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Two Scientologists Are Convicted Of Aiding in U.S. Office Break-ins

A U.S. District Court jury convicted two high officials of the Church of Scientology here yesterday of nine counts of aiding and abetting burglary in connection with break-ins at government offices in 1976.

The defendants, Jane Kember and Morris Budlong, face up to 15 years in prison on each of the nine charges. Judge Aubrey E. Robinson Jr., who presided at their five-week-long trial, scheduled sentencing for Dec. 19 and released Kember and Budlong on personal bond.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Raymond Banoun told the jury that the burglaries were intended to find out what information government officials had collected on church founder L. Ron Hubbard and on the church's tax-exempt status. The burglaries occurred at the Justice Department, the Internal Revenue Service and the U.S. attorney's office in Washington, Banoun said.

Banoun prosecuted the case along with Assistant U.S. Attorneys Judith Hetherton and Katherine Winfree.

Defense lawyers R. Kenneth Mundy and John A. Shorter Jr. argued that their clients' directives to church members did not include orders for the break-ins and that they were not aware that such illegal entries had occurred.

Nine other church members were convicted in December 1979 in a separate case on a charge of conspiracy to obstruct justice, which was related to the same series of break-ins. All nine of those church members have appealed their convictions.

In a related development yesterday, Robinson ordered three of those nine church members to complete 300 hours of community service after they were held in contempt of court for refusing to testify as government witnesses in the case against Kember and Budlong.