

Remarks With Vietnam Deputy Prime Minister And Foreign Minister Pham Gia Khiem

Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary of State
Government Guest House
Hanoi, Vietnam
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MODERATOR: (In Vietnamese.)

MINISTER KHIEM: (In Vietnamese.)

SECRETARY CLINTON: Thank you very much. It is a real pleasure for me to be back in Vietnam. And I have had the good fortune of observing the evolution of our relationship over the last 15 years ever since my husband, President Bill Clinton, took steps to normalize our relations. And we came on our first visit 10 years ago, which was a wonderful opportunity for me to see so much of the progress that was taking place. And now upon my return, I am looking forward to seeing even more.

My meetings today are very important to furthering our bilateral relationship. I think that Minister Khiem and I had candid and productive discussions on issues, as he said, ranging from trade and investment to health and education, to good governance, human rights, humanitarian and security issues. The Obama Administration is prepared to take the U.S.-Vietnam relationship to the next level on these issues and in new areas of cooperation. We see this relationship not only as important on its own merits, but as part of a strategy aimed at enhancing American engagement in the Asia Pacific and in particular Southeast Asia. We spoke about a range of challenges affecting regional security, including Burma, North Korea, territorial disputes in the South China Sea, and we welcome Vietnam's constructive leadership and its excellent contributions to ASEAN, including its very important role as ASEAN chair. We also discussed our growing cooperation on civil nuclear power and counter-proliferation efforts. Vietnam is an active partner in both areas.

In the past three months alone, Vietnam participated in President Obama's Nuclear Security Summit, endorsed the global initiative to combat nuclear terrorism, and signed a memorandum of understanding with the United States on civil nuclear cooperation. Now, as with any country, we do not agree on everything. We have different experiences historically and culturally, but we had candid discussions about the issues we do view differently. The United States is committed to working with nations everywhere to help strengthen civil society as a fundamental ingredient of political, economic, and social progress. And Vietnam, with its extraordinary dynamic population, is on the path to

becoming a great nation with an unlimited potential. And that is among the reasons we express concern about arrest and conviction of people for peaceful dissent, attacks on religious groups, and curbs on internet freedom.

We look to work in a spirit of cooperation and friendship to support efforts to pursue reforms and protect basic rights and freedoms. And we are particularly seeking to promote economic progress in Vietnam through broad-based growth built on Vietnam's integration into the regional and global economy. We discussed our shared interest in expanding trade to create jobs in both countries. And I am very much supportive of Vietnam's participation as a full member in the Trans-Pacific partnership. As Vietnam embarks on labor and other reforms, the American businesses that are investing in Vietnam can provide expertise that will aid Vietnam's economic and infrastructure development.

Mr. Minister, we have a full and formidable agenda. But I believe our discussion today has helped lay the foundation for continued progress in our relationship. So again, let me thank you for the warm hospitality and the discussions that we've enjoyed on this auspicious occasion. Thank you, Minister.

MODERATOR: (Via interpreter) Thank you very much, Madam Secretary of State and with that, I would like to invite journalists to ask questions. We have only two questions for the journalists; one from Vietnam and one from the U.S. side. I invite VTV.

QUESTION: (Via interpreter) May I introduce myself? I'm (inaudible) from the Television of Vietnam News. My question goes to Madam Secretary. What is the specific plan for the U.S. in cooperation with Vietnam to deal with the consequences of the wars in Vietnam?

SECRETARY CLINTON: The minister and I discussed the concern that both Vietnam and the United States have about Agent Orange and the consequences that it produced in the people here. As you know, we have been working with Vietnam for about nine years to try to remedy the effects of Agent Orange and I told the minister that I would work to increase our cooperation and make even greater progress together.

MODERATOR: (Via interpreter) I invite the question from other journalist. Kim Ghattas from BBC, please.

QUESTION: Question to the Secretary first. I would like to ask you about Burma. You've expressed in the past concerns about the possibility that Burma is pursuing a nuclear program, that it has connections with North Korea on that front. I was wondering whether you were planning to present any evidence to members of ASEAN about your suspicions. And if you could tell us a little bit more about how you feel one year on or ten months on about how your efforts to engage Burma are actually going.

And to the minister, the Secretary said that she'd raised the issue of human rights and I was wondering what your response was.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, first with respect to problems in Burma and the impact not only on the people of that country, but on the neighbors as the outflow of refugees continues and the consequent instability because of that. I believe that the ASEAN nations correctly raised yesterday in their meeting their concerns about Burma and particularly the planned elections that Burma has said will be held, but without providing any details, even the date, raising questions about their commitment to such elections. I've also shared with the minister our concerns about the exporting by North Korea of military materiel and equipment to Burma. We know that a ship from North Korea recently delivered military equipment to Burma and we continue to be concerned by the reports that Burma may be seeking assistance from North Korea with regard to a nuclear program. So this is a matter that is of concern to ASEAN and it is of concern to the United States. And we will be discussing further ways in which we can cooperate to alter the actions of the government in Burma and encourage the leaders there to commit to reform and change and the betterment of their own people.

MODERATOR: (In Vietnamese.)

MINISTER KHIEM: (Via interpreter) With respect to human rights issue, we discussed this matter and this is, I think, that the difference between Vietnam and the U.S. I believe that the best way to have – enhance the mutual understanding is through promoting the dialogues. This is a very positive way and let me enter some more points that human rights have common values, but it also has its typical features, because it depends a lot on the cultural and historical backgrounds. And it is very important to work closely together to share the views and (inaudible) together during our talk. I appreciated very much the opinions of President Obama regarding human rights. He said that there's no perfect way and each country should select their own ways, depending on the circumstances of the nation and the human rights values shouldn't be imposed from the outside. And I also value very much the observation from Madam Secretary at the university in 2009, that the human rights should (end of audio)

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