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SCIENTOLOGY LESD (TOPS N12)

BY LARRY MARGASAK

WASHINGTON (AP) -- A FEDERAL JUDGE TODAY SENTENCED A SIXTH CHURCH OF SCIENTOLOGY LEADER TO PRISON FOR CONSPIRING TO STEAL GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS, INFILTRATE FEDERAL AGENCIES AND KIDNAP A CHURCH OFFICIAL WHO DECIDED TO HELP EXPOSE THE CRIMES.

U.S. DISTRICT JUDGE CHARLES R. RICHEY ORDERED MITCHELL HERMANN TO SERVE A FOUR-YEAR PRISON TERM AND PAY A \$10,000 FINE.

THREE OTHER CHURCH OFFICIALS OR OPERATIVES AWAITED SENTENCING LATER IN THE DAY.

HERMANN ADMITTED PLACING A BUGGING DEVICE IN AN INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE OFFICE WHERE TAX OFFICIALS WERE DISCUSSING THE CHURCH'S TAX-EXEMPT STATUS.

HERMANN TOLD THE JUDGE THAT HE PERSONALLY PLANTED THE "BUG" BECAUSE "I AT LEAST HAD THE SENSE TO DO IT WITHOUT BUMBLING ABOUT. I FELT IT WAS BETTER IF I DID THIS THAN SOMEONE ELSE BECAUSE I FELT IF SOMEONE ELSE DID IT, IT MIGHT BE DONE IN AN INEPT FASHION THAT WOULD PRECIPITATE A DISASTER."

ON THURSDAY, RICHEY SENTENCED FIVE SCIENTOLOGY OFFICIALS TO EITHER FOUR- OR FIVE-YEAR PRISON TERMS AND FINED EACH ~~\$20,000~~ HE SAID THE PUNISHMENT SHOULD BE "A DETERRENT TO OTHERS."

ALL THE DEFENDANTS SENTENCED THURSDAY -- INCLUDING MARY SUE HUBBARD, WIFE OF CHURCH FOUNDER L. RON HUBBARD -- SAID THEY WERE SORRY FOR THEIR CRIMES. ONE, HENNING HELDT, SAID THE CHURCH LEADERS WERE REACTING TO GOVERNMENT ATTEMPTS TO "DESTROY THEIR RELIGION AND MAKE A MOCKERY OF THEIR BELIEFS."

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