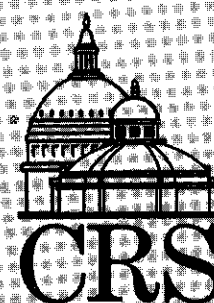


CRS Issue Brief

Vietnam-U.S. Relations: The Debate Over Normalization

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by
Robert G. Sutter
Office of Senior Specialists



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Vietnam-U.S. Relations: The Debate Over Normalization

SUMMARY

Since the late 1980s, there have been active negotiations involving the United States and Vietnam over peace in Cambodia and U.S.-Vietnamese bilateral issues, notably the approximately 2,300 Americans still listed as prisoners of war/missing in action (POW/MIA) in Indochina.

In October 1991, the United States and Vietnam joined others in signing in Paris an agreement to bring peace to Cambodia. In response, the Bush Administration began what became an incremental process of improving relations with Vietnam, contingent on Vietnam's cooperation in the transition to a new government in Cambodia and its cooperation on POW/MIA and other, humanitarian issues.

Specifically, the Bush Administration promised to follow a 4-phase "road map" on the way to normalizing U.S.-Vietnamese relations, but it repeatedly warned that the "pace and scope" of that effort would be affected by Vietnamese cooperation on POW/MIA matters. The official "road map" remains classified although its details were repeatedly disclosed by Administration officials and others, including Vietnam (see Appendix).

There is continuing public debate in Congress and elsewhere in the U.S. between those who favor greater U.S. flexibility and forward movement in relations with Vietnam and those who oppose such changes until Vietnam ends completely its military occupation of Cambodia, plays a constructive role in settling the Cambodian conflict, and accounts fully for U.S. POW/MIA. (Some opponents of U.S. flexibility judge that Hanoi's human rights record and overall political system should also affect U.S. policy.) A third, less prominent U.S.

view is seen among those who are concerned over POW/MIA issues but are skeptical that the U.S. policy debate over Vietnam will be easily resolved and tend to think that U.S. interests in Indochina no longer warrant the high level of policy attention they received in the past.

Advocates of these competing perspectives acknowledge that recent circumstances including changes in Vietnam's leadership, shifts in Moscow's policy, Vietnam's withdrawal of troops from Cambodia, and intensified international efforts to settle the conflict over Cambodia may prompt Vietnam to change policy further in accord with U.S. interests. But they differ markedly in judging how the United States should respond to the changing situation.

The 1992 presidential candidacy of Ross Perot and press reports of his involvement with the POW/MIA issue heightened the sensitivity of this issue in U.S. politics. Senate hearings in September 1992 indicated that U.S. leaders knew U.S. servicemen were or might be left behind in Indochina after the signing of the U.S.-Vietnamese peace agreement in 1973.

Important developments on the POW/MIA issue in October included high-level U.S. official meetings with Vietnamese leaders in Washington and Hanoi. The U.S. side, armed with evidence including photographs of extensive Vietnamese archival information on U.S. POW/MIAs, pressed for greater access to such data; Vietnam agreed. The U.S. pledged disaster assistance for Vietnamese flood victims and help with malaria problems in Vietnam. It also eased some economic sanctions against Vietnam.

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Debate in the U.S. Congress, media, and elsewhere shows strongly opposing groups who differ on the appropriate U.S. policy to deal with the new situation. One group holds that U.S. interest in obtaining a full accounting for U.S. POW/MIAs and restoring peace and stability in Indochina and Southeast Asia requires continued firm U.S. pressure on Vietnam. An opposing view says that success in reaching these goals requires greater U.S. flexibility and accommodation toward Vietnam. A third less prominent view tends to be skeptical that U.S. leaders will be able to resolve these contentious issues and argues that Indochina issues -- except perhaps for the POW/MIA issue -- no longer warrant a high level of U.S. policy concern.

BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS

U.S.-Vietnam Relations since 1975

U.S.-Vietnam diplomatic and economic relations remained essentially frozen for over a decade. After the communist victory in South Vietnam in April 1975, the United States ended diplomatic relations with Saigon and subjected all economic relations with South Vietnam to the same restrictions that already applied to North Vietnam. These restrictions consisted principally of a virtually total embargo on all commercial and financial transactions with Vietnam, a blocking of all Vietnamese assets in the United States, and a ban on U.S. exports to Vietnam.

The Hanoi government called for talks with the United States on establishing diplomatic relations and demanded that the United States fulfill the provisions of the January 1973 Paris Peace Agreement, including a provision that pledged U.S. postwar aid for Vietnam's reconstruction. The Ford Administration rejected Vietnam's demand for aid on grounds that Hanoi had massively violated the 1973 Paris Peace Agreement in launching its final military assault against South Vietnam. It also said that there could be no normalization of relations without a full accounting of Americans missing in action (MIA) during the war and until Vietnam's longer-range intentions in Southeast Asia became more clear. The United States vetoed Vietnam's application for membership in the United Nations on three occasions during 1975-1976.

Policy Initiatives during the Carter Administration

The Carter Administration took several steps to improve relations with Vietnam in 1977, but these efforts were progressively frustrated by growing evidence in 1978

that the Vietnamese government was deliberately expelling hundreds of thousands of its citizens and was making military preparations to invade Cambodia. On Mar. 2, 1977, the Administration relaxed slightly restrictions against trade. Restrictions on U.S. travel to Vietnam were allowed to expire on Mar. 18, 1977. President Carter sent a commission, led by Leonard Woodcock, to Vietnam in March 1977 to discuss matters affecting mutual interests.

The Administration agreed to talks on establishing normal diplomatic relations in May and June 1977. During these talks, U.S. negotiators announced that the United States would no longer veto Vietnam's application for U.N. membership. (On July 20, 1977, the U.N. Security Council recommended by consensus without formal vote that Vietnam be admitted to the United Nations.) The U.S. side proposed that diplomatic relations quickly be established between the United States and Vietnam, after which the United States would lift export and asset controls with Vietnam. But the Vietnamese said in response that they would not agree to establish relations or to furnish information on U.S. MIAs until the United States pledged to provide several billion dollars in postwar reconstruction aid. They later modified this position and provided some limited information on MIAs, even though U.S. aid was not forthcoming.

The U.S. Congress, for its part, responded unfavorably to the Carter Administration initiatives and the Vietnamese response. Members were particularly opposed to Vietnam's insistence on receiving U.S. aid. In the latter part of 1977, both Houses went on record as strongly opposing U.S. aid to Vietnam.

Developments in 1978 had a long-term negative effect on U.S.-Vietnamese relations. Vietnam expelled hundreds of thousands of its citizens (many of Chinese origin) as refugees throughout Southeast Asia; aligned itself economically and militarily with the USSR; and invaded Cambodia, deposing the pro-Chinese Khmer Rouge regime, and imposing a puppet Cambodian government backed by 200,000 Vietnamese troops. The Carter Administration halted consideration of improved relations with Vietnam. It worked closely with the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to condemn and contain the Vietnamese expansion and to cope with the influx of refugees from Indochina (see map).

Developments during the Reagan and Bush Administrations

The Reagan Administration opposed normal relations with Hanoi until there was a verified withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Cambodia, a position amended in 1985 to include a verified withdrawal in the context of a comprehensive settlement. Administration officials also noted that progress toward normal relations would remain difficult until Vietnam cooperated in obtaining the fullest possible accounting for U.S. personnel listed as prisoners of war/missing in action (POW/MIAs).

As Vietnam withdrew forces from Cambodia and sought a compromise peace settlement there, the Bush Administration decided on July 18, 1990, to seek contacts with Hanoi to reach a peace agreement in Cambodia and to end U.S. support for the coalition government. That coalition, composed of three guerrilla forces, included the Khmer Rouge, which represented Cambodia in the United Nations. In September 1990 the Administration also began official contacts with the Vietnamese-backed government in Phnom Penh.

Regarding the issue of the POW/MIAs, since a visit to Hanoi by a U.S. Presidential delegation led by John Vessey in 1987, Vietnam has returned hundreds of sets of remains said to be those of U.S. MIAs. Some, but not most, were confirmed as those of Americans. From 1974 to 1992, Vietnam returned the remains of over 300 Americans. There is a widespread and persistent belief in the United States that Hanoi holds more remains. A Vietnamese refugee testified before Congress in the late 1970s that the remains of several hundred Americans were stored in a Hanoi warehouse mortuary.

Belief that living Americans are still in Vietnamese captivity also was prominent in recent years amid reports from former U.S. government officials and others testifying to this possibility. Underlying this thinking are historical examples of alleged U.S. Government mishandling of POW/MIA issues and U.S. Government documents and other evidence supporting the view that live Americans may have been left in Vietnam. (See, among others, *An Examination of U.S. Policy toward POW/MIAs*, by the U. S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Republican staff. May 3, 1991.) Hanoi denies that it holds living Americans against their will or the remains of U.S. MIAs. Americans who deny that live POWs are still in Vietnam dispute the veracity of the documents and other evidence used to support that issue. Others feel that some Americans may have been held after the Paris Peace Accord of 1973, but are now dead and/or may have voluntarily remained in Vietnam.

Highlighting a new stage of U.S.-Vietnamese contacts, the two foreign ministers met in New York on Sept. 29, 1990. The Vietnamese foreign minister subsequently met with General Vessey and promised new cooperation on POW/MIA matters. In April 1991, the United States laid out a detailed "road map" (see below) for normalization with Vietnam, welcomed Vietnam's willingness to host a U.S. office in Hanoi to handle POW/MIA affairs, and pledged \$1 million for humanitarian aid (mainly prosthetics) to Vietnam. The U.S. office began operation in mid-1991 and the aid was transferred by the end of FY1991. Amid new controversy about U.S. Government handling of POW/MIA issues, the Senate in August 1991 set up a special committee to look into the matter. The Committee completed its work in January 1993.

At the Paris peace conference on Cambodia in October 1991, Secretary of State Baker said formal negotiations on normalization with Vietnam would begin within a month, and that the United States was easing travel restrictions on Vietnamese diplomats (U.N.) in the United States and on U.S. organized travel to Vietnam.

A U.S. delegation headed by Assistant Secretary of State Solomon visited Hanoi in March 1992 to encourage Vietnamese cooperation with the United States. In discussions with them and with a U.S. Senate delegation in April 1992, Vietnamese leaders were reported to be positively inclined to meet U.S. requirements in the road map. Concrete action was also seen, especially in the area of allowing U.S. investigators access in pursuit of "live sightings" reports. The United States pledged \$3 million in humanitarian aid (mainly prosthetics and aid to abandoned children or orphans) for Vietnam; agreed to restore direct telecommunications with Vietnam; agreed to allow U.S. commercial sales to meet basic human needs in Vietnam; and lifted restrictions on projects in Vietnam by U.S. nongovernmental organizations.

This first phase in the "road map" has been followed by a second phase, which calls for the United States to partially lift its trade embargo once U.N. peacekeepers are well

established in Cambodia. The third phase would see a full lifting of the embargo and an exchange of diplomatic missions 6 months after the U.N. peacekeepers are set up in Cambodia and full diplomatic and economic relations are established. The fourth phase would come after elections in Cambodia, now expected in mid-1993.

Of course, the "pace and scope" of normalization is also contingent on Vietnamese cooperation on POW/MIA issues. U.S. attention to that issue remained strong in 1992 with widespread press coverage of the presidential campaign of Ross Perot, who had strong views on this subject; the disclosure of Russian President Yeltsin that American POWs may have been sent to the U.S.S.R.; an incident in late July when President Bush was heckled when giving a speech to POW/MIA relatives; and lengthy hearings by the Senate Committee on POW/MIA Affairs in August and September 1992 where some former Administration officials agreed with Senator Kerry that Americans were probably left behind in 1973, and some said that some Americans may still be in Indochina.

Important developments in October 1992 saw U.S. officials, armed with evidence including photographs of extensive Vietnamese archival information on U.S. POW/MIAs, pressing for greater access to such data. Vietnamese representatives agreed. The U.S. pledged a disaster assistance grant to Vietnamese flood victims and promised to help Vietnam with malaria problems. In November, the U.S. lifted restrictions that allowed direct U.S. telephone service to Vietnam. In December, the U.S. eased some restrictions on U.S. companies doing business in Vietnam.

Meanwhile, since the latter 1980s, the United States has achieved significant progress in negotiations with Vietnam concerning other humanitarian issues dividing the two countries. They include U.S. efforts to:

- facilitate emigration from Vietnam of relatives of Vietnamese-Americans or permanent Vietnamese residents of the United States;
- regularize the flow of Vietnamese immigrants to the United States and other countries under the so-called Orderly Departure Program managed by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees;
- resolve the issue of the estimated several thousand Amerasians (whose fathers are Americans and whose mothers are Vietnamese) who reportedly wish to emigrate from Vietnam to the United States; and
- obtain release from Vietnamese prison camps and the opportunity to immigrate to the United States of an estimated many thousands of Vietnamese who worked for the United States in South Vietnam or were otherwise associated with the U.S. war effort there.

U.S. officials in Congress and the Administration express repeatedly their concern about the large numbers of prisoners of conscience said to be in Vietnam, warning that human rights is a central feature of U.S. foreign policy and cannot but affect U.S. policy toward Vietnam. (See CRS Issue Brief 92101, *POWs and MIAs: Status and Accounting Issues*, and Issue Brief 91146, *The Cambodian Peace Agreement: Issues for U.S. Policy*.)

Vietnam's Situation

Vietnam has faced grave difficulties caused by internal mismanagement and external pressures resulting in particular from its military occupation of Cambodia and the collapse of the U.S.S.R. As a result, the Vietnamese are thought to be more inclined than in the past to change policy, at least in some areas, in accord with U.S. interests.

External pressures against Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia took several forms:

- China invaded parts of northern Vietnam for a month in early 1979 and occasionally threatened to do so again. Beijing also provided the main portion of military support to the coalition of Cambodian resistance forces opposing the Vietnamese occupation.
- ASEAN led international political condemnation of the Vietnamese occupation. ASEAN members also provided political support to the coalition government representing the Cambodian guerrillas and some military support to the noncommunist members of that coalition.
- As a result of the Vietnamese policy in Cambodia, most noncommunist countries restricted foreign assistance, trade, and investment with Vietnam.

The collapse of communism in the former Soviet bloc has had important consequences for the communist regime in Vietnam. The U.S.S.R. was Hanoi's chief ally, main source of aid, and largest trading partner for two decades. A substantial cutback in Soviet bloc aid and other developments in the last few years prompted Vietnam to embark on economic reforms to end its draining military occupation of Cambodia and to try to open commercial ties with Japan, the West, non-communist Asian countries, and more recently China. The collapse of the Soviet bloc has also encouraged a concurrent Vietnamese effort to control more tightly political developments in the country that might challenge communist rule.

U.S. Interests and Policy Approaches

Americans have a long history of strong differences over how to handle U.S. relations with Vietnam, but there appears to be general agreement on some common policy objectives. In particular, U.S. interests center on assuring a settlement in Cambodia that restores stability to Southeast Asia, secures the interests of our treaty ally Thailand and the other members of ASEAN, and checks the past militant expansion of Vietnamese influence in Southeast Asia.

At the same time, Americans want to prompt Vietnam to fully account for U.S. POW/MIAs; facilitate orderly emigration procedures for Vietnamese relatives of U.S. residents and citizens; and release and allow to emigrate Vietnamese associated with the U.S.-backed government of South Vietnam. Americans also have an interest in improved human rights conditions in Vietnam. Some Americans voice strong interest in possible trade and other economic opportunities in Vietnam.

Americans generally hope to accomplish U.S. objectives at minimal cost to the United States and oppose past Vietnamese calls for several billion dollars in U.S. war reparations to Vietnam. Many Americans are also anxious to avoid acrimonious debate over these and other issues flowing from the U.S. involvement in Indochina, judging that the issues involved may not be worth the debilitating and divisive U.S. debates associated with Vietnam-related questions.

At present, there is continuing public debate in Congress and elsewhere in the United States between those who favor greater U.S. flexibility and forward movement in relations with Vietnam, and those who oppose such changes at least until Vietnam meets conditions set by the Bush Administration regarding POW/MIAs, Cambodia, and other questions. As with most policy debates, there is no uniformity among proponents and opponents of greater flexibility in U.S. policy. For example, many opponents go beyond Bush Administration criteria to argue that Vietnam's human rights practices should change before the U.S. considers improving bilateral ties. Meanwhile, a third, less prominent view argues that the U.S. debate over Vietnam has received more attention than may be warranted. They argue that such debate has preoccupied American leaders and weakened U.S. policy for too long. The collapse of the Soviet threat and pressing domestic concerns in the U.S. are seen as possibly presaging a major decline in U.S. interest in Indochina-related questions, with the possible exception of POW/MIA issues.

Greater U.S. Flexibility toward Vietnam

Proponents of this view hold that U.S. interests in settling the POW/MIA and other humanitarian issues and in restoring peace and stability in Cambodia and Southeast Asia are more likely to be served by a policy that balances U.S. pressure against Vietnam with diplomatic and economic overtures. Such initiatives could include the establishment of a U.S. interests section or some other diplomatic presence in Vietnam, the further easing of the American economic embargo, or the provision of food aid or other assistance. (Vietnamese officials have said they would welcome such U.S. moves.) According to this group, the U.S. gestures could result in several benefits:

- They could establish a more positive atmosphere in U.S.-Vietnamese relations that is more conducive to further Vietnamese flexibility on the POW/MIA question and other humanitarian issues than the past practice of U.S. pressure. The Vietnamese leadership is perceived as highly nationalistic and unable and unwilling to compromise in the face of unmitigated outside pressure. By balancing continued pressure with some positive gestures, it is argued, the United States would allow the Vietnamese to "save face" as they seek to end Vietnam's international isolation through accommodation with the United States over humanitarian issues.
- U.S. flexibility could also encourage continued Vietnamese cooperation in implementing the complicated peace settlement process in Cambodia.
- U.S. trade or investment with Vietnam could benefit U.S. business and encourage greater Western and Japanese involvement in the Vietnamese economy. It also would allow the U.S. to conform to a perceived trend that has seen Japan and others broaden aid and economic contacts with

Vietnam. This situation is seen to reduce the economic imperative behind Vietnam's communist system and thereby could pave the way for eventual political relaxation and liberalization in Vietnam.

This course of events, it is argued, would see a notable improvement in U.S.-Vietnamese relations, a relaxation of tensions in Indochina and Southeast Asia, a possible reassertion of Vietnamese independence and nationalism against Russia, China, and others, and possible improved internal conditions in Vietnam. Alternatively, it is argued that a rigid U.S. stance would isolate the U.S. from Japan, ASEAN, and others who are moving ahead with economic and other relations with Vietnam now that there is a peace agreement on Cambodia.

Opposition to Greater U.S. Flexibility toward Vietnam

These observers oppose U.S. efforts to improve relations or ease tensions with Hanoi unless the Vietnamese withdraw all their forces from and play a constructive role in a peace settlement in Cambodia and offer a full accounting of American POW/MIAs. Some of these observers tend to be skeptical of economic opportunities for the U.S. in Vietnam or they stress that Vietnam's repressive human rights practices must change before there is improvement in U.S. relations. In particular, this point of view argues strongly against establishing a U.S. liaison office or interests section in Hanoi or easing the U.S. economic embargo until Hanoi meets U.S. conditions on Cambodia and the POW/MIAs.

According to this view, Vietnam would move to exploit unilateral U.S. gestures to improve relations and ease pressure in ways detrimental to U.S. interests. In particular it is asserted that:

- Such U.S. gestures could make the Vietnamese more intransigent on the POW/MIA issue. For example, it could confirm Vietnam's belief that holding remains of U.S. servicemen gives Hanoi considerable leverage over the United States, rewarding and reinforcing Hanoi's demonstrated tendency to use this leverage cynically, to gain greater concessions from the United States. Thus, under these circumstances, it is argued, the Vietnamese might be expected to stress past demands for U.S. reconstruction aid as a precondition for a full accounting on MIAs.
- Such steps would make it more difficult for the U.S. Government to slow Japan, Western Europe, and international organizations who are inclined to offer assistance to Vietnam. Some who are sensitive for the present to the strong, U.S.-backed pressure against Vietnam might change their policy if U.S. policy changed. Increased international aid, it is argued, will increase Hanoi's resolve to continue repressive and possibly expansionist policies.

Proponents of this view judge that whatever signs of Vietnamese flexibility have appeared regarding Cambodia and humanitarian and other issues have been prompted largely by the continued U.S.-backed pressure against Vietnam. To be effective, the United States must continue to apply this pressure until Vietnam meets U.S. conditions. Easing up now, they assert, would only further complicate U.S. efforts to

get a full accounting for POW/MIAs and to restore stability and peace to Cambodia and Southeast Asia.

A Lower Profile for Vietnam-Related Issues

The collapse of the U.S.S.R. and its communist empire, and the rising preoccupation of Americans with domestic issues underline a third U.S. policy approach. This less articulated view anticipates a time soon when Indochina-related issues, with the exception of POW/MIA questions, will be increasingly relegated to the lower level of American policy priorities.

Proponents contend that American security, economic, or other basic interests will not be fundamentally involved with Indochina-related events. The POW/MIA issues are acknowledged to continue to be a major national priority, but U.S. concern may diminish rapidly as the Senate Select Committee has completed its work and Hanoi provides more data, remains, and other evidence useful in closing the cases of missing Americans.

Moral issues include Vietnam's human rights practices and Vietnam's role in securing a peace settlement in Cambodia that assures that the Khmer Rouge do not return to power. Such issues may also continue to receive strong U.S. attention under some circumstances. But this view assumes that U.S. concerns with the latter will decline if the Cambodian settlement arrangements work reasonably well. U.S. concerns with the former may be taken care of through evolutionary change within and around Vietnam toward economic and increasingly political reform that does not require specific policy actions by the United States.

Some in the U.S. have been anxious to "get beyond" the array of contentious Indochina-related policy debates that have continued for over 20 years. The divisiveness of these issues is perceived as harmful at a time when the United States is seen to need greater unity in pursuing effective policies for internal reform that provide a basis for U.S. leadership in the post-Cold War world.

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CHRONOLOGY

- 01/13/93** --- The Senate Select Committee on POW/MIAs released its report amid conflicting press assessments as to whether the report would put to rest this controversial subject in American policy.
- 12/18/92** --- Senators Kerry and Smith held talks with Vietnamese leaders in Hanoi.
- 12/14/92** --- President Bush allowed U.S. companies to sign contracts for commercial dealings with Vietnam once the U.S. economic embargo is lifted.
- 11/21/92** --- Senators Kerry, Daschle, and Brown ended five days of contacts in Vietnam on POW/MIA and other matters. Senator Kerry subsequently urged U.S. reciprocity toward Vietnamese help.
- 11/11/92** --- Following the easing of U.S. Treasury Department restrictions, AT&T signed an agreement allowing direct U.S. telephone service to Vietnam.
 - President-elect Clinton said he would not normalize relations with any nation that is suspected of withholding POW/MIA information.
- 11/05/92** --- Japan announced resumption of aid (about \$350 million) to Vietnam.
- 10/22/92** --- Backed by senior Administration and bipartisan congressional leaders concerned with POW/MIA affairs, President Bush announced a "breakthrough" following General Vessey's Oct. 17-19, 1992 visit to Hanoi. Armed with evidence of extensive Vietnamese archival information on U.S. POW/MIAs, Vessey and other U.S. officials had pressed for and received a pledge that Vietnam would grant greater access to such data. The U.S. promised some disaster assistance and aid to curb malaria in Vietnam.
- 09/21-22/92** Senior officials of the Nixon Administration acknowledged that American servicemen were probably left behind in Indochina after the signing of the U.S.-Vietnamese peace agreement in 1973. Henry Kissinger disputed charges that the POWs were "knowingly" left behind.
- 09/16/92** --- The State Department announced contributions up to \$2 million to non-governmental organizations working in Vietnam to assist boat people voluntarily returning from countries of first asylum.

- 08/28/92** --- President Bush extended the U.S. embargo on Vietnam until Sept. 14, 1993.
- 08/11-12/92** Ross Perot and former Administration officials testified before the Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs. The former officials agreed with Senator Kerry that Americans were probably left behind in Indochina in 1973, and some said that some Americans may still be there.
- 07/24/92** --- President Bush was heckled while addressing POW/MIA families.
- 07/22/92** --- President Bush ordered the declassification of most Government information about POWs and MIAs from the Vietnam war.
- 07/19/92** --- Vietnam held National Assembly elections where a host of regulations and administrative actions effectively eliminated the few nongovernment-approved independents running for office.
- 07/14/92** --- It was disclosed that two U.S. DOD employees searching for MIAs were expelled by the Vietnamese government.
- 07/02/92** --- The Senate passed a resolution urging declassification of U.S. information on POW/MIA affairs.
- 06/25/92** --- The Senate Select Committee on POW/MIAs completed hearings where Senators charged that the Pentagon knew that scores of U.S. soldiers had been left behind in enemy hands after the Vietnam War.
- 06/16/92** --- Russian President Yeltsin told NBC News that some American POWs may have been transferred from Vietnam to the Soviet Union. U.S. Special Presidential Envoy John Vessey called the disclosure "absolutely new information."
- 06/04/92** --- Vietnam said it had released all former South Vietnamese military and civilian officials. It also said that 41,808 former detainees and their families had been settled in the United States since October 1989.
- 05/12/92** --- Vietnam and Britain announced agreement allowing forced repatriation of boat people in Hong Kong camps who have been denied refugee status.
- 05/05/92** --- The Defense Department announced it would declassify records of American MIAs. Cases under investigation will remain classified.
- 04/30/92** --- The State Department announced that the U.S. would allow commercial sales that meet basic human needs in Vietnam and would lift restrictions on U.S. nongovernmental organizations' projects in Vietnam.
- 04/13/92** --- The U.S. agreed to restore direct telecommunication links with Vietnam.
- 03/05/92** --- Assistant Secretary of State Solomon completed two days of talks in Hanoi on POW/MIA issues, U.S. humanitarian aid (valued at \$3 million) for Vietnam, and other questions.

- 10/23/91** --- A peace agreement on Cambodia was signed in Paris, setting in motion a 4-stage U.S. "road map" for normalization with Vietnam.
- 04/25/91** --- The United States announced it would give \$1 million in humanitarian aid to Vietnam.
- 11/05/90** --- Several Senators reportedly wrote to the Bush Administration urging an easing of the U.S. economic embargo against Vietnam.
- 02/25/89** --- A "humanitarian" delegation of U.S. doctors left Vietnam after performing 100 operations on Vietnamese children.
- 01/19/89** --- A Reagan Administration report noted the difficulties involved in ever getting a full accounting of MIAs in Indochina.
- 08/10/87** --- General Vessey briefed President Reagan on his Aug. 1-3, 1987 visit to Vietnam.

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Appendix. The U.S. Reported "Road Map" Proposal For Normalization with Vietnam

PHASE I

Began with October 1991 signing of peace agreement on Cambodia.

Vietnam is to:	U.S. is to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sign the Cambodian peace accord and help to persuade the Phnom Penh regime to sign ● Take needed steps to resolve quickly "last known alive" POW discrepancy cases, live sighting reports, and return American remains with an eye toward settling the POW/MIA cases in Indochina in 2 years ● Allow those Vietnamese detainees previously affiliated with the U.S. to exit by means of the Orderly Departure Program (ODP). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lift 25-mile travel ban on Vietnamese diplomats in New York ● Begin bilateral talks on normalizing diplomatic relations ● Permit U.S. organized travel to Vietnam ● Liberalize U.S. economic relations with Cambodia ● State publicly U.S. official concerns regarding genocide in Cambodia.

PHASE II

Begins after Phase I and once U.N. peacekeepers are well established in Cambodia.

Vietnam is to:	U.S. is to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continue to support Paris agreement and help persuade Phnom Penh to continue to support it ● Continue progress on POW/MIA issues begun in Phase I. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Send high-level delegation to Hanoi for talks on normalization of relations ● Allow U.S. telecommunication links with Vietnam ● Allow signing of U.S. contracts with Vietnam ● Allow U.S. commercial transactions meeting basic human needs in Vietnam ● Work with others to help Vietnam eliminate arrears to international financial institutions (IFI) ● Allow U.S. firms to open commercial offices in Vietnam ● Lift all restrictions on U.S. non-governmental organization projects in Vietnam.

PHASE III

Begins once U.N. procedures and Cambodian settlement process are well in place (i.e., cantonment of competing factional forces is complete and demobilization has begun).

Vietnam is to:	U.S. is to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continue its support and encourage Phnom Penh's support of Cambodia peace agreement ● Withdraw all Vietnamese forces/military advisers from Cambodia ● Resolve last known alive discrepancy cases and repatriate U.S. remains readily available to Vietnam. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Open diplomatic liaison office in Hanoi and invite Vietnam to establish one in Washington ● Fully lift trade embargo ● Support International Financial Institutions (IFI) aid meeting basic human needs in Vietnam.

PHASE IV

Begins once a U.N.-certified free election takes place in Cambodia; a Cambodian National Assembly is formed and is writing a new constitution; demobilization of factional forces specified in the 1991 accord has occurred; and the objectives of the U.S.-Vietnam 2-year effort to resolve POW/MIA issues have been achieved.

Vietnam is to:

[No additional requirements at this stage.]

U.S. is to:

- Establish ambassadorial-level diplomatic relations with Vietnam
- Consider granting most-favored-nation status to Vietnamese trade
- Favorably consider IFI assistance for non-basic human needs projects in Vietnam.

Source: *N.Y. Times*, Oct. 24, 1991, p. 1; *Indochina Digest*, Apr. 12, 1991, p. 2; interviews, Washington, D.C., February 1992.

Southeast Asia



Names of members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) appear underlined on the map above.