

12-2-77

NYT

F.B.I. Is Upheld On Search Warrant For Church Offices

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Dec. 1—A Federal appeals court today upheld the validity of a warrant used by the Federal Bureau of Investigation to seize materials at the headquarters of the Founding Church of Scientology here in July.

A three-judge panel here dismissed the contention that the search warrant was "too broad" and said that "supporting documents went into great particularity not only as to the relevant documents and their location but also as to the particular offenses that the property sought was designed to prove."

A spokesman for the church charged that the ruling served to perpetuate "a police state in America" and said the church planned to appeal to the United States Supreme Court.

Early on July 8, agents searched the church's three-story, townhouse-style headquarters here and its offices in Los Angeles. The warrant had been issued on a charge that certain church officials had conspired to "steal documents from the United States Government," either by burglary of Government buildings or by placing operatives in Government service.

The search attracted considerable attention from the news media and was conducted virtually in the eye of reporters and television cameras. Attorneys for the church sought a restraining order while the search was under way, but was denied one.

The church later filed a motion urging that the material be returned and suppressed as evidence. This was upheld by a district court but overturned by the appeals court today.

The Government contended in its request for a warrant that the Internal Revenue Service had been infiltrated by a church operative and that documents about the church's tax status and background material from I.R.S. investigations had been removed.