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Prisoner Interview Ruling Challenged

A Federal Court ruling that San Quentin inmates have a constitutional right to talk to the press is being challenged by the State Attorney General's office.

Deputy Attorney General George R. Nock said last night that a motion will be filed here, probably today, asking U.S. District Judge Spencer Williams to reconsider his ruling.

In the decision handed down last week, Judge Williams said present regulations barring most interviews between San Quentin inmates and reporters violated the prisoners' First Amendment rights to freedom of speech.

He ordered the State Department of Corrections to

submit proposed new regulations within 90 days, providing reasonable access to the press for inmates.

The judge said the regulations may permit prison officials to control the times, places and, within limits, the frequency of interviews — but that they must not be banned altogether.

State officials had contended that the present rules, under which many requests by specific prisoners and reporters have been flatly rejected, were necessary for security reasons.

Judge Williams' ruling came in a case originally filed last November by San Quentin inmate Booker T. Hillery Jr., who was denied permission for an interview with Earth magazine.