

SFCronicle FEB 27 1973

South Viet Crackdown On Press

Saigon

Displaying increasing sensitivity to the presence of Viet Cong and North Vietnamese officials in its midst, the South Vietnamese government apparently is carrying out a crackdown on Western newsmen trying to report on the Communists' activities.

The government told an American television reporter over the weekend that he was not welcome in Vietnam and secret police confiscated from a photographer his film of Communist officials.

The reporter, Ronald Nessen of the National Broadcasting Co., was told his visa would not be renewed. Saigon claimed Nessen had "distorted" and falsely attributed the remarks of a military spokesman.

On Sunday Vietnamese police briefly detained and confiscated film and credentials from another photographer, a Canadian taking pictures of Canadian truce observers attending church.

The actions stem from a strict new press policy put into effect February 7. The rules said newsmen could face punitive action for what an official spokesman called "un-Vietnamese activities."

The new press policy, many newsmen feel, foreshadows a deterioration in relations between the South Vietnamese government and the Western press.

Although irritated by the reports from Viet Cong-controlled areas, the government has been toughest on newsmen trying to cover the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese delegates to the four-party Joint Military Commission set up by the Paris peace agreement.

Repeatedly, newsmen have been chased away from the prison-like compound housing Communist delegates at Tan Son Nhut air base. Most recently, newsmen have been barred altogether from the base with a warning that they risk being shot by guards if they try to get inside without permission.

Associated Press