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Explanation Ordered For Seizure of Film

NEW YORK, Aug. 13 (UPI)— Three photographers obtained a federal court order Tuesday directing U.S. Customs officials to explain why they should not return 10,000 feet of film seized when the cameramen returned from the North Vietnam last week.

Judge John F. Dooling Jr. of U.S. District Court in Brooklyn ordered the defendants— Customs, Trans World Airlines and the State Department—to explain the action of last Thursday. He also directed that developing of the 16-mm black-and-white movie film, already begun by the government, be halted.

The three cameramen, employed by the underground documentary film organization known as "Newsreel"— actually Camera News, Inc.— shot the film in Hanoi when they accompanied the delegation of American pacifists who arranged the release of three American prisoners of war. The film was seized when the pacifists returned to this country with the servicemen.

In the preliminary court hearing, it was brought out that Customs officials warned the three filmmakers — Nor-

man D. Fruchter, Robert Kramer and John Douglas—that the film would have to be confiscated. They cited a federal regulation that prohibits pictures advocating the overthrow of the U.S. Government.

With this warning, the cameramen elected to have the film stored under seal by TWA—the airline they arrived on—until shipment to another country could be arranged. But when Newsreel called the airline earlier this week to arrange the transshipment, it was learned the airline had turned the film over to Customs.

In addition to the movie film, there were 35-mm. still photographs and more than four hours of recorded tape to be used in the antiwar documentary the filmmakers planned.

The cameramen said a short segment of the confiscated film had been sold to the Columbia Broadcasting System for \$3,000 before they left Vietnam. After examining that portion, CBS reportedly offered more than \$25,000 for the rest of the film if it proved to be as newsworthy.