

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 24, 1988

Khuc Minh Tho, President
Families of Vietnamese Political Prisoners Association
P.O. Box 5435
Arlington, VA 22205-0058

Dear Friend:

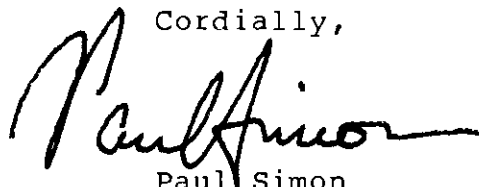
Thank you for your most thoughtful letter.

I would like to extend my congratulations to you on reaching your goal of securing the release of all political prisoners in Vietnam. Your commitment to eliminating human rights abuses played a key role in gaining their release. I will look into the legislation that you propose concerning proper medical care for the former prisoners and their families, and I assure you that I will keep your views in mind in the days ahead.

Thanks also for your kind words about my efforts on behalf of these prisoners.

Again, thanks for keeping me informed.

My best wishes.

Cordially,

Paul Simon
United States Senator

PS/owk

PAUL SIMON
ILLINOIS

COMMITTEES:
LABOR AND HUMAN RESOURCES
JUDICIARY
FOREIGN RELATIONS
BUDGET

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 30, 1989

Mrs. Khuc Minh Tho
President
Hoi Gai Dinh Tu Nhan
Chinh Tri Viet Nam
P.O. Box 5435
Arlington, VA 22205-0635

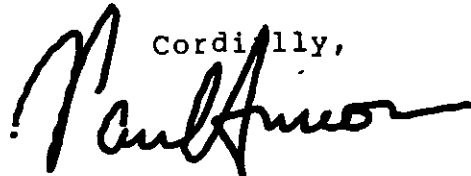
Dear Mrs. Khuc Minh Tho:

Thank you for your recent letter expressing your deeply felt concern about the Administration's decision to divert ODP numbers from southeast Asian refugees.

The refugee situation throughout Southeast Asia continues to be a difficult one. As a member of the Senate Subcommittee on Immigration and Refugee Affairs, I have encouraged Secretary of State George Shultz's efforts to convene an international conference on Indo-Chinese refugees.

I am enclosing copies of the responses the Senate Immigration and Refugee Affairs Subcommittee received from the State Department to the questions that other Senators and I asked about refugee resettlement following the Annual Congressional Refugee consultation. This information should give you a good idea of certain Congressional and State Department views on resettlement. Again, I share your concerns and will certainly keep your views in mind during the 101st Congress.

My best wishes.

Cordially,


Paul Simon
U.S. Senator

PS/djp



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

DEC 12 1988

Dear Senator Kennedy:

The Secretary has asked me to respond to your letter to him of September 23 providing official Subcommittee support for the President's proposed levels of refugee admissions for Fiscal Year 1989. I regret the delay in responding to the concerns you raised in your letter, which focused primarily on first asylum in Southeast Asia. In addition, I am enclosing the responses to additional followup questions for the record from the September consultations hearing.

At the ASEAN meeting in Bangkok in July, the Secretary suggested the formation of a working group made up of the ASEANs and the donor and resettlement nations, along with the UNHCR, to discuss approaches -- including our suggested strategy -- to the thorny policy issues which must be resolved before the international community can begin to assume that the need for resettlement has diminished. The working group deliberations, as currently foreseen, will lead to an international conference, which the United States will support once international consensus has been achieved on a comprehensive plan which preserves first asylum in principle and in practice and clarifies the responsibilities of all nations concerned. The working group has met twice and a preparatory conference is being planned now.

Last spring, we presented to the first asylum nations, other resettlement and donor countries, and the UNHCR a comprehensive strategy to (a) ensure that first asylum is maintained throughout the region; (b) decrease the incentive for boat departures relative to emigration via an expanded Orderly Departure Program, and as a result, reduce boat departures in fact, (c) establish refugee screening programs for new arrivals coupled with appropriate repatriation programs under UNHCR auspices for those screened out and third country resettlement for bona fide refugees. This strategy is presented in some detail in the Secretary's statement for the record for the September 13 hearing.

The Honorable
Edward M. Kennedy, Chairman,
Subcommittee on Immigration and Refugee Affairs,
Committee on the Judiciary,
United States Senate.

In your past letters you emphasized the lack of alternatives to third country resettlement for refugees in Southeast Asia. You noted the three durable solutions and the fact that third country resettlement is generally considered the least desirable of the three. That has been the stated policy of the United States for many years. Voluntary repatriation of refugees to Vietnam has not been an active issue because there have never been refugees willing to return to Vietnam and neither has Vietnam been willing to accept any returning refugees. At the time of our reply to your letters last year, circumstances did not exist which met U.S. standards for voluntary refugee repatriation to Vietnam, namely: the refugee must truly be willing to return to his country and the situation of the refugee once repatriated must be such that the international community can verify that no recrimination has occurred.

International verification of the safety of returnees is a principle which is shared by other donor and resettlement nations, and which we are also applying to the issue of the return of non-refugees to Vietnam. This high priority issue is connected to the establishment of screening programs for newly arrived asylum-seekers in Southeast Asia, which is currently under deliberation in the ASEAN working group. Screening programs would operate similarly to that for Lao asylum-seekers in Thailand (which, when it is allowed to operate, functions relatively well), with the active participation of the UNHCR and the host government. Those found to be refugees would be eligible for third country resettlement, and those screened out would be held in the equivalent of "closed" camps. Unlike the Lao screening program, however, the commitment to return -- with acceptable safeguards -- those who are determined not to have suffered persecution to their native countries would be coupled to screening programs. Screening without repatriation of the screened out is unacceptable to the host countries, which believe that they would be left with large residual populations that would quickly become "longstayers," representing in their eyes no change from the status quo.

The UNHCR has done considerable work to explore with the SRV the possibilities for voluntary return to Vietnam of over 300 Vietnamese who have been screened out in Hong Kong and who have requested to return. We are pleased with the developments thus far: Her Majesty's Government has indicated that this activity will be conducted in cooperation with UNHCR and the Government of Vietnam has reportedly announced its intention to cooperate with the UNHCR in this repatriation and to accept only those who are willing to return. The United Kingdom has expressed confidence that there will be no persecution of those returned. So long as these circumstances do, in fact, exist, the United States will not object to this repatriation to Vietnam.

One obvious point is that if conditions in Vietnam were to change its policies, fewer Vietnamese would leave and perhaps more would choose willingly to return home. We are pleased by the increased cooperation which Vietnam has recently shown us on humanitarian issues, and we are hopeful for continued progress on political issues which will allow us to normalize our bilateral relations. We believe that Vietnam must continue along the path that it began through the start of its withdrawal of forces from Cambodia. Vietnam alone controls the speed with which it reenters the international community.

You mention that humanitarian issues of concern to us could be moved more quickly toward resolution by the establishment of an interests section in Vietnam. We do not agree. There has been progress on humanitarian issues recently, including POW/MIAs and initial talks on the resettlement of reeducation camp prisoners. We remain committed, however, to our policy regarding diplomatic relations with the government of Vietnam, and have the strong support of our ASEAN allies on the normalization issue. We believe that establishing an interests section at this time would not be helpful with regard either to inducing Vietnam to resolve the issues which drive us apart, or to our relationships with the ASEAN nations.

Regarding the second "durable solution," resettlement in the region, the current climate and attitude toward refugees and asylum seekers in Thailand, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia or the Philippines does not lend itself to a fruitful discussion of local or regional resettlement of refugees.

Your letter expressed doubt that the Judiciary Committee would continue to support "large resettlement numbers" for Indochinese refugees. The first asylum admissions ceiling was 29,500 in FY 1988 and will decrease to 28,000 in FY 1989. I would simply note that in October 1987, Committee members were split on the question of the "Indochinese Refugee Resettlement and Protection Act of 1987," which recommended a level of 28,000 admissions from first asylum for Southeast Asia for FY 1988, 1989, and 1990, and which passed the Senate 63-33-4. Although the Administration did not support that bill, we recognize this expression of the sense of the Senate, and we see the level proposed by the President as clearly consistent with it.

Part of the large increase in the ceiling for FY 1989 is due to the increase in the Orderly Departure Program, which is an essential part of the strategy to emphasize legal emigration from Vietnam as an alternative to boat departures. Much of the increase from 8,500 to 25,000 involves Amerasian departures, which are funded under the Migration and Refugee Assistance account. Last December, Congress passed legislation to authorize unlimited admission of Amerasians over a two year period outside the refugee admissions ceiling upon which we consult, but within MRA funding levels. Because of the confusion on many fronts over the past 12 months between admissions and funding, we deliberately showed our projected FY 1989 Amerasian admissions (12,000) within the ceiling for ODP during the Consultations. If we remove the Amerasians from the ODP ceiling, we have an increase from 8,500 to 13,000 for the ODP. In your letter to the President following the Consultations last year, you noted that

"The new procedures now agreed upon by the United States and Vietnam for processing ODP cases will certainly increase the numbers needed for the program -- numbers that are clearly for those persons of 'special humanitarian concern' to the United States."

The increase is responsive to this earlier expression of intent and is a signal which may encourage Vietnamese not to pursue dangerous boat escape attempts, but to use the ODP instead. It will also accommodate any political prisoners whose resettlement we are able to negotiate with Vietnam during the fiscal year.

Many of the dramatic foreign policy successes the Secretary mentioned in his testimony are connected to our overseas assistance programs for refugees. Our funding is used in refugee emergencies and contributes to saving lives, particularly in Africa. We also assist governments in coping with large populations of refugees who await political solutions which would enable them to live not as refugees, but as citizens of a country, such as Cambodians on the Thai-Cambodian border. The most satisfying successes come with refugee repatriation. Although the impending Afghan repatriation is featured prominently in the news because of its size, every year thousands of African refugees are repatriated, even as more are generated in that continent. Repatriation to Uganda from Sudan for interested refugees is now nearly completed. Thousands of Salvadorans in Honduras have returned voluntarily to their homes in El Salvador in the past year as well.

We recognize that overseas assistance programs are the most vital activity we undertake from a life and death viewpoint. Unfortunately, they do not have the domestic constituency or the visible consultations process with the Congress that the admissions program does, and, therefore, tend to suffer in the funding process as it goes through what seems now to be inevitable earmarking. For Fiscal Year 1989, although the final Conference bill added \$21.95 million to the bottom line of the MRA, Congressional earmarks -- to the admissions and assistance accounts -- outside the Administration request level totaled \$57.80 million, forcing a cut of \$25.85 million from the unearmarked programs -- equivalent to a 14% cut from the request level. This comes on top of a similar 9% cut the previous year. Between FY 1987 and FY 1989, funds available for regional refugee assistance overseas dropped from \$195 million to \$173 million while the number of refugees worldwide grew by one million people. The programs to be cut all provide assistance to refugees in the third world: Africa, Southeast Asia, the Near East, and Central America.

This forced competition between refugee admissions and refugee assistance is not something we encourage or support. Each program has discrete funding needs which should not be made a function of the other. While refugee admissions and assistance programs overseas are all funded through and managed by the Bureau for Refugee Programs, we find that attempts to force comparisons or trade-offs between the programs are misconstrued, as the programs serve very different purposes. The Secretary's testimony presented the policy bases for each program.

The relationship between assistance and admissions programs is vastly different in different regions of the world. In Africa, our assistance program follows the premise that generally, refugee assistance helps to preclude the need for large resettlement programs. In contrast, the assistance we provide to refugees resettling in Israel is quite clearly funding a resettlement program, although it is not presented as part of the admissions budget. As a third example, an important element of our strong desire to establish a large, efficient Orderly Departure Program is to decrease the flow of boat people, and thus reduce somewhat the need for emergency refugee assistance and for continuing programs of care and maintenance in Southeast Asia. Rather than taking away from refugee assistance, as in a "zero-sum game" approach, the large growth of the ODP -- and the increased percentage of immigrants using the ODP -- can be viewed as a preventive measure. The point is simply that refugee assistance programs are not as easily categorized as they might appear.

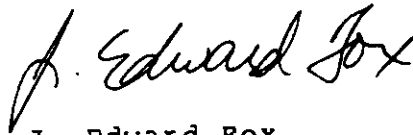
I appreciate this opportunity to comment in a broad, philosophical manner on the consideration of the humanitarian dimensions of our foreign policy. Looking at the foreign policy process directly, there is no single, institutionalized framework which integrates refugee outcomes into consideration of policy options. Our task is to assure that there be reconciliation, not separation, of refugee and foreign policies, so that refugee concerns are not overridden by, but interact properly with, other aspects of foreign policy. Refugees are deeply involved with superpower competition, regional conflicts, security and economic pressures, and our long-term strategic interests. Refugees and foreign policy are inextricably linked in terms of long-term progress in attacking the strategic root causes of refugee generation: political oppression, violence, and poverty. We agree with the assumption behind your question -- that refugee policy could receive greater attention in our own foreign policy formulation process -- and we will continue to work to give greater weight to the refugee implications of foreign policy decisions.

On the question of the adequacy of current international mechanisms for dealing with refugee problems, the generic reply is that the existing mechanisms are sufficient so long as individual governments respect them. That is, current difficulties we face on various refugee protection or assistance issues are not the result of an inadequate international framework to deal with them. They are, rather, the result of insufficient will on the part of governments to afford adequate protection or assistance to refugees and to prevent acts which generate them. We would point to an area in which this framework is being strengthened, however. The UNHCR has made good progress in arranging coordinated and productive relationships with the UN Development Program and the World Bank in integrating refugee integration and refugee repatriation into countries' development programs. The first example of this occurred in Pakistan, where the World Bank sponsored reforestation projects which employed both refugee and Pakistani labor, to repay Pakistan for the deforestation caused by refugees' needs for firewood. We think this cooperation among existing international agencies is preferable to the creation of new agencies (which would never replace existing ones, but simply add bureaucracy), and is now being extended and broadened for application in Africa and Central America.

Your letter raises important policy concerns and we appreciate the care that went into formulating it. Because on many issues you and Senator Simpson do not always agree, we realize the importance of your consensus on these matters. We look forward to working with you on the issues facing us as we continue to grapple with the Gordian knot in which resolution of the refugee problem in Southeast Asia is bound. Unfortunately, we do not have the luxury of facing the problems in Southeast Asia isolated from needs in other parts of the world. Funding constraints, added to our self-imposed requirement that we not discriminate by attending to the needs of refugees from one part of the world at the expense of equally needy refugees elsewhere, force us to make compromises in the programs we would like to implement all over the globe.

We appreciate the careful consideration you give to refugee affairs and the frank and open relationship we have with the Committee on refugee policy and programs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "J. Edward Fox". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

J. Edward Fox
Assistant Secretary
Legislative Affairs

Senator Edward M. Kennedy

[Afghanistan]

QUESTION: We were prepared to help -- with strong bi-partisan support -- to fund the war over the past 8 years. What are we prepared to do now to assist in reconstructing the peace and helping refugees return?

ANSWER:

The U.S. has already contributed substantial resources to assist Afghan refugees in Pakistan as well as Aghans still inside Afghanistan. In 1988 we contributed \$142 million in cash and in kind to Afghan relief and in 1989 we hope to contribute an equivalent amount.

Our support for the U.N. effort will go beyond our international leadership and our financial contribution. We will closely coordinate our bilateral program with the U.N. effort to seek to ensure that our activities are mutually supportive and complementary. We are presently sharing with the U.N. the experience we have gained over the past several years administering our bilateral program. We are also providing statistical and analytical information we have developed to the Special Coordinator for his data base project.

We are making a significant contribution to the mine clearing project. We sent a technical team to Pakistan this summer to determine how the mine threat can best be met. Using the team's report, we are developing an educational and media program to teach mine awareness and identification which we hope to implement shortly. A program to train Afghans in demolition procedures is also in the works and should be implemented early in 1989. Both of these programs are intended to play an important role in the broader U.N. effort on mine clearing. Although U.N. officials are anxious that the demining program not be perceived as a solely U.S. program, they recognize that the U.S. is playing the central role in the development and implementation of the program.

QUESTION: Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan has been given the role of U.N. Coordinator. What proposals have we received from him and what has been our response?

ANSWER:

We were pleased the appointment of Sadruddin Aga Khan as the Special Coordinator for Afghanistan. We have and will continue to work closely with him and support his effort to develop an effective U.N. program.

In June of this year, less than one month after his appointment, the Special Coordinator presented a \$2 billion comprehensive plan for the repatriation and resettlement of Afghan refugees and internally displaced Afghans and the reconstruction of Afghanistan. We strongly support the Special Coordinator's appeal to fund this plan, and we have called on all other donor nations to support it. We have, however, told U.N. representatives that we believe there needs to be a greater effort to prioritize, with concentration initially on training for mine awareness and clearing, assisting displaced persons, and preparing for the return of the refugees. We have stated that assistance must go directly to the Afghan people and not be manipulated by anyone to gain political advantage. We have also urged the U.N. to shift its emphasis now from planning to implementation of those plans already created.

[Bangladesh]

QUESTION: From all reports, the massive flooding in Bangladesh may well represent one of the world's worst disasters. At this point, the problem appears to be not a lack of resources offered by the international community (with Japan taking the lead), but logistics -- how to get food and clean water to the population. What are we doing? What have we offered? Do we have a plan for the long-term to assist Bangladesh in averting future disasters of this sort?

ANSWER:

Our regular program for Bangladesh in FY 89 consists of \$55 million in development assistance and \$80 million in Title II assistance (\$60 million of which is food aid).

In response to the flooding, in FY 88 we were able to divert 47,000 MT of wheat intended for food-for-work programs to emergency feeding programs. In FY 89 we are providing \$20 million in additional PL 480 wheat (approximately 80,000 MT) to compensate for crop losses caused by the flood. We will follow the food situation closely to determine if additional USG food assistance is necessary.

We have also provided \$5.9 million in OFDA emergency grants, commodities, medical supplies and seed, \$6 million in fertilizer and health kits, and \$5.5 million for disaster preparedness/management and reconstruction activities. We hope to be able to provide additional funds for this last item.

To anticipate future disasters of this sort we plan to work quickly with the UNDP and the World Bank on a comprehensive disaster preparedness project which should be underway by 1989. The long-term issues on water management and flood control in the Ganges-Brahmaputra basin are the subject of a comprehensive report due to the Congress by April 30, 1989 as requested in the Bangladesh Disaster Assistance Act of 1988.

[Chile]

QUESTION: The October 5 plebiscite is now around the corner. What do you think are the prospects of a fair election? In your view, has the campaign been fair so far?

ANSWER:

The Chilean plebiscite was peacefully and fairly conducted. On October 5 Chilean voters turned out in exceptionally high numbers, the government carried out its pledge of an impartial and orderly plebiscite, the armed forces protected the polling places and guaranteed order, and a large number of international observers were witnesses to the event. President Pinochet has recognized the victory of his opponents, thereby setting a very good precedent for next year's elections.

Respect for basic rights improved during the plebiscite campaign and we hope that the Chilean Government will build on these advances as the country moves towards scheduled presidential and congressional elections in December 1989. The opposition says it wants to discuss moving up those election dates as well as changes in the constitution. While these are matters for Chileans to decide, we would support any dialogue which would lead to an establishment of a democratic political consensus.

[Angola-Namibia]

QUESTION:

A sixth round of negotiations has just been concluded in Brazzaville. While there is reason for optimism, is it realistic to expect that Cuban forces will withdraw if the United States continues military aid to UNITA?

Is it also realistic to expect that the South Africans will withdraw from Namibia as long as Cuban forces are inside Angola? What evidence is there to support your optimism that these negotiations will be successful and that the South Africans will, in fact withdraw from Namibia?

When do you believe these negotiations will be completed?

Many suggest that the reason these negotiations have been so promising is the change in view of the Soviets. What is your view of this? Are there other problems in South Africa that might be addressed more effectively if we work with the Soviets?

ANSWER:

We are indeed hopeful that the current Angola-Namibia negotiations will lead to Namibian independence within a relatively short period of time and set the scene for national reconciliation in Angola. During the course of these negotiations, it has become clear that all parties perceive it to be in their best national interest to reach a negotiated solution to the Angola-Namibia conflict, and that this indeed is a key reason that the U.S., in its role as mediator, has been able to bring these talks so close to a successful conclusion. Various regional conflicts around the world have been part of the agenda in recent meetings between ourselves and the Soviets and we have seen welcome progress in a number of those regional conflicts.

[West Bank/Gaza]

QUESTION:

The United States has committed resources to King Hussein's Development Trust for the West Bank and Gaza. Now that the King has withdrawn, how will the United States use those resources intended to improve the quality of life for people in the West Bank and Gaza?

ANSWER:

For the period FY 89, a total of \$22 million is expected to be programmed directly through private voluntary organizations (PVO's) for development programs in the West Bank and Gaza.

The \$22 million figure includes \$15 million appropriated and earmarked by Congress. An additional \$7 million is expected to be reprogrammed after a Section 614 waiver for FY 88 and FY 89 obligation of West Bank and Gaza Development Program Funds. (A Presidential waiver is required for funds which were originally earmarked for the Government of Jordan's West Bank/Gaza program.) The Agency for International Development (AID) is responsible for administering the funding through the PVO's. Projects include health and sanitation, vocational and health training, training of nurses, programs for handicapped, projects for village water and electrification, etc.

The remainder of the \$14 million FY 88 funds (originally appropriated for the Jordan Development Program) is being administered through the Government of Jordan for projects previously selected for funding for the development of municipalities in the West Bank and Gaza. These projects have historically been funded through the Jordan Development Program for the West Bank and Gaza. The \$14 million is the final amount to be channeled through the Jordanian Government for purposes of municipal and other development projects.

Senator Alan Simpson

[Special Interest Immigrants]

QUESTION:

I appreciate the Administration's willingness to search for alternatives to granting a refugee visa to persons who are of special interest to our country but who do not meet the Refugee Act definition. While the Secretary mentioned interest in a new "Special Immigrant" category, would the Administration support a proposal to create a new category of immigrant visa, under the preference system, for "foreign policy/humanitarian" immigrants?

ANSWER:

As the Secretary stated in his testimony before the Judiciary Committee, the Administration is eager to work with Congress to develop a means to permit the admission of persons of special interest. The Department proposes discussions between the Department, INS and the Judiciary Committee staff to work out the details of this program. We need to discuss such things as whether this status should be incorporated into the existing preference immigrant visa system, whether such special immigrants would be subject to all of the 212(a) ineligibilities, whether these immigrants would come under 20,000 ceiling for immigrants from any given country or supplement that ceiling, etc. We look forward to further exchanges on this subject.

[Afghanistan Mines]

QUESTION:

The problem of mines is an important concern of Afghan refugees, who will face grave danger as they return to their homeland unless the large number mines are cleared from agricultural fields, roads, and villages. What has been your position toward the Soviets and their refusal to participate in mine removal? What efforts do you plan to encourage the Soviets to change their position?

ANSWER:

This issue continues to be a major concern for us, particularly given recent reports that Soviet mine laying continues in Afghanistan. We have pressed the Soviets both in public and private to participate actively in the mine clearing, including providing maps of the areas where they have sown mines so no more innocent blood need be shed. They did not mention mine clearing at the October 12 donors' conference in New York, even though the conference opened with a six minute film that graphically demonstrated the effects of the mines on the Afghan people. They previously stated that they have given maps of some mine fields to the present regime in Kabul. The Soviets have also tried to turn aside responsibility for this problem by alleging, without evidence, that the source of most mine laying in Afghanistan has been the Afghan resistance.

We intend to continue to press the Soviets on the issue and we understand that the Special Coordinator for Afghanistan will do the same. We hope the Soviet Union will support the mine clearing program by clearing existing minefields, and by providing maps of uncleared minefields and samples of mines used in Afghanistan to the Special Coordinator.

Senator Strom Thurmond

[Fair Share]

QUESTION: How does the United States compare with other countries around the world when it comes to accepting refugees? Do you believe that other countries accept their fair share of refugees?

ANSWER:

The United States resettles more refugees than any other country. The three traditional immigration countries -- Australia, Canada and the United States -- resettled or granted asylum to 23,000, 11,000 and 64,000 persons respectively in 1987. When compared with their existing populations, Australia and Canada resettle proportionately more refugees than does the United States.

The countries of Western European resettled many thousands of refugees in 1987. France took over 12,000, the FRG over 8,000 and Spain over 4,000. Of particular note are the Scandinavian countries. These small and relatively homogeneous countries not only contribute generously to refugee organizations, they provided asylum to thousands of refugees in 1987. Denmark resettled over 2,700, Norway over 1,000, and Sweden over 16,000. The latter is especially noteworthy given Sweden's population of around 8 million. The Scandinavian countries have also taken a number of handicapped refugees which other countries were reluctant to resettle. Japan resettled a small number of refugees but has given generously for refugee assistance.

The United States is the largest contributor to a large number of organizations assisting refugees including UNHCR, UNRWA, UNBRO, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the Intergovernmental Committee for Migration. Japan, Canada, Australia and the West European countries also contribute importantly to these organizations.

No mention of the share of refugees and refugee assistance would be complete without citing the very large and often unheralded assistance that countries of first asylum in the developing world contribute simply by hosting millions of refugees. Pakistan, which hosts over three million refugees

from Afghanistan, estimates the support of these refugees costs over a million dollars a day, only about half of which is met by international contributions. Somalia, Sudan, Malawi, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Thailand, Iran, Honduras -- to mention only a few other first asylum countries -- contribute generously in this capacity.

[Refugee Return]

QUESTION: Historically, after being allowed in the United States, how often are political refugees able to return to their homelands without fear of persecution?

ANSWER:

In general, after they have been given asylum in the United States, political refugees can only return to their homelands without fear of persecution after they have become citizens of the United States. Even in these cases much would depend on the circumstances in which the individual left his homeland and whether he is willing to avoid political declarations while visiting his homeland. The willingness of the homeland to welcome the refugee back can also be influenced by its desire to portray itself as a country with greater freedoms and its desire to obtain more hard currency.

[Gramm-Rudman-Hollings]

QUESTION:

What kind of impact, if any, will the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings budget legislation have on refugee admissions to our country? In other words, because of less funds that will be appropriated for refugee programs, do you foresee any drastic change in refugee policy for the future?

ANSWER:

As you know, the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings (GRH) budget legislation led, in December 1987, to a bipartisan budget summit agreement which, for FY 88 and FY 89, served to preset an established ceiling on the overall budget. This ceiling, therefore, preempts budget requests which seek to fund new requirements based on increasing needs. It also means that increases to any programs require cuts to others within the same budget function, including international affairs. Refugee needs must, therefore, be accommodated and compete for resources within an overall ceiling for the international affairs function.

Since the GRH legislation, refugee assistance funds have fallen below our traditional levels of support in response to increasing needs for expanding numbers of refugees overseas. We do consider this to be a drastic change in U.S. policy. In addition, the continuing and growing pressure for additional refugee admissions has required a decrease in the level of services provided to refugees being admitted in this country. There are numerous examples of these cutbacks:

- (a) non-Amerasians departing as refugees under the ODP will no longer receive ESL/CO training;
- (b) for FY 1989, the reception and placement grant level has been reduced from \$560 to \$525;
- (c) reimbursements to voluntary agencies receiving Soviets for processing in Europe will only cover the initial 30 days of their stay there;
- (d) Vietnamese immigrants under the ODP no longer are eligible for U.S.-backed ICM loans, but must have prepaid tickets, which are available through ICM.

[4,000 Reserve]

QUESTION:

President Reagan has recommended an unallocated and unfunded reserve of 4,000 admissions. Do you have any guidelines to define the circumstances under which this reserve of 4,000 admissions would be needed? And should this reserve be needed, from which agency areas would you draw the funds?

ANSWER:

A pool of 4,000 unfunded admissions numbers has been available in Fiscal Years 87, 88, and now in 89. The use of this pool is, and has always been foreseen to be, for privately-funded admissions.

The admissions numbers may be used to the extent that there are private resources available to cover the essential and reasonable costs of admission and resettlement. While the numbers are available to refugees from any ethnic or regional group, it is not a program available to individuals. Private organizations interested in sponsoring privately admitted refugees must be: 1) willing to agree to the terms of a model Memorandum of Understanding (developed by the Office of the U.S. Coordinator for Refugee Affairs), and 2) able to produce an operational plan which convincingly demonstrates the ability to conduct an admissions and resettlement plan for a substantial number of refugees without Federal, state, or local government resources. Two of the largest burdens include covering possible medical costs privately and ensuring that the refugees, once resettled, do not access the welfare system.

Discussions have been initiated with several different groups. Thus far, the Cuban-American Foundation has signed a Memorandum of Understanding, under which it sponsored the admission of 733 Cuban refugees during FY 88.

[Refugee Investigations]

QUESTION: Secretary Shultz, could you briefly explain what kind of investigation is conducted to determine if those who seek refugee status are truly "refugees" in accordance with the definition in the 1980 Refugee Act.

ANSWER:

Each principal applicant must individually establish a claim to a well-founded fear of persecution in a personal interview with an INS officer. Many different methods are used to determine if a refugee applicant's account of persecution is true and establish his/her eligibility for the program. These methods vary from region to region and on the kind of persecution claimed.

For example, it is usually possible to verify whether someone is a member of a persecuted religious group through the religion's international headquarters. U.S. employment can be verified by the employer. Relatives in the U.S. can be contacted and required to provide proof of legal residence and the relationship to the applicant.

Refugee applicants go through several interviews prior to acceptance for U.S. admission. Many are interviewed first by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to determine whether they meet the international standard of "refugee"; these interviewers are well trained in human rights conditions in the refugee generating countries and in international refugee law. Applicants referred to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program by UNHCR are prescreened by consular or refugee officers or by the staff of international voluntary agencies under contract to the Department of State (International Catholic Migration Commission, International Rescue Committee, etc.). The refugees' claims are compared against the Country Reports in the U.S. Human Rights Report and other sources to judge credibility. Only after the applicant's refugee bona fides are reviewed and his/her eligibility for the U.S. program (e.g., family relationships/U.S. employment) are confirmed are the refugees presented to INS inspectors.

Experienced INS officers interview each refugee applicant carefully, cross-checking stories with other family members, other refugees, and against country condition reports. The officers are also familiar with current asylum policies and court cases so that refugee and asylum adjudications are

consistent. These procedures are reinforced by periodic training to ensure that INS adjudicators have current information on interview techniques, changing political conditions, refugee flows, federal regulations, legal opinions, etc.

Senator Paul Simon

[Conference]

QUESTION:

The New York Times in its editorial "Boat People and Compassion Fatigue" on July 14, 1988, stated, "It is also U.S. policy, as Mr. Shultz said, to support a well prepared world conference on refugees and to hear out complaints of first asylum countries like Malaysia, Thailand and Hong Kong." I think everyone involved would be benefitted by a worldwide conference. Other nations, not just the United States and Canada, ought to be more involved in resettlement and in assistance to the first asylum countries. I would like for you to elaborate on what plans you have to convene such a conference.

ANSWER:

In July at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' (ASEAN) Post-Ministerial Conference, Secretary Shultz announced that the U.S. could support a second international conference on Indochinese refugees if it were well prepared and would result in a constructive, humane approach for dealing with the continuing flow of refugees from Indochina. The Secretary proposed that a working group composed of the ASEAN nations, the major resettlement countries, the UNHCR and the governments of Laos and Vietnam start meeting immediately to formulate these new approaches. This working group has met twice, with a third meeting scheduled for early December.

The working group has made good progress in discussing the mechanics of a new approach, including establishment of UNHCR-monitored screening of all asylum seekers to determine refugee bona fides. However, much work remains to be done.

The U.S. and the other major resettlement and donor countries have been active participants in the working group process. However, it is our hope, and the intention of the U.N., to broaden this participation so that other members of the international community can once again become more actively involved in assisting and resettling Indochinese refugees.

[Hong Kong]

QUESTION:

What efforts are we making to gain the cooperation of Great Britain to resolve the burdens placed upon Hong Kong by the increased rate of entry of refugees?

ANSWER:

We have approached Her Majesty's Government (HMG) on numerous occasions to urge that it do more to alleviate the refugee burden in Hong Kong. Specifically we have pressed HMG to increase its modest resettlement figure of 460 refugees over a two year period. The United States, in turn, has reaffirmed its willingness to do more if the U.K. and other resettlement countries join us in a multilateral effort to deal with this problem.

When a screening program was announced by the Hong Kong Government (HKG) in June this year, we urged both HMG and HKG to implement it in accordance with internationally accepted standards and criteria. We supported UNHCR as it negotiated with the two governments the modalities of the process. We believe that the result has been a screening program which may develop into a useful model for the entire region.

[Baha'is]

QUESTION:

Last year, the United States admitted approximately 350 to 400 refugee Baha'is from their temporary refuge in Pakistan. Do the present plans for Fiscal Year 1989 refugee admissions permit a similar level of support?

ANSWER:

The U.S. Government remains committed to aiding refugees fleeing religious persecution in Iran; Baha'is have been subject to particularly severe harassment and discrimination under the Khomeini regime. Baha'is and other religious minorities have special access to the U.S. refugee admissions program through the expansion of the definition of admissions priority four for the Near East/South Asian region.

Although the FY 89 admissions ceiling for this region is lower than in FY 88, we anticipate decreasing numbers of applications as the Iran-Iraq war and the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan draw to a close.

[Iranian/Armenian Admissions]

QUESTION:

The proposed refugee admissions for Fiscal Year 1989 set at 7000 the number to be accepted from the Near East and South Asia. Last year the admissions ceiling was 9000 and 8500 were actually admitted from this part of the world. I have heard from a number of organizations, including the Iranian-Armenian Society and the Armenian Assembly of America, who are concerned about this reduction. What impact will this reduction in admissions region-wide have on Iranians and Armenians?

ANSWER:

The admissions ceiling for the Near East/South Asian region is lower for FY 89 than for FY 88, in part because of budgetary constraints and the growing worldwide pressure on admissions numbers but also because, while the need for U.S. resettlement has increased dramatically in several regions, the likely end to the Iran-Iraq war and the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan will serve to reduce, somewhat, the need for U.S. resettlement for Near East/South Asian refugees.

As stated in response to your first question (about Baha'is), the U.S. remains committed to helping individual Iranian refugees who were persecuted because they were members of a minority religion. While the Department does not record refugee admissions according to religion or other sub-nationality category, we estimate that well over half of Iranian admissions are Armenians. They, like other refugees around the world, will probably have to wait longer for admission because of the increasing pressure on admissions numbers; no regional ceiling accommodates all of the refugees who are eligible. Therefore, we encourage private groups to consider sponsoring refugees under the Private Sector Initiative in cases where the U.S. program cannot meet the demand.

[African Admissions]

QUESTION:

Last year, the designated refugee admissions number for Africa was 3,000, and the actual admissions was 1,500. In Fiscal Year 1989, the Administration has proposed that figure to be 2,000. Your Fiscal Year 1989 report states, in part, "The continued economic crisis and political oppression in Ethiopia will account for the largest group of refugees from any single African country." In light of the refugee situation in Ethiopia and other African nations, I hope there will be more actual admissions than last year even though the designated numbers have dropped. What are the prospects for that?

ANSWER:

The Department expects that African admissions in FY 89 will be higher than the FY 88 total of 1,585, and we hope that they will reach or approach the ceiling of 2,000. As of September 30, 1988, there were over 1,300 INS-approved African refugees awaiting only final administrative clearances before departing for the U.S. We hope and expect that all of these individuals, as well as additional refugees approved during the course of the year, will be admitted to the U.S. during FY 89.

The low level of admissions in FY 88 was caused in great part by the difficulty in obtaining exit permission for Ethiopian refugees in the Sudan. Of the 1,300 approved refugees cited above, over 750 are Ethiopian refugees in Sudan approved on INS trips in October 1987 and March 1988 who await only Sudanese exit permission to depart the country. While this problem by no means has been totally resolved, we continue to press the Sudanese government at every level to give these individuals exit permission.

INS officers are traveling to Sudan in late November 1988 to interview refugees, and we expect that they will approve several hundred individuals for admission to the U.S. Some of these individuals may be able to travel to the U.S. during FY 89, depending on the situation with exit permits. The INS officer in Kenya interviews refugee applicants in Nairobi, and will travel to southern Africa early in CY 89 to interview additional applicants there. We also expect that some additional African refugees in Europe will be approved for admission, and be admitted to the U.S. this year.

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 20, 1988

Khuc Minh Tho, President
Families of Vietnamese Political Prisoners Association
P.O. Box 5435
Arlington, VA 22205

Dear Friend:

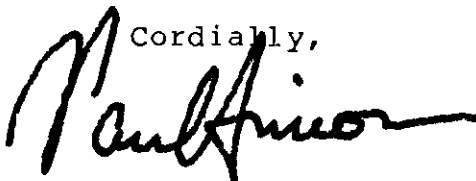
Thank you for taking time to write.

I appreciate your kind words on behalf of my efforts regarding the resettlement talks. I can assure you that I will continue to work on behalf of the interests and welfare of former re-education camp detainees and other humanitarian concerns in our relations with Vietnam.

Again, thanks for writing.

My best wishes.

Cordially,



Paul Simon
United States Senator

PS/mc

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 24, 1988

Khuc Minh Tho, President
Families of Vietnamese Political Prisoners Association
P.O. Box 5435
Arlington, VA 22205-0058

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your most thoughtful letter.

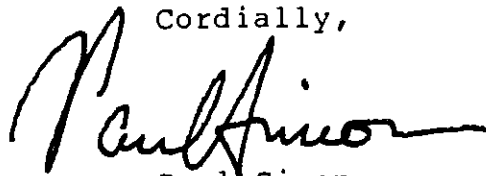
I would like to extend my congratulations to you on reaching your goal of securing the release of all political prisoners in Vietnam. Your commitment to eliminating human rights abuses played a key role in gaining their release. I will look into the legislation that you propose concerning proper medical care for the former prisoners and their families, and I assure you that I will keep your views in mind in the days ahead.

Thanks also for your kind words about my efforts on behalf of these prisoners.

Again, thanks for keeping me informed.

My best wishes.

Cordially,



Paul Simon
United States Senator

PS/owk

JOSEPH R. BIDEN, JR., DELAWARE, CHAIRMAN

EDWARD M. KENNEDY, MASSACHUSETTS
ROBERT C. BYRD, WEST VIRGINIA
HOWARD M. METZENBAUM, OHIO
DENNIS DECONCINI, ARIZONA
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HOWELL HEFLIN, ALABAMA
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STROM THURMOND, SOUTH CAROLINA
ORRIN G. HATCH, UTAH
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MARK H. GITENSTEIN, CHIEF COUNSEL
DIANA HUFFMAN, STAFF DIRECTOR
TERRY L. WOOTEN, MINORITY CHIEF COUNSEL
R.J. DUKE SHORT, MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6275

February 11, 1988

Mrs. Khuc Minh Tho
President
Families of Vietnamese Political Prisoners Association
P.O. Box 5435
Arlington, VA 22205-0635

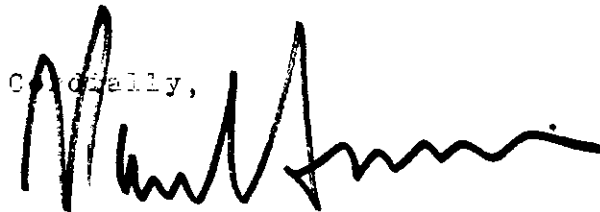
Dear Mrs. Tho:

I appreciated your letter regarding the Indochinese Refugee amendment to the State Department Authorization Bill and would like to thank you for your work in supporting the amendment. For your information, I have enclosed a copy of the final version of the Indochinese Refugee Resettlement section of the bill. I have also included a copy of the portion of the Conference Report discussing it.

Thank you for your input regarding this issue. Please feel free to contact me in the future if I can be of assistance.

My best wishes.

Cordially,



Paul Simon
U.S. Senator

PS/jbh

(1) The Secretary of State should urge the Government of Thailand to allow full access by highland refugees to the Lao Screening Program, regardless of the method of their arrival or the circumstances of their apprehension, and should intensify its efforts to persuade the Government of Laos to accept the safe return of persons rejected under the Lao Screening Program.

(2) Refugee protection and monitoring activities should be expanded along the Thai-Laotian border in an effort to identify and report on incidents of refugees forcibly repatriated into Laos.

(3) The Secretary of State should urge the Government of Thailand to address immediately the problems of protection associated with the Khmer along the Thai-Cambodian border. The Government of Thailand, along with appropriate international relief agencies, should develop and implement a plan to provide for greater security and protection for the Khmer at the Thai border.

(4) The international community should increase its efforts to assure that Indochinese refugee camps are protected, that refugees have access to a free market at Site 2, and that international observers and relief personnel are present on a 24-hour-a-day basis at Site 2 and any other camp where it is deemed necessary.

(5) The Secretary of State should make every effort to identify each person at Site 2 who may qualify for admission to the United States as an immigrant and for humanitarian parole.

(6) The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees should be pressed to upgrade staff presence and the level of advocacy to revive the international commitment with regard to the problems facing Indochinese refugees in the region, and to pursue voluntary repatriation possibilities in cases where monitoring is available and the safety of the refugees is assured.

(c) ALLOCATIONS OF REFUGEE ADMISSIONS.—Given the existing connection between ongoing resettlement and the preservation of first asylum, the United States and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees should redouble efforts to assure a stable and secure environment for refugees while dialog is pursued on other long-range solutions, it is the sense of the Congress that—

(1) within the worldwide refugee admissions ceiling determined by the President, the President should continue to recommend generous numbers of admissions from East Asia first asylum camps and from the Orderly Departure Program sufficient to sustain preservation of first asylum and security for Indochinese in Southeast Asia, consistent with worldwide refugee admissions requirements and the consultative processes of the Refugee Act of 1980;

(2) within the allocation made by the President for the Orderly Departure Program from Vietnam, the number of admissions allocated for Amerasians and their immediate family members should also be generous;

(3) renewed international efforts must be taken to address the problem of Indochinese refugees who have lived in camps for 3 years or longer; and

should urge the Government of Laos to accept the safe the Lao Screening Program.

Monitoring activities should be expanded in an effort to identify refugees forcibly repatriated into

should urge the Government of Laos to accept the safe the Lao Screening Program.

should increase its efforts to identify camps are protected, that refugees at Site 2, and that international are present on a 24-hour-a-day camp where it is deemed nec-

should make every effort to identify qualify for admission to the United States and for humanitarian parole. The Commissioner for Refugees presence and the level of administrative commitment with regard to refugees in the region, and to the possibilities in cases where monitoring of the refugees is assured.

admissions.—Given the existing situation and the preservation of the United Nations High Commissioner's efforts to assure a stable while dialog is pursued on the basis of the Congress that—

admissions ceiling deterrent should continue to recommendations from East Asia first-come, first-served Departure Program sufficient asylum and security for consistent with worldwide refugee consultative processes of

the President for the Orderly Departure Program, the number of admissions immediate family members

must be taken to address the refugees who have lived in camps for 3

(4) the Secretary of State should urge the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to organize immediately an international conference to address the problems of Indochinese refugees.

(d) **REPORTING.**—The President shall submit a report to Congress within 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act on the respective roles of the Immigration and Naturalization Service and the Department of State in the refugee program with recommendations for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the program.

SEC. 905. AMERASIAN CHILDREN IN VIETNAM.

(a) **FINDINGS AND DECLARATIONS.**—The Congress makes the following findings and declarations:

(1) Thousands of children in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam were fathered by American civilians and military personnel.

(2) It has been reported that many of these Amerasian children are ineligible for ration cards and often beg in the streets, peddle black market wares, or prostitute themselves.

(3) The mothers of Amerasian children in Vietnam are not eligible for government jobs or employment in government enterprises and many are estranged from their families and are destitute.

(4) Amerasian children and their families have undisputed ties to the United States and are of particular humanitarian concern to the United States.

(5) The United States has a longstanding and very strong commitment to receive the Amerasian children in Vietnam, if they desire to come to the United States.

(6) In September 1984, the United States informed the Socialist Republic of Vietnam that all Amerasian children in Vietnam, their mothers, and qualifying family members would be admitted as refugees to the United States during a three-year period.

(7) Amerasian emigration from Vietnam increased significantly in fiscal year 1985 under the Orderly Departure Program of the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees.

(8) On January 1, 1986, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam unilaterally suspended interviews of all individuals seeking to leave Vietnam legally under the auspices of the Orderly Departure Program for resettlement in the United States.

(9) On the 19th and 20th of October 1987, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam permitted the United States to resume interviewing the Amerasians and their families.

(b) **SENSE OF THE CONGRESS.**—It is the sense of the Congress that—

(1) the United States should maintain its strong commitment to receive the Amerasian children in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and their families;

(2) the Socialist Republic of Vietnam should cooperate fully in facilitating the processing of all Amerasians who desire to be resettled in the United States; and

(3) the Socialist Republic of Vietnam should cooperate fully in the processing of Amerasians for emigration.

could be able to apply for ad-
ble provision.

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ADMISSION TO THE UNITED

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clarifying language to ensure
shall be followed for Cubans
all other nationalities.

The committee of conference points out that the bilateral agree-
ment between the United States and Cuba calls for the total resto-
ration of normal immigration procedures. Specifically, the agree-
ment calls for the United States to "resume issuance of preference
immigrant visas to Cuban nationals . . . (and to take) all neces-
sary measures to ensure that Cuban nationals residing in Cuba
wishing to emigrate to the United States and who qualify under
U.S. law to receive immigrant visas, may enter the United States,
taking maximum advantage of the number of up to 20,000 immi-
grants per year."

The conference substitute takes into account the serious concerns
of the Department of State that legislative restoration of normal
immigration procedures at this time could jeopardize implementa-
tion of the bilateral agreement. The committee of conference in-
tends that in the event of future problems with the implementa-
tion of the agreement, the advisability of legislatively mandating
normal immigration procedures for all Cubans will be revisited.
The committee of conference is concerned with the plight of U.S.
citizens and permanent resident aliens who cannot be rejoined with
close family members who have applied or qualified (or both) for
immigrant visas. The continued separation of these families is a se-
rious problem and the committee of conference is hopeful that,
with the reinstatement of the agreement, this problem will be
eliminated. If for some reason this does not occur, the committee of
conference urges the appropriate committees of Congress to review
this matter in the second session of the 100th Congress.

The committee of conference urges the Department of State to
use every available means and international forums to press the
Cuban Government to live up to its Mariel agreement to permit
the return of those 2,746 Cuban nationals found inadmissible to the
United States because of serious criminal records or severe mental
illness. The committee of conference finds the continued refusal of
the Castro regime to live up to the terms of this agreement a major
obstacle to any lessening of tensions or improvement in relations
between our two nations. Cuba's behavior in this matter is not only
a serious breach of normal international law and practice, but a
flagrant violation of the human rights of these Cubans and their
families who wish to return to their homeland.

NATURALIZATION REQUIREMENTS FOR CERTAIN CUBAN POLITICAL PRISONERS

The Senate amendment (sec. 549) waives the naturalization re-
quirements of continuous residence and physical presence for six
Cuban political prisoners now residing in the United States.

The House bill contains no comparable provision.

The conference substitute deletes this provision.

INDOCHINESE REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

The Senate amendment (secs. 702-709): (1) contains congressional
findings regarding the plight of Indochinese refugees in first
asylum countries in Southeast Asia and the responsibility of the
United States and the United Nations High Commissioner for Ref-
ugees for the deterioration of refugee programs in the region; (2)

contains congressional findings regarding the problems of processing of Indochinese refugees by the Immigration and Naturalization Service; (3) requires the President to submit a report to Congress not later than 120 days after the date of enactment of this act assessing the merits of transferring the authority to admit all refugees under the Immigration and Nationality Act from the Attorney General to the Secretary of State; (4) expresses the sense of Congress regarding the allocation of refugee admissions from East Asia first asylum camps, the Orderly Departure Program from Vietnam, and Indochinese refugees who have lived in camps for more than 8 years; (5) earmarks \$5 million for each of the fiscal years 1988 and 1989 from development assistance (education) for educational programs, projects and activities along the Thai-Lao and Thai-Cambodian borders; (6) earmarks \$5 million in economic support fund assistance for each of the fiscal years 1988 and 1989 for assistance for Thai villages affected by the influx of Indochinese refugee; (7) earmarks \$2 million from funds authorized for international military education and training for each of the fiscal years 1988 and 1989 to train and deploy the Royal Thai Army to better protect Indochinese refugees; and (8) expresses the sense of Congress that the international community should increase efforts to assure Indochinese refugee camps are protected and that international observers and relief workers should be present on a 24-hour-a-day basis in any camp where it is deemed necessary.

The House bill contains no comparable provision.

The conference substitute (sec. 904): (1) expresses the sense of Congress that the United States continues to be committed to playing a major role in responding to the Indochinese refugee problem and that the Government of Thailand should be commended for recently allowing the United States to begin processing Cambodian refugee ration cardholders in Khao I Dang and for its cooperation in creating a more effective antipiracy campaign; (2) expresses the sense of Congress that the Department of State should urge the Government of Thailand to allow full access to the Lao Screening Program for all Lao refugees, particularly hill tribe people, and directs the Department of State and responsible international organizations to address the protection problems of the Khmer along the Thai-Cambodian border; (3) requires the President to submit a report to the Congress within 180 days of enactment on the respective roles of the Immigration and Naturalization Service and the Department of State on the refugee program with recommendations for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of that program; (4) states that the President should continue to recommend generous numbers of admissions from East Asia first asylum camps and from the Orderly Departure Program sufficient to sustain preservation of first asylum and security for Indochinese in Southeast Asia, consistent with worldwide refugee requirements; and (5) earmarks \$1 million for educational programs for protection, improved health care, nutrition, education, and skills training programs for refugees in Thailand.

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United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 6, 1987

Mrs. Khuc Minh Tho, President
Families of Vietnamese Political Prisoners Association
P.O. Box 5435
Arlington, Virginia 22205-0635

Dear Mrs. Tho:

Thank you for your letter of July 17 concerning the plight of political prisoners in Vietnam.

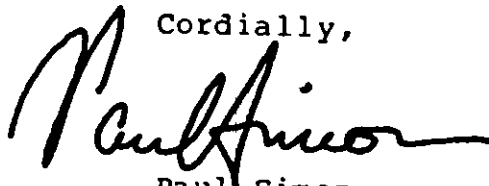
On July 28 the Senate approved unanimously Senate Resolution 255 expressing support for General John Vessey's forthcoming negotiations in Vietnam to resolve the fate of Americans missing in action in Southeast Asia. The resolution also expresses support for his discussions on other humanitarian issues, including the release of political prisoners who are now in reeducation camps.

I believe American foreign policy must emphasize human rights issues. In the case of Vietnam, a clear signal has been sent by the United States that relations can only be improved once Vietnam addresses some basic humanitarian concerns.

Again, thank you for your kind letter.

My best wishes.

Cordially,



Paul Simon
United States Senator

PS/owk

PAUL SIMON
ILLINOIS

COMMITTEES:
LABOR AND HUMAN RESOURCES
JUDICIARY
FOREIGN RELATIONS
BUDGET

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

April 19, 1988

Mrs. Khuc Minh Tho
President, Families of Vietnamese
Political Prisoners Association
P.O. Box 5435
Arlington, Virginia 22205-0635

Dear Mrs. Tho:

Thank you for inviting Senator Simon to the reception hosted by the Families of Vietnamese Political Prisoners Association on April 27, 1988. He is pleased and honored by your invitation.

Unfortunately, prior commitments make it impossible for the Senator to be with you at that time. He has asked that I convey to you his sincere regrets and his very best wishes for a successful event.

Again, many thanks for your kind invitation.

Sincerely,



Kathleen A. Crowell
Special Assistant for Appointments