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Seizure of Scientology Papers in Raid Held Illegal

WASHINGTON (AP)—A federal judge ruled Friday that the U.S. government had "illegally and unconstitutionally" seized documents during a raid on the Church of Scientology here in 1977.

U.S. Dist. Judge William J. Bryant ordered the government to return all of the documents seized by 25 FBI agents during their search on July 8, 1977. Asst. U.S. Atty. Raymond Banoun said that the government would appeal Bryant's ruling and that it would have no effect on an upcoming criminal trial of nine church members accused of stealing government documents and planting bugging devices in

government offices.

Banoun said none of the documents seized in the Washington raid were to have been used in the criminal trial. He said the criminal charges were based on evidence seized during a raid the same day at church facilities in Los Angeles. U.S. Dist. Judge Malcolm M. Lucas in Los Angeles ruled last year that the West Coast search was legal. That decision was later upheld by a federal appeals court.

The church has contended that both raids were a part of a harassment program by the government because the church is attempting to uncover alleged government misconduct.