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BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON EAST ASIAN AND PACIFIC AFFAIRS
SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE

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Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the opportunity to appear today before the Subcommittee to discuss the situation in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, and our policies toward those countries.

The United States has joined with the vast majority of the nations of the world in condemning Vietnam's illegal occupation of Cambodia and has called for Hanoi to withdraw its forces and to negotiate a settlement acceptable to all sides. We believe that only through a political solution can the suffering of the Cambodian people be brought to an end and regional stability restored. Our goal is a free and independent Cambodia which is not a threat to its neighbors and which will permit the Cambodian people to determine their own future without internal or external manipulation or intimidation. In this context, the United States is unalterably opposed to the Khmer Rouge, whose legacy of brutality and depravity is unsurpassed. We are committed to a settlement in Cambodia that contains effective safeguards to ensure that the Khmer Rouge can never again take control in Cambodia and subject the Cambodian people once again to the horrors of the past.

The Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia and Vietnam's continuing occupation of that country constitute a direct threat to the security of Thailand, a long-time friend and

treaty ally of the United States, and to regional stability. ASEAN has responded to this danger with vigor and effectiveness. It has marshalled international opposition to Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia and has fostered the growth of the Cambodian noncommunist resistance into a viable military and political force in the struggle for a free and independent Cambodia.

The United States has worked energetically with ASEAN in seeking to resolve the Cambodian conflict. We have consulted closely and regularly with ASEAN governments, most recently during Secretary Shultz' visit to Bangkok last month, and have provided strong backing to ASEAN efforts to generate and maintain international opposition to Vietnam's occupation. We have also made this issue a priority in our discussions with the Soviet Union and with China, including during the Secretary's recent visit to Beijing; we have urged both these major powers to use their influence constructively. ASEAN and our other friends in the region have come to rely, with good reason, on the consistency and steadfastness of our policy on Cambodia.

There has recently been considerable diplomatic activity surrounding the Cambodian conflict, and some signs of progress. The Vietnamese have announced that they will withdraw 50,000 troops from Cambodia by year end and that their remaining units would be placed under the command of the Phnom Penh regime. Based on Hanoi's previous manipulation of

withdrawal dates and announcements, we of course remain skeptical. In particular, we do not place any real significance on the putative decision to place the remaining occupation forces under Phnom Penh's command. Nevertheless, if Hanoi follows through on its announcement, this would be an encouraging, albeit only partial, step toward the objective we seek -- the complete withdrawal of all Vietnamese troops from Cambodia.

On the negotiating front, informal talks were held in Indonesia last week which brought together the four Cambodian factions, the Vietnamese, the Indonesians and other ASEAN representatives. The Jakarta Informal Meeting did not achieve dramatic breakthroughs, but it did lend additional impetus to a negotiating process that could lead to a settlement of the Cambodia conflict. The meeting seemed to produce a broad consensus on two fundamental points: that Vietnamese forces must indeed be withdrawn totally, and that the Khmer Rouge must be prevented from regaining control. These are the leitmotifs of our own policy, and we will continue to lend our support to efforts to achieve a settlement which would make those goals a reality.

Despite these encouraging signs, there are fundamental uncertainties. Even if Hanoi were to withdraw 50,000 soldiers, this would still leave a sizeable force in Cambodia -- of over 50,000 troops -- whose presence would preclude genuine national

reconciliation. Moreover, despite Hanoi's participation in the Jakarta Informal Meeting, it remains questionable whether the SRV will in fact take an active and direct role in negotiations -- e.g., by talking directly with Prince Sihanouk -- and is prepared to talk seriously about how to end the conflict.

We believe, therefore, that the best course for the United States is to maintain our present policies. This means that we will continue to support Prince Sihanouk and the Cambodian noncommunist resistance forces in their valiant struggle for a free and independent Cambodia. These forces are making encouraging progress in expanding their presence in the interior of Cambodia and we believe that, because they constitute an increasingly viable alternative to both the Vietnamese and the murderous Khmer Rouge, they can and will play a key role in a settlement which serves the best interests of the Cambodian people.

We also intend to continue our support for the international effort to isolate Vietnam economically and diplomatically. We believe that this campaign has, over the years, helped to bring home to Hanoi the cost of its aggression in Cambodia and that the recent, although inconclusive, signs of change in Vietnam's approach attest to its effectiveness. Thus, we must continue to adhere to a policy which can be summarized as "no trade, no aid and no normal relations" with Vietnam except in the context of a political settlement and an end of Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia.

And we must continue to work for a settlement which ensures that the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops will not lead to the return to power of the Khmer Rouge. Crafting such a solution will not be easy, inasmuch as the Khmer Rouge remain probably the most militarily powerful of the Cambodian factions. ASEAN and others, particularly Prince Sihanouk, have at various times put forward a number of ideas for controlling the Khmer Rouge which warrant serious and urgent consideration. These include the holding of internationally-supervised elections -- we cannot imagine that the Cambodian people would willingly vote for the return of the Khmer Rouge; the removal of Pol Pot and other senior Khmer Rouge leaders most responsible for crimes against the Cambodian people; the disarmament of all the factions under some form of international monitoring; a cut-off of arms aid from the outside; and the despatch of an international peacekeeping force. We believe some combination of these or other approaches can prove effective. In our discussions with our ASEAN partners, the Chinese and others, we have stressed the absolute necessity of controlling the Khmer Rouge, and the need to move now to address the specific ways by which this could be done. This was a central theme of Secretary Shultz' recent discussions in Bangkok and Beijing. We have noted authoritative statements by China's leaders that they oppose a Khmer Rouge return to power in Phnom Penh and are gratified by China's recent willingness, as reflected in its July 1 statement, to begin to address the concrete measures that will be necessary to prevent this from happening.

I must also emphasize, however, our strong belief that until Hanoi shows clearly -- more clearly than it has to date -- that it has in fact made the fundamental decision to end its occupation of Cambodia, the United States must continue our joint efforts with ASEAN and others to maintain diplomatic and economic pressure on Vietnam.

In this connection, I would like to discuss Senate Concurrent Resolution 109, which calls for the establishment of reciprocal interests sections in Hanoi and Washington. As I understand it, the rationale for the establishment of such offices would be to improve cooperation between the U.S. and Vietnam on humanitarian issues, facilitate the search for a resolution of the Cambodia conflict and, more broadly, to heal old wounds.

While we recognize the constructive purposes this resolution is intended to serve, we believe it represents the wrong approach, and must oppose it.

With regard to the Cambodian conflict, the establishment of interests sections would represent a fundamental change in our policy of supporting the diplomatic isolation of Vietnam. The opening of an interests section staffed by U.S. personnel would in fact represent the establishment of a U.S. diplomatic presence in Vietnam. This would be seen as a major political victory by Hanoi. For those who are struggling against the Vietnamese occupation

noncommunist resistance led by Prince Sihanouk, it would be seen as a deeply discouraging signal of a weakened American commitment. Internationally, it would represent a major breach in the political isolation of Vietnam stemming from its occupation of Cambodia. It would, in short, severely undermine the international effort to bring about a settlement in Cambodia. To make such a move now, at a time when this effort appears to be having an impact, would not be in the interest of the United States or of our friends and allies in the region.

ASEAN in particular would be deeply troubled were we to take this step. ASEAN leaders have expressed their concern and strong opposition to the establishment of interests sections, which they correctly assert would damage our joint effort to end Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia. Prime Minister Lee of Singapore spoke eloquently along these lines when he met with several members of this Committee during his visit to Washington last April. Failure on our part to stand with ASEAN on this vitally important issue could affect our relations with ASEAN more generally, calling into question the constancy we have thus far demonstrated.

Despite the absence of diplomatic relations, a function of Vietnam's continuing occupation of Cambodia, the United States and the SRV cooperate on several urgent humanitarian issues of mutual concern, including the effort to achieve the fullest possible accounting of Americans missing in action in Vietnam (POW/MIA), the resettlement of Amerasian children still in

Vietnam, the departure of Vietnamese through the Orderly Departure Program and the resettlement of released re-education center detainees. In keeping with commitments undertaken during General Vessey's trip to Hanoi in August of last year, we have facilitated efforts of American nongovernmental organizations to address Vietnamese humanitarian concerns in the areas of prosthetics and child disabilities. Senate Concurrent Resolution 109 contends that the establishment of interests sections in Hanoi and Washington would facilitate the resolution of these issues by increasing communication and cooperation between the United States and Vietnam. We disagree.

There is no dearth of communication between us and the Vietnamese on humanitarian issues. The United States has more contact with the Vietnamese on operational and policy levels than any other western nation, including those which maintain diplomatic relations. Since 1982, more than 35 executive branch U.S. delegations have visited Vietnam; there have also been numerous high-level discussions elsewhere. For example, Presidential Special Emissary General John Vessey met in early June with Vietnamese Vice Premier and Foreign Minister Thach in New York to discuss POW/MIAs and the resettlement of re-education center detainees in the United States. In July a senior Department official travelled to Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City to continue the detainee discussions and to examine ODP and Amerasian processing. Just last week, a technical team from the Central Identification Laboratory in Hawaii and the Joint Casualty Resolution Center concluded the latest round of

POW/MIA technical talks with Vietnamese experts in Hanoi. Given the frequency of US/SRV discussions at all levels, and the continuing dialogue between our respective embassies in Bangkok, we do not believe that the establishment of interests sections would significantly improve either communications or cooperation between our two countries on humanitarian issues. A review of developments over the past year bears this out:

-- As a result of General Vessey's talks with FM Thach in New York in June, we have secured a renewed Vietnamese commitment to cooperate on POW/MIAs. Hanoi has agreed to General Vessey's proposal for joint, on-the-ground investigations, surveys, and crashsite excavations. Moreover, the repatriation of remains of missing Americans since 1985 is higher than at any time since the end of the war.

-- We have achieved agreement in principle to the processing of released re-education center detainees for resettlement in the United States. Several important issues remain to be resolved, but we are encouraged by the progress to date. It is possible that the processing of released detainees may begin within the next several months.

-- Both the Orderly Departure Program and Amerasian program are in full operation and we have interviewed over 14,000 people since last September.

Given the current level of cooperation, we do not believe that any formal diplomatic structures are required. The progress which we have recently achieved has been due in large part to our having managed, successfully, to deal with these humanitarian issues separately from the political questions which divide Vietnam and the United States. The establishment of interests sections -- regardless of legislative language to the contrary -- would be seen in Hanoi as an important political concession motivated by our desire to resolve these humanitarian issues. In this way, a relationship between political and humanitarian issues would have been created, and any future progress on our humanitarian agenda would be affected by the state of our political relations. This would not be in our interest.

For all of these reasons, the Administration opposes the establishment of reciprocal interests sections. We do not believe that they would contribute either to improving US/SRV humanitarian cooperation or toward facilitating a settlement in Cambodia. Quite the contrary, we believe that interests sections could well have a negative impact on both sets of issues. We therefore oppose the passage of Senate Concurrent Resolution 109.

Our opposition to interests sections should not be seen as a sign that the Administration remains implacably hostile toward Vietnam. This is not true. As Secretary Shultz made

clear in his remarks to the ASEAN post-ministerial meeting in Bangkok last month, we hold no malice toward Vietnam as a result of the war in Indochina. In fact, we look forward to the time when we will be able to enter into normal diplomatic and commercial relations with Vietnam and have made it clear that we are prepared to establish such relations in the context of a Cambodian settlement which provides for the withdrawal of all Vietnamese troops from Cambodia. But at the same time, the Vietnamese leadership must realize that our commitment to a free and independent Cambodia is steadfast and that we will continue with our current policies until that conflict is satisfactorily resolved. Moreover, we have and will continue to make it clear to the Vietnamese that the pace and scope of the normalization process will be affected by Vietnam's ability to work with us on the POW/MIA issue, as demanded by the American people.

Before closing, I would like to review briefly our policy toward Laos, a country which appears to have begun to change the isolationist stance it adopted when the communists came to power. The Lao People's Democratic Republic and the United States have maintained diplomatic relations at the charge level since the LPDR came into existence in 1975. We agreed with Laos in 1982 to seek improved bilateral relations through concrete steps, to be taken concurrently by both sides. While we have avoided establishing any direct linkage between our actions and those of the Lao, we have made it clear that for

the United States progress on the POW/MIA issue is the principal standard by which progress in the relationship will be measured.

Here too, we are encouraged by recent developments. We have conducted three joint excavations of suspected aircraft crashsites in Laos, most recently in May of this year. Although that latest effort did not result in the recovery of any remains, Lao cooperation was exemplary. In addition, the Lao unilaterally turned over remains earlier in the year, the first time this had been done since 1978. We believe we are close to agreement with the Lao government on dates for another technical planning meeting to prepare for further joint excavation activities. The United States has over the years responded to Lao humanitarian needs in a variety of ways. An American nongovernmental organization plans to construct and stock a prefabricated clinic in the vicinity of the May excavation. The USG provided rice in 1984 and 1987, and medicine to combat dengue fever in 1985.

An issue of growing concern in our relationship with Laos is the increasing flow of narcotics to the international marketplace from that country. The Lao government has declared its opposition to illicit narcotics production and trafficking, and has agreed to a United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control (UNFDAC) pilot project to control narcotics cultivation and production. The United States has also offered bilateral

assistance in this area. We intend to keep this problem high on our agenda.

In general, we believe that our relationship with Laos is slowly but steadily improving, and that continued improvement -- would serve the interests of both countries.

Finally, I would like to comment on the continuing refugee crisis in Southeast Asia. The upsurge in boat refugee arrivals in 1988, a perception of lessened commitment on the part of resettlement nations, and growing impatience in the region have eroded the international consensus which has sustained first asylum in Southeast Asia for more than a decade. In his meeting with ASEAN foreign ministers last month, Secretary Shultz assured them that the United States wants to work with ASEAN governments and others to develop a comprehensive and revitalized approach, one that deals with changing circumstances -- and that preserves first asylum. We have put forward a number of specific proposals -- including a UNHCR-monitored screening program, the resettlement of long-stayers, the humane return of those determined to be non-refugees, and an expanded ODP program -- and we will pursue these and other initiatives as a matter of priority in the months ahead. Secretary Shultz emphasized to his ASEAN colleagues that we would continue to stand by them, for as long as is necessary. We will work hard to improve and expand the Orderly Departure Program; we will continue to share the

financial burden with the first asylum countries through our contributions to international refugee organizations; we will continue to offer high levels of resettlement opportunities; and we will continue to urge other resettlement and donor nations to participate in these efforts.

The Secretary added that we are of course mindful that the refugee problem of Southeast Asia is rooted not in the first asylum countries, but in the countries from which refugees flee -- and this is where these problems ultimately must be solved. The international community must continue to attempt to convince Hanoi, in particular, to adopt the kinds of political and economic policies that will permit its countrymen to live productive lives at home.

This concludes my statement, Mr. Chairman. I would welcome questions from the Subcommittee.