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## Judge Who Ordered Raid Questions Info He Had

MONTPELIER, Vt. (AP). — The judge who issued the warrant allowing Vermont's ill-fated 1984 raid on the Northeast Kingdom Community Church now says he may have done so based on bad information.

Responding to allegations of child abuse, state police and social workers raided the Island Pond sect in the early morning hours of June 22, 1984 and rounded up 112 children in an action later ruled unconstitutional.

In his first public comment on the raid since it took place in June of 1984, Judge Joseph Wolchik told the Judicial Retention Board on Tuesday that he issued the warrant "after hearing several hours of fresh testimony and reviewing a five-inch stack of affidavits."

The affidavits described psychological and physical abuse of the sect's children aimed at destroying the children's independent thinking and imagination — charges that have never been substantiated.

"Every child was consistently described in those affidavits as being in the same position, receiving the same treatment every day," Wolchik told the board, which will recommend to the Legislature whether he and other judges should be retained.

He described the raid, which was approved by then-Gov. Richard Snelling, as "a tragedy for the state of Vermont."

Wolchik issued a general warrant that allowed the state temporarily to detain the sect's children. But then-Administrative Trial Judge Thomas Hayes decided against appointing Wolchik to continue hearing the case.

Instead, Hayes named District Judge Frank Mahady to hear the arguments on whether the children should be retained for several days to check them for signs of abuse. Mahady denied the state's request and ordered the children released.

Wolchik said he issued the warrant under pressure from Orleans County State's Attorney Philip White, Orleans nurse Suzanne Cloutier and Chris Braithwaite, publisher of the Barton Chronicle.

He said he didn't believe they were lying about the activities of the church, but that they "overstated the situation in an attempt to do something purposeful."

State Sen. Vincent Illuzzi, R-Essex-Orleans, a member of the retention panel whose home district includes Island Pond, said of Wolchik, "I think he was misled on the whole thing."

Wolchik said the size and some aspects of the raid later shocked him. He said when he signed the warrant, he expected 16 to 20 children would be picked up.

"When I heard 112, my jaw dropped."