

# TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

## THE VIETNAM CENTER

Box 41045 / Lubbock, Texas 79409-1045 / (806) 742-3742, 742-8663 / Fax (806) 742-8664 / E-Mail vietnam.center@ttu.edu

22 September 1999

The Hon. Richard J. Danzig  
Secretary of the Navy  
1000 Navy Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20350-1000

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I deeply regret that your heavy commitments made it impossible for you to meet with your Advisory Subcommittee on Naval History on 16 September, as I had much looked forward to the opportunity to meet you. Indeed, I had wished to propose a project for your consideration. For the past ten years, with the active guidance and assistance of Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr., USN (Ret), I have directed The Vietnam Center at Texas Tech University. [I am a retired naval officer.]

In recent years The Vietnam Center has sought active engagement with the Vietnamese authorities, and particularly has sought opportunities to improve educational opportunities for Vietnamese students and also to improve public health in Vietnam. Last month, the Chancellor of Texas Tech University and I traveled to Vietnam and visited the major universities in Hanoi, Hue, Ho Chi Minh City and Can Tho. The one request in common from all of those universities was that we provide textbooks and other books appropriate for university study.

We intend to dispatch an initial shipment to these universities within the next few weeks; however, we anticipate that by the end of this year we will have gathered an additional 20,000+ volumes, and also some medical equipment which we would very much like to ship to Vietnam. Discussing this issue, Vice Admiral Emmett H. Tidd, USN (Ret) recollected that in the 1960s and 1970s the Navy had in place a practice whereby deploying ships embarked such materials for subsequent delivery at planned foreign ports of call.

The purpose of this letter is to propose that you consider arranging a port visit for a deploying US Navy ship to call in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, and while there, to deliver a cargo of textbooks for universities and medical equipment for use principally in teaching Vietnamese doctors. The Vietnam Center at Texas Tech University will carefully inventory and package all materials and deliver them to any port in the Continental United States. All that would be required is that the US Navy ship deliver them to any Vietnamese port.

It has now been a quarter-century since the end of the war in Vietnam. I most firmly believe it is time for us to take some positive action to move along the road to establishment of a more normal relationship between our two countries. I discussed this project with Vietnamese Ambassador Le Van Bang on 15 September 1999. Additionally, I have discussed this at length with Admiral Zumwalt, who has agreed to act as The Vietnam Center's point of contact in Washington for this project.

VIETNAM CENTER NATIONAL COUNCIL  
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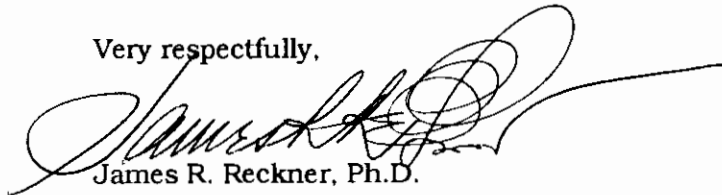
THE VIETNAM ARCHIVE  
Texas Tech University  
Lubbock, Texas 79409-1041 (806) 742-9010  
Fax: (806) 742-0496 • E-Mail livna@ttu.edu

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I envision this as a "win-win" project. A successful port call after so long an absence from Vietnam will, I believe, be a major step along the road to reconciliation between our two countries. Additionally, the delivery of a significant cargo which is so clearly humanitarian in nature will help to set a positive tone for the visit. On the other side, Vietnamese universities will receive books and equipment which will help them provide a better education to the young people of Vietnam.

We at Texas Tech University will be pleased to work out the details of the shipment of materials, and, indeed, would be willing to have leadership on the pier in Vietnam upon the ship's arrival, should you agree to this most worthwhile project.

Very respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James R. Reckner", written over a horizontal line.

James R. Reckner, Ph.D.  
Director

encl:

xc: Ambassador Le Van Bang  
Ambassador Pete Peterson  
Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr., USN (Ret)  
Texas Tech University Chancellor John T. Montford