

December 10, 2007: Sanchez Skeptical of Vietnam's Charges Against San Bernardino Couple

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 10, 2007

Sanchez Skeptical of Vietnam's Charges Against San Bernardino Couple: U.S. Citizens Detained in Vietnam For Entering Country with Firearm Brought Through LAX

U.S. citizens affirm their innocence and that the weapon does not belong to them

WASHINGTON, D.C. - On December 7, 2007, Representative Loretta Sanchez (D-Garden Grove) issued a letter to Claire Heffernan, Acting Assistant Administrator for the Transportation Security Administration, asking for an immediate investigation of TSA's screening procedures at Los Angeles Airport to help resolve allegations that U.S. citizens, Le Van Phan and Nguyen Thi Thinh, currently being jailed in Vietnam, passed through LAX security with a firearm in their luggage. The couple affirms that they do not know where weapon came from and that it does not belong to them.

On November 22, 2007, the couple traveled from Los Angeles to Vietnam, where they were detained by Vietnamese authorities under accusations of having entered the country with a firearm in their checked luggage. The suitcase did not arrive with their other luggage in Vietnam. The Vietnamese police then brought the suitcase to them, opened the bag and found a gun, then proceeded to arrest the U.S. citizens who remain jailed in Vietnam.

To help resolve this issue, Sanchez, Vice-Chair of the Homeland Security Committee has asked TSA to provide further information regarding TSA screening processes at LAX, particularly any evidence that the suitcase in question was screened by TSA at LAX, and thus did not depart the United States bound for Vietnam containing a firearm and ammunition.

The arrest of these two U.S. citizens occurred just one week after the Government of Vietnam arrested U.S. citizens Dr. Nguyen Quoc Quan and Mr. Truong Van Ba (Leon) in Vietnam, for promoting peace and non-violence.

The government-controlled media in Vietnam has reported that the couple was planning a terrorist act to sabotage the 12th Vietnamese congress meeting; to smuggle the weapon to Viet Tan, a group that promotes peace and non-violent actions in support of democracy; and to have confessed to the crime.

The couple denies all of these allegations, which no entity outside of the Government of Vietnam has been able to substantiate.

###