayed action on a church motion that the 17 boxes of Scientology records seized during the June 13 raid be returned.

A hearing on that matter has been set for Aug. 20.

More than two dozen Riverside County sheriff's deputies conducted the raid in search of evidence that possibly as many as 100 past and present members of the church fraudulently obtained bank loans and then gave the money to Scientology.

Two former Scientology members said in sworn affidavits used in support of the search warrant that they had fraudulently obtained loans for the church.

Gay Anne Marie Doucette said she had obtained a \$6,500 bank loan using false information at the urging of a church member. Another former member, Todd Eric Carter, said he obtained more than \$4,000 in bank loans, which he said he turned over to the church.

Earlier this month, the church, in a prepared statement, denied any wrongdoing and attacked the credibility of Ms. Doucette and Carter.

The Rev. Heber C. Jentszsch, the church's public affairs spokesman, told The Times Deissler's ruling Tuesday would be appealed.

The church's motion to quash the search warrant—a motion charging that the church's Fourth Amendment rights under the U.S. Constitution were violated—said that the deputies came “battering through a door of the mission to gain entrance” on the day of the raid.

This occurred, the church said, at 8 a.m. even though deputies knew that the mission opened its doors at 9 a.m.

But Deissler in his ruling said the deputies had complied with the state's “knock-and-notice” law regarding search warrants.

Meanwhile, the investigation into the alleged fraud scheme will be delayed until the disposition of the seized records can be determined, law enforcement officials said.