

TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

THE VIETNAM CENTER

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Memorandum

21 September 1999

To: Chancellor John T. Montford

From: James R. Reckner



Subj: Proposal to Secretary of the Navy Danzig

Attached please find a draft of a letter to Secretary of the Navy Danzig, in which I propose that the US Navy arrange a port visit in Vietnam to deliver the books and medical equipment we are currently collecting.

I feel quite comfortable asking the Secretary to do this, and Admiral Zumwalt is very strongly supportive. However, as I am involving two Ambassadors and the Secretary of the Navy, I wanted to gain your approval before actually sending it

→ I told him you were OOT and he decided to go ahead with the letter.

encl:

VIETNAM CENTER NATIONAL COUNCIL
Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr., Chairman
General William C. Westmoreland, Hon. Bui Diem
Hon. William F. Bundy, Professor Douglas Pike
Colonel Roger H. C. Donlon, M.H.

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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.

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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,

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