

December 11, 2007: Sanchez to Government of Vietnam: "Release Remaining U.S. Prisoner"

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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California Congresswoman calls for immediate release of remaining U.S. citizen jailed in Vietnam after today's release of three other U.S. prisoners

WASHINGTON, D.C. -U.S. Rep. Loretta Sanchez agreed with U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam, Michael Michalak, that the Socialist Republic of Vietnam never had any reason to detain Mr. Truong Van Ba (Leon), a U.S. citizen who was arrested for promoting peace and non-violence, or Mr. Le Van Phan and his wife, Ms. Nguyen Thi Thinh, U.S. citizens who reside in San Bernardino County, accused of entering Vietnam with a firearm, and felt that Vietnam's release of the three citizens was its only option.

On November 20, 2007, Sanchez authored a letter to Secretary of State Rice requesting the U.S. Department of State's immediate assistance in investigating the reported arrests of two United States citizens, Dr. Nguyen Quoc Quan and Mr. Truong Van Ba (Leon), in Vietnam on November 17. Likewise, Sanchez led a bipartisan group of 11 House Members in issuing a letter to the Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung calling for the release of the two U.S. citizens. In addition, Sanchez asked for an immediate investigation of TSA's screening procedures at Los Angeles Airport to help resolve allegations that U.S. citizens, Mr. Le Van Phan and his wife Ms. Nguyen Thi Thinh, who were jailed in Vietnam, passed through LAX security with a firearm in their luggage.

"I am pleased to hear that Mr. Truong Van Ba (Leon), Mr. Le Van Phan and his wife, Ms. Nguyen Thi Thinh have been released from the custody of the Government of Vietnam," said Sanchez. "I am grateful to the U.S. Department of State for their expeditious assistance with these cases. It is completely unacceptable that the Government of Vietnam is continuing to jail Dr. Nguyen Quoc Quan, and I hope that his release is imminent.

"It is appalling to me that just one day after International Human Rights Day, the Government of Vietnam is still holding an American citizen in jail for his support of peace and democracy. I anxiously await news as to when the Government of Vietnam will release the remaining U.S. prisoner-- Dr. Nguyen Quoc Quan of Sacramento, who was arrested for promoting peace and non-violence, as was Mr. Truong Van Ba (Leon). I am skeptical of all charges and believe he and the three U.S. citizens already released have been falsely accused, harassed and arrested.

"The Government of Vietnam has continuously broken promises to reform its civil, religious and human rights policies

and has recently heightened its harassment towards Vietnamese-Americans. I hope that the outcry leading up to today's release will send a clear message to the Vietnamese government that the U.S. government and its citizens are concerned about civil liberties violations and will continue to be a voice for the Vietnamese people."

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