

Peter Rodman mentioned in his remarks before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, "U.S. policy opposes unilateral changes in the Taiwan Strait status quo by either party. The PLA military build-up changes that status quo and requires us to adapt to the new situation, as we are doing now." Therefore, we must help the Taiwanese people to protect themselves in the event of a military conflict in the Strait.

Taiwan is very worried about China's military intentions. Last March, the Chinese enacted the anti-secession law, which gives them the right to use force against Taiwan. Chinese leaders have consistently maintained that military action is a viable possibility.

I ask President Bush to persuade Mr. Hu to withdraw Chinese missiles from the Strait, to rescind the anti-secession law and to resume a dialogue with Taiwan's elected leaders.

Peace in the Strait is important to the United States, China, and Taiwan. The 23 million people of Taiwan have worked hard to earn their democratic way of life and they should be allowed to determine their own future. Keeping the freedom of the Taiwanese people secure is a matter of deepest concern to all of us.

THE HUMAN RIGHTS DIALOGUE
WITH VIETNAM: IS VIETNAM
MAKING SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 5, 2006

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, on March 29, I co-chaired a hearing to examine the results of the recent Human Rights Dialogue with the government of Vietnam, and the progress, or lack thereof, in Vietnam's respect for human rights and religious freedom. While the hearing revealed that there have been some improvements in Vietnam's human rights record, the testimony showed that the evidence of abuse is still too strong for us to relax our efforts.

It would be inappropriate, in any discussion of Vietnam, not to first raise the issue that engages more Americans, more deeply, than any other when we talk of Vietnam—the need to complete a full, thorough and responsible accounting of the remaining American MIAs from the Vietnam conflict. As my colleagues know well, of the 2,583 POW/MIAs who were unaccounted for—Vietnam (1,923), Laos (567), Cambodia (83) and China (10)—just under 1,400 remain unaccounted for in Vietnam. During my last visit to Vietnam in December 2005 I met with LTC Lentfort Mitchell, head of the Joint POW-MIA Accounting Command (JPAC). While JPAC is making steady progress and is able to conduct approximately four joint field activities per year in Vietnam, I remain deeply concerned that the government of Vietnam could be more forthcoming and transparent in providing the fullest accounting. It is our sacred duty to the families of the missing that we never forget and never cease our pursuit until we achieve the fullest possible accounting of our MIAs.

This hearing took place in the context of the recently concluded Human Rights Dialogue with Vietnam, which our distinguished witnesses from the State Department, the Honorable Barry F. Lowenkron, Assistant Secretary

of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, the Honorable John V. Hanford III, Ambassador-at-Large for the Office of International Religious Freedom, and the Honorable Eric John, Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, reported on.

The State Department had suspended the Human Rights Dialogue since 2002 because it was clear Hanoi was not serious about our concerns. Since that time Hanoi was designated a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) for egregious and systematic violations of religious freedom in both 2004 and 2005. Vietnam is currently anxious to receive Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR) with the U.S., to gain admittance to the World Trade Organization (WTO), and to have President Bush attend the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit in November. Indeed, this is the "APEC Year" in Hanoi. Now that the dialogue has been resumed, at Hanoi's request, it is both imperative and opportune for the administration and Congress to pressure Hanoi for more deeds than words. Vietnam needs to show that it is not merely trying to smooth out some minor "misunderstandings" which get in the way of Vietnam's important economic and political goals, but rather that it has made a fundamental commitment to human rights and reform, and to fulfilling its international commitments, a fundamental commitment which will not be forgotten after it has achieved those goals.

Section 702 of Public Law 107-671 requires the Department to submit a report on the U.S.-Vietnam Human Rights Dialogue within 60 days of its conclusion "describing to what extent the Government of Vietnam has made progress during the calendar year toward achieving the following objectives:

(1) Improving the Government of Vietnam's commercial and criminal codes to bring them into conformity with international standards, including the repeal of the Government of Vietnam's administrative detention decree (Directive 311/CP).

(2) Releasing political and religious activists who have been imprisoned or otherwise detained by the Government of Vietnam, and ceasing surveillance and harassment of those who have been released.

(3) Ending official restrictions on religious activity, including implementing the recommendations of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance.

(4) Promoting freedom for the press, including freedom of movement of members of the Vietnamese and foreign press.

(5) Improving prison conditions and providing transparency in the penal system of Vietnam, including implementing the recommendations of the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.

(6) Respecting the basic rights of indigenous minority groups, especially in the central and northern highlands of Vietnam.

(7) Respecting the basic rights of workers, including working with the International Labor Organization to improve mechanisms for promoting such rights.

(8) Cooperating with requests by the United States to obtain full and free access to persons who may be eligible for admission to the United States as refugees or immigrants, and allowing such persons to leave Vietnam without being subjected to extortion or other corrupt practices.

So far, all the evidence suggests, however, that Vietnam still has a long way to go before it can convince us that it has made any fundamental and lasting change in its human rights policy. The State Department's Human Rights report on Vietnam for 2005, upgraded Vietnam's Human Rights record from "poor" to merely "unsatisfactory." Freedom House still rates Vietnam as "unfree," but it is no longer at the absolute bottom of the repression scale. These are not exactly ringing endorsements.

There are fewer religious and political dissidents in jail, but there still are too many. Even those let out, like Father Ly, Father Loi, Dan Que, are subject to continued forms of house arrest or harassment. Restrictions on the legal churches have eased, but requests to build churches, to receive back confiscated properties, and provide charitable and educational services, which are allowed under current law, are never answered quickly, and often never answered at all. Hundreds of churches have been closed in the past 5 years. Last year, a few dozen were opened, which does to begin to redress the earlier harm. And still large numbers of believers who belong to "illegal churches" suffer continued harassment—not everywhere, not everyone, not always, but their rights to believe and practice are still not secured by rule of law. Too often all of the improvements are based on local and arbitrary decisions which can be reversed at any time. The Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV) is still illegal, and its leaders, the Venerable Thich Quang Do and Patriarch Thich Huyen Quang remain under strict "pagoda" arrest, and 13 other senior figures remain under similar restrictions. The independent Hoa Hao Buddhists are also illegal, and their church was singled out for repression last year. Evangelical Protestant house churches, Mennonites, Bahai, Hindus, and others exist in a legal limbo: technically illegal, sometimes tolerated, but sometimes repressed. Those officials who violate government guaranteed religious rights appear never to be punished. This is not the way a rule of law society is constructed.

Reports of forced renunciations of Christianity in the Montagnard regions have diminished—but they have not ended. Montagnard house churches are allowed to operate, but have not received their registration. The UNHCR, and various diplomats, are allowed to travel, sometimes, to some Montagnard regions, but only when carefully monitored. Montagnards eligible for resettlement in the U.S. get their passports and exit visas, but not all, not everywhere. And hundreds of Montagnards languish in detention.

Vietnam reportedly weakened its two-child policy several years ago, after coercive policies involving contraception, birth quotas, sterilization and abortion cut Vietnam's fertility almost in half in 20 years. Yet last year the Deputy Prime Minister called for "more drastic measures" to cut the birth rate further. It is not clear that this has yet been enforced, but it hangs there as a storm cloud over all families, but especially over Vietnam's long-abused indigenous minorities. Like China's one child policy, Vietnam's two-child policy has led to a large and growing imbalance in male and female births, which will only increase its already severe problems as a source, transit and destination country for human trafficking. According to last year's State Department's Human Trafficking report, Vietnam remained a

Tier II country because of its serious trafficking problems, but was removed from the Watch List. Many of us think this was an error, and that Vietnam's response to its trafficking problems remains inadequate.

In December I met with over 60 people: government officials, political and religious activists, archbishops, heads of churches and ordinary believers. I have had several, somewhat stilted, I must admit, conversations recently with mixed delegations of religious leaders and government officials. That the Vietnamese government even consented to send these delegations was an important step. It does seem that some of the government officials at least are beginning to understand our concerns. What they will now do is the question. I believe that Michael Cromartie, Chairman of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, has made the crucial observation: "We are not arguing over whether the glass is half-full or half-empty. We just do not know if the glass, so recently constructed, will continue to hold any water. Will legal developments hold in a country where the rule of law is not fully functioning? Are changes only cosmetic, intended to increase Vietnam's ability to gain WTO membership and pass a Congressional vote on PNTR? . . . Though promises of future improvement are encouraging, we should not reward Vietnam too quickly by lifting the CPC designation or downplaying human rights concerns to advance economic or military interests."

I could not agree more. We have seen various thaws in other Communist regimes. The Khrushchev thaw was followed by the worst persecution of religion in 30 years, and then the long stagnation of the Brezhnev regime. In the 60's we thought Nicolae Ceausescu of Romania would be the next Tito, I remember when we thought that was an advance; instead, he decided to be the next Kim Il-Sung. Finally, who can forget the democratic opening in China which was crushed at Tienanmen Square.

We must be sure that the change in Vietnam is real. We have a unique opportunity this year to achieve real and lasting progress in Vietnam. We should use the leverage we have, and seek to increase it. The House of Representatives has twice passed legislation authored by me on human rights in Vietnam. H.R. 1587, The Vietnam Human Rights Act of 2004, passed the House by a 323-45 vote in July 2004. A similar measure passed by a 410-1 landslide in the House in 2001. The measures called for limiting further increases of non-humanitarian United States aid from being provided to Vietnam if certain human rights provisions were not met, and authorized funding to overcome the jamming of Radio Free Asia and funding to support non-governmental organizations which promote human rights and democratic change in Vietnam. Regrettably, both bills stalled in Senate committees and have not been enacted into law. But we are again ready to work with the administration to find ways to encourage and promote civil society in Vietnam. I have re-introduced the Vietnam Human Rights Act of 2005, H.R. 3190. I would be delighted to hear what sort of measures we could add to the bill to cooperate with Vietnam's government if it is indeed serious about strengthening civil society and the rule of law: to help promote genuine NGO's, especially faith-based NGO's, to deal with Vietnam's problems with trafficking, addic-

tion, HIV/AIDS, street children; to create an independent bar association, and help train lawyers who can defend the rights already guaranteed to Vietnam's people by Vietnam's own constitution and laws.

Human rights are central. They are at the core of our relationship with governments and the people they purport to represent. The United States of America will not turn a blind eye to the oppression of a people, any people in any region of the world. Our non-governmental witnesses: Ms. Kay Reibold, project development specialist for the Montagnard Human Rights Organization; Mrs. H'Pun Mio, a Montagnard refugee who after many years of abuse, was finally allowed to join her family in the U.S.; Dr. Nguyen Dinh Thang, the executive director of Boat People SOS; and Mr. Doan Viet Hoat, the president of International Institute for Vietnam, gave us valuable independent testimony, so that the world will get a true and complete picture of this government with whom we are growing ever closer.

THE CONGRESSIONAL YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL MAKES A DIFFERENCE

HON. SAM JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 5, 2006

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, when you think of the leaders of the future—what qualities come to mind? Civic activism? Community awareness? Personal leadership? Academic excellence? It is a privilege to recognize the members of the 2005-2006 Congressional Youth Advisory Council because they embody these qualities and more.

For the last 2 years, the members of the Congressional Youth Advisory Council have represented the young people of the Third District well by working as ambassadors of the future. Several times a year the members of the Youth Council would share a valuable youth perspective on the current issues before Congress. This year 42 students from public, private, and home schools in grades 10 through 12 made their voices heard and made a difference to Congress.

For the first time, this year there was a philanthropy element to the Youth Council. For the community service project, the members of the Youth Council reached out to veterans and encouraged them to share their stories. Called the "Preserving History Project," each member had to interview a veteran. Then the student had to submit a lengthy paper detailing the veteran's service and sharing what the student learned from that experience. The students submitted a summary of their work. Today I'm proud to submit the briefs provided so the hard and valuable work of the Youth Council may be preserved for antiquity in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

Someday, each member will be able to share with children and grandchildren—"In high school I served my community and my work will always be recognized in the official CONGRESSIONAL RECORD."

A copy of each submitted student summary follows.

To each member of the Congressional Youth Advisory Council, thank you for your time, effort and sacrifice to help make the

Congressional Youth Advisory Council a success. You're the voices of the future and I salute you. God bless you and God bless America.

I was thankful for my list of questions as my Grandpa (William Frank Morgan) began relating his military experiences to me. I learned about his life, sacrifices, and service. He was a Seaman First Class in the Navy, and later a Senior Master Sergeant when he retired from the Air Force. This opportunity to talk with him and hear his story has strengthened our relationship, and I'm so thankful for this chance to glean more knowledge about my family. Grandpa and Grandma Morgan visit once a year at Thanksgiving and I always look forward to their arrival. Reconnection through our talks and the time we spend together has become more precious each year. We also try to visit them, and keep in touch through phone calls and letters. Surprisingly, although Grandpa is not talkative, he will sporadically crack the funniest jokes. He is a good example in studying the Bible and desiring a life of a Godly character. He has a talented green thumb, and I enjoy stepping into his untidy greenhouse to watch him care for his healthy plants. When he isn't gardening, Grandpa spends time among his books, or checking the weather for the coming week. Grandpa's traveling, distance from loved ones, disrupted education, interesting experiences with food, and dangerous challenges have molded his character and sacrificially ensured the freedoms and safety Americans enjoy today.—Meredith Morgan

A native of Elmira, New York, William Stone, Jr. served in the U.S. Army for two years as an officer stationed in Germany. There he was assigned as a motor officer responsible for CMMI's beginning in 1967. Stone entered the Army as a 2nd lieutenant and reached the rank of 1st lieutenant prior to returning to civilian life. After working for several years as an insurance adjuster in New York, Stone moved to Texas, where he and his wife have been teaching in the Plano Independent School District.

As a result of this interview, I was able to gain insight into the role of our nation's military. Mr. Stone, like many others, is among those who have helped safeguard the freedoms we enjoy in the United States. Listening to his experiences has allowed me to better understand the sacrifices the men and women of the military have made on our behalf.—Albert Chang

Joe McAnally is a great man. He is my neighbor, who I have known for about four years, and is very active, knowledgeable and helpful. His tour doesn't even seem to have affected him in any adverse way. He was born, raised and still lives in the Dallas area. He chose to be in the Army R.O.T.C. because he knew, since his birthday was 12th on the draft list, he would have to serve anyway. Since he was already an officer his enlistment and boot camp were an easier transition, and since his family knew he was going to be drafted, they supported him fully. He served in the Vietnam War and had to find his own way, because he landed at midnight when everyone was asleep. He earned two Bronze Stars, the third highest medal in the service. His food was good, especially the food mailed from home, except for the mutton. His platoon was well supplied and was entertained by Bob Hope once. On leave he went to Thailand and Australia. When he returned home he was offered his old job back, got married and eventually bought a business making plastic molds, which he still owns and runs to this day.—Elliot Post

I interviewed Mr. Spencer Guimarin, a retired first class petty officer in the United States Navy. Mr. Guimarin surmounted obstacles in his life that most men would consider their worst fear. He survived the first