

EMBASSY OF VIET NAM IN THE UNITED STATES

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NEWSLETTER

1. VIET NAM – US RELATIONS

- VN, US Open First Strategic Dialogue on Political, Security, National Defense, Humanitarian Co-operation issues.

The dialogue, which opened in Hanoi on October 6th, aims to strengthen the mutual understanding between the two countries for mutual benefit and to promote peace, stability, cooperation and development in the region, Vietnamese Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Pham Binh Minh said at a joint press briefing with US Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs Mark Kimmitt.



The two countries are enhancing their bilateral cooperation on the basis of developing friendly ties, and their common interest in the bilateral and regional cooperation, said ASS Mark Kimmitt. Talking about Vietnam's preparations for participating in the UN peace keeping force, he said the United States is ready to help Vietnam improve its capacity to contribute to international peace keeping.

DFM Pham Binh Minh and ASS Mark Kimmitt at a news briefing in Hanoi.

The two sides also discussed other bilateral and regional issues of mutual concern. The dialogue, set to be annual, was held under the auspices of a high-level agreement reached during the US visit by Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung in June.

- US Deputy Secretary of State Visits Vietnam

Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte was welcomed by Vietnamese PM Nguyen Tan Dung, who applauded the outcome of Negroponte's earlier working sessions with Vietnam's relevant agencies to boost bilateral cooperation in various areas, particularly

trade, investment, education and training, and environment, as well as in response to climate change and rising sea level.

The government leader appreciated concerted efforts of Vietnamese and US concerned agencies to deploy agreements between senior leaders of the two countries, focusing on four cooperation pillars of investment, trade, education and environmental protection. Both host and guest were delighted at the fine development of Vietnam-US friendship and multifaceted cooperation on the basis of equality and mutual benefit.



PM Nguyen Tan Dung and DSS John Negroponte in Hanoi.

The US Deputy Secretary of State also worked with leaders of Vietnam's Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Education and Training, Defense, and Public Security. Negroponte affirmed that the US wants to cooperate with Vietnam in many areas, including bomb and mine sweeping, provision of information about Vietnamese missing in the war, and solving Agent Orange consequences.

Education High Priority in Vietnam - US Relations



DPM, Education Minister Nguyen Thien Nhan and DSS John Negroponte in Hanoi.

Negroponte asserted that the US is willing to help Vietnam fulfill the target of training 10,000 doctoral candidates by 2020. He said the two countries should work closely to discuss concrete cooperation for the years to come.

“In the coming weeks, members of the Education Task Force will meet to discuss how we might strengthen our work together in this area. This Task Force will examine ways in which we can increase the number of Vietnamese

students in the US and Americans studying in Vietnam and what can be done to increase exchanges between US and Vietnamese universities,” Negroponte said.

The second highest ranking US diplomat said on September 12 that education is a high priority in the Vietnam-US relations. He also said the US wants to link American companies and Vietnamese universities to help graduates acquire the skills they need to find good jobs in the new Vietnamese economy.

- Vietnam National Defense and Security Law Makers Visits the US

Le Quang Binh, Chairman of the Committee on National Defense and Security of the National Assembly and other committee members met with Senator Chuck Hagel,

Senator Mel Martinez, Representatives Joe Wilson and Rick Larsen and high-ranking officials from the Departments of Defense and State during their stop in Washington July 29-31. Mr. Binh also had joined a business round table meeting hosted by the US-ASEAN Business Council (USABC).

Binh was the highest ranking member of this committee to visit the US since the Vietnam – US diplomatic normalization 13 years ago.

The Vietnamese lawmakers and their US legislative counterparts noted with satisfaction new developments in the bilateral ties in recent years and acknowledged the great significance of regular high level dialogues and exchanges between Vietnam and the US law makers, especially a new mechanism of talks on political-military and policy planning issues, initiated during the recent visit to the US by Vietnam PM Nguyen Tan Dung, in further broadening their understandings on various security and strategic issues.

In his meeting with US businesses hosted by the USABC, Chairman Le Quang Binh highlighted Vietnam's political stability and affirmed its long-term commitment to safeguard legitimate and legal interests of foreign investors in Vietnam.

- Vietnam-US Extend Labor Dialogue and Cooperation to 2012

As part of the ongoing exchanges on labor issues between Vietnam and the US, which started in 2000, Vietnam sent a senior-level labor delegation to Washington from August 6 to 8.

During the visit, Vietnamese Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs and the U.S. Department of Labor agreed to extend the Letter of Understanding on labor cooperation with for four more years until 17 August 2012. The LoU, signed in 2006, will put both sides on the continued labor dialogues and cooperation on the various issues of mutual concern, including improvement of industrial relations, labor legislation and regulations, labor inspection and enforcement, promotion of employment service and social safety net, prevention of HIV/AIDS at workplace, prevention and elimination of exploitative child labor and human trafficking, and protection of migrant workers.

The upcoming dialogue, the sixth one in recent years, is expected in October 2008.

The delegation also held meetings with senior officials from Department of State, and US Trade Representative Office, senior trade and labor staff of the offices of Senator Dianne Feinstein, Senator Max Baucus, Senator John Kerry and Representative Sander Levin, as well as with Vietnam analysts and researchers at the Congressional Research Service and business representatives from US-ASEAN Business Council and US Chamber of Commerce.

2. UNITED NATIONS:

- **Vietnam fulfills its chairmanship role at United Nations Security Council in July**

Vietnam has successfully accomplished its double role as a non-permanent member and chair of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in July. Under Vietnam's chairing, Vietnamese Deputy Prime Minister Pham Gia Khiem arrived in New York and directly led an open debate on children and armed conflicts (CAAC). The discussion was an initiative by Vietnam, the first country in Asia and the second in the world to sign the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and an optional



DPM Pham Gia Khiem presides a UNSC discussion.

protocol to that convention. Vietnam has always stated that the CAAC should be discussed and addressed at the UN and the UNSC in order to serve the interests of children and has urged parties not to politicalize the issue. Vietnam wants to contribute to fully and effectively implementing the UN and UNSC resolutions so as to ensure the rights and interests of children and make a better world for children. The council also adopted the UNSC Chair's statements on children and armed conflicts.

During its one month chairmanship, the UNSC also discussed various issues, including the operations of UN missions in Cote d'Ivoire, the Central African Republic and Chad, West Africa, Sudan, Darfur, Ethiopia and Eritrea, Georgia, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Nepal. The UNSC chair prepared the council's annual report for submission to the upcoming session of the UN General Assembly. A number of unscheduled issues, such as instability and increased violence in Zimbabwe and the situation in Myanmar also emerged in July.

- **Vietnam's DPM Khiem Attends the 63rd UNGA in September**

On behalf of the State of Vietnam, Deputy Prime Minister Pham Gia Khiem attended the 63rd UNGA from 23-29 September. The Deputy Prime Minister delivered a speech at the 63rd UN General Assembly's plenary session and a mid-term meeting to review the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. He joined an informal meeting of ASEAN Foreign Ministers and the 32nd Foreign Ministers' Meeting of Group 77, and chaired a ministerial-level meeting between the ASEAN and the Gulf Cooperation Council. The Deputy Prime Minister also had a meeting with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, attending the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) plenary session and several working sessions on the sidelines of UNGA.

2. DOMESTIC NEWSLINE

- The Baha'i Community of Vietnam Recognized.

On July 25, Nguyen The Doanh, Chairman of the Government's Committee for Religious Affairs handed over a certificate to the Baha'i Community of Vietnam in Ho Chi Minh City.

Doanh praised the Baha'i community for its contributions to the national development since its presence in Vietnam and said he believed the community will always preserve its advanced tenets that honour charity, marriage, family, and education.

Chairman of the Spiritual Council of the Baha'i Community of Vietnam Nguyen Thuc Trong said the Government's recognition of the Baha'i religion "charts a new course of development for the entire Baha'i community" and motivates followers to make more contributions to social and humanitarian activities and to drive to preserve traditional spiritual values.

The Baha'i Community of Vietnam made its first presence in the country in 1954 and it has to date had 7,000 followers in 43 provinces and cities.

- Baptist Church Opens First Congress

The Baptist Church in Vietnam (Southern) opened its first general conference in Ho Chi Minh City on August 8 as part of its roadmap towards the government's recognition of its legal status as a religious organisation. The Baptist Church in Vietnam received a certificate for religious practice on October 2 last year.

During the three-day event, which is attended by more than 500 dignitaries and including those from abroad, the church will pass its charter and elect an executive board for the 2008-2012 term. The Provisionary President of the Baptist Church in Vietnam (southern), Pastor Nguyen Thong, described the general conference as an event of great significance that will open up a new page in the history of the denomination. The general conference is being held openly and democratically with assistance from the Government and local authorities, he said.

Pastor David Nelson, one of the 15 Baptist Protestant pastors from the US and the Republic of Korea to attend the event, said Vietnam's current religious policy reflects the Government's goodwill and practical assistance to religious organisations.

Deputy Director of the Government's Committee for Religious Affairs Nguyen Thanh Xuan said he hoped that Baptist Protestants continue to promote unity and make contributions to the country's stability and prosperity.

The Baptist Churches in Vietnam has more than 18,000 followers and 500 dignitaries, including over 5,000 ethnic ones, practising in 409 congregations in 42 cities and provinces throughout the country.

3. EMBASSY HIGHLIGHTS

- University of Montana signs student exchange agreement with Vietnam

A new UM student exchange program with Vietnam was signed by President George Dennison and Ambassador Le Cong Phung on August 12, marking a historic landmark and new chapter in the relations between the Land of Shining Mountains state and Vietnam. The signing was witness by U.S. Sen. Max Baucus.

The agreement is the first of its kind for Montana and promises to open doors for educational, cultural and economic opportunities for both parties, Baucus said.

Currently, there are 7,000 Vietnamese college students studying in the United States, and in the immediate future - over the next two years - the country would like to increase that number to 10,000.

- Ambassador Le Cong Phung Visit to Utah

The visit, from September 24-26, aims at promoting relations between Vietnam and Utah. During the visit, Ambassador Phung met with Utah Lt. Governor Gary R. Herbert, the First and Second Counselors of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and talked at BYU David Kennedy Center for International Studies and the University of Utah Hinkley Institute of Politics.

- Vietnam cuisine thrills Washington gourmets.

A cultural show featuring Vietnamese finest traditional cuisine was hosted by Madam Nguyen Thi Nhan, the Ambassador's spouse, on June 29 at the Embassy residence. It marked the first time Washington gourmets can enjoy the most authentic Vietnamese dishes, such as Nem – spring roll, Pho – Vietnamese beef rice noodle soup in the capital area.



The home-cooked Vietnamese iconic food thrilled the guests, many of them Vietnam's frequent visitors. Then it came to the most keenly awaited part of the night when guests, including Congressman Callahan and his spouse, were invited to join hands-on instruction to prepare their own favorite dishes. Vietnamese folk music and decoration soaked the night well with a Vietnamese traditional and cultural ambiance.

Madam Nhan hopes the after-taste of the event will open another colorful window of Vietnamese culture to the American people.

- Vietnamese Ambassador Series Hosts Congressional Staff Grouping.

On August 7, the Embassy hosted an Ambassador Series for Congressional Legislative Staff Association, a social and professional grouping of legislative staffers on the Hill. More than a hundreds congressional staffers were in attendance.

Addressing the event, Ambassador Le Cong Phung spoke highly of the contributions made by members of the US Congressional Legislative Staff Association in boosting cooperation between the two countries. The ambassador briefed the audience Vietnam's two decade of reform and its way forward in the national building and its relations with the US. Representatives from the Congressional Legislative Staff Association highly valued the progress in Vietnam-US relations and committed to making further efforts for the benefits of the two peoples.

- Ambassador Shares Grief over the Tragic Bus Crash

On August 12, Ambassador Le Cong Phung sent a letter to Houston Mayor Bill White to express his sadness and sympathy over traffic accident on August 8th in Sherman, Texas which claimed over a dozen of lives of fellow Vietnamese and injured many others.

"I was deeply saddened by the news. My thoughts and prayers go out to the victims", wrote Ambassador Phung.

On the same day, he also offered his condolences and prayers to the families of the deceased and the injured passengers as well as to the Vietnamese Martyrs Church, the Lady of Our La Vang Church and the Christ Incarnate Word Catholic Church in Houston, which lost their members in the accident./.

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