

June 28, 2005- Rep. Sanchez: Deny Military Aid to Vietnam

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Amendment Requires Linking Assistance to Respect for Human Rights

WASHINGTON—Following reports of a deal between the Pentagon and visiting Vietnamese Prime Minister Phan Van Khai to provide International Military and Education Training (IMET) to the socialist republic, Rep. Loretta Sanchez offered an amendment to the Foreign Operations Appropriations bill debated in the House of Representatives today. The Sanchez Amendment would deny IMET funding to Vietnam, given its designation by the State Department as a "Country of Particular Concern", due to its repressive human rights policies.

Her statement on the Floor of the House is as follows: "I strongly support the IMET program. It is a vital tool for furthering regional security cooperation and promoting U.S. interests overseas. However, I do not believe that Vietnam should receive IMET funding.

"Vietnam held off on agreeing to participate in the IMET program for quite awhile, because they were concerned about scrutiny of their human rights record. Those concerns are well-founded.

"Vietnam is responsible for a broad range of human rights abuses, including the repression of ethnic minorities, detention and torture of political dissidents, and the repression of religious freedom.

"The U.S. designated Vietnam as a "Country of Particular Concern" in 2004 because of its violations of religious freedoms. With the designation, Vietnam joins a dubious club, including Burma, China, Iran, and North Korea. Should the U.S. provide IMET for these countries? Why should Vietnam be any different?

"The Vietnamese military has reportedly been involved in numerous cases of human rights violations, including violent and brutal suppression of peaceful Montagnard demonstrations in April 2004.

"Providing humanitarian assistance to a country is one thing. Establishing trade relations is yet another. But military assistance such as IMET requires an even higher standard. Why would we want to establish military relations with a repressive regime, one in which our potential counterparts are directly involved in that repression? Vietnam should not be eligible for IMET assistance until it has demonstrated a willingness to treat all its citizens with the fundamental dignity and respect that they deserve."