



NDU President Vice Admiral Ann Rondeau welcomes General Phung Quang Thanh, Minister of Defense, Vietnam, to NDU, December 14, 2009

NDU

NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY Building Strategic Relations with Vietnam

By LEWIS M. STERN

We are a school. We here are teachers, and students, and researchers. Many of us are in uniform with obligations to our defense and security establishments, but in the end we are a school with everything that entails—libraries, homework, computers, research, publications, and end-of-term grades. . . . We have this common understanding of the central importance of continuous learning, and that is what we should take as the central motivating force in our institutional relationship.

—Toast in honor of Vietnamese National Defense Academy Commandant General Vo Tien Trung offered by NDU President Vice Admiral Ann E. Rondeau, October 2011, Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington, DC.

Dr. Lewis M. Stern was a Visiting Research Fellow in the Institute for National Strategic Studies (INSS) at the National Defense University from September 2008 until his retirement from the Federal Government in October 2010. He was an Adjunct Senior Research Fellow in the Center for Strategic Research at INSS from October 2010 to October 2011.

For as long as nations have had organized militaries, bilateral relations have been marked by exchanges of personnel and knowledge on how each is organized, trained, and equipped. The United States has benefited and helped other nations through such exchanges. One of the most remarkable instances of this kind of exchange is the development of a military-to-military relationship between the United States and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV). As this bilateral defense relationship evolved, and both sides sought a means of infusing strategic content into the interaction, the relationship between the National Defense University (NDU) in Washington, DC, and the National Defense Academy (NDA) in Hanoi took shape. The most recent evidence of success in this

appreciate the full context of this effort, we need to go back almost a decade.

Setting the Context

During the early 2000s, as the opportunity for improved state relations appeared, senior Vietnamese officials in the Ministries of National Defense (MND) and Foreign Affairs (MFA) consistently made several key points about U.S.-Vietnamese ties, offering a recipe for improving bilateral ties and for positioning the United States in regional affairs in a manner that would echo the increasing strategic relevance of the United States for Southeast Asia. At the core of the relationship between Vietnam and the United States, the issue of mutual trust remained a sticking point that complicated moving forward in any area. That reality required deliberate, focused

galvanizes broad popular support in Vietnam, generates activism within specific constituencies that find legislative support, and promises to be a domestic issue with significant foreign policy consequences. Another concern to those seeking a basis for enhancing relations with the United States was the Vietnamese perception that the U.S. Congress keeps churning out punitive legislation that speaks to Vietnam's human rights record and that the Obama administration has not been actively speaking against these initiatives.

Nevertheless, Vietnam was resolved to invest energy and resources to improve critical bilateral relations, a point evidenced in the key themes made explicit in the Political Report to the 11th National Congress of the Vietnamese Communist Party in January 2011. Within this context, an active role for each nation's top military universities offered a path for forward movement.

First Efforts

The notion of a relationship between NDU and NDA was first broached during a visit to Washington by an NDA delegation in 2003, and was raised again during Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Peter Rodman's 2005 visit to Hanoi. The Vietnamese delegation was briefed on the International Fellowship opportunity that could place a Vietnamese candidate in the National War College. The delegation was also offered the chance to engage in a regular exchange of publications produced by the Institute for National Strategic Studies (INSS). NDA participants embraced the ideas laid out at the NDU meeting, but did not take any steps to act on the potential for a formal relationship.

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During 2008 and 2009, the possibility of a formal relationship between NDU and NDA was raised by the U.S. side at senior levels during several critical meetings. The matter of a relationship between the universities was briefed to senior-level Office

NDU has played an important role in the military-to-military relationship between the United States and Vietnam

increasingly sturdy defense relationship is the visit of Vietnam's NDA Commandant Lieutenant General Vo Tien Trung to Washington in early October 2011. The general conducted meetings at NDU and conferred with congressional staffers on bilateral defense relations, underscoring significant geopolitical considerations driving Hanoi's recent commitment to improve the defense and security dimension of the bilateral relationship.

The relationship between NDU and NDA has been built on careful discussions that meet the needs of both nations. NDU, led by President Vice Admiral Ann E. Rondeau, has played an important role in the military-to-military relationship between the United States and Vietnam, especially as both countries sought to elevate the level of interaction. The Vietnamese defense establishment and U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) see the relationship as a means of strengthening cooperation between the two militaries. Moreover, both schools are committed to increasing the number of academic exchanges, joint research, communication between subject matter experts, and visits by institutional leaders, faculty, and staffs to the other's professional military education home. As a part of a larger relationship, this academic engagement has a great deal of promise, but this effort was not achieved overnight. To

work to persuade Vietnam that relations with the United States were worth the investment.

Beginning with then Prime Minister Phan Van Khai's 2005 visit to Washington, the U.S.-Vietnamese joint statement issued at the time embedded acknowledgment of Vietnam's "sovereignty." This mutual act demonstrated to Hanoi's leadership that an expanded bilateral relationship suffused with increasing strategic meaning was possible. Soon after the inauguration of President Barack Obama, the Vietnamese communicated their belief in the need and importance for his administration to construct a more effective relationship with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which includes Vietnam. ASEAN has far more regional importance than it used to and is increasingly relevant to relationships with other states and regions of strategic importance to Washington, such as India and South Asia. Additionally, from Hanoi's perspective, the United States should be ready to take a higher profile position on South China Sea issues, perhaps moving out in front of an ASEAN consensus by cautioning China on the potential political consequences of continuing its trajectory on this issue in the face of a united ASEAN.

Along with these geopolitical issues, Vietnam has continually sought U.S. recognition that Agent Orange is an issue that



NDU President Vice Admiral Ann Rondeau gives presentation to class at Vietnam's National Defense Academy

of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) for Policy and Department of State representatives for the October 2008 Political Military Talks, a first dialogue between DOD and State on the U.S. side, and the MND and MFA on the Vietnamese side. The June 2009 Political Military Dialogue between the United States and Vietnam, hosted by the State Department, focused on the regional and global security environment, bilateral security issues, humanitarian programs, and defense cooperation. Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense Greg Delawie led the U.S. delegation consisting of representatives from State, DOD, Department of Commerce, the Joint Staff, and U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM). INSS presented the case for an entry-level program of engagement between the U.S. and Vietnamese defense universities, and reiterated the longstanding invitation to send a Vietnamese officer to the National War College as part of the International Fellowship program.

In September 2008, NDU developed an informal quarterly discussion between INSS scholars and senior fellows from NDU and officials from the SRV Defense Attaché's Office and SRV Embassy Political Section.¹ The SRV Ambassador Le Cong Phung lent his support to this initiative, which made it increasingly easy for the defense ministry to embrace some of the initiatives involving strategic and policy dialogue, roundtable discussions at NDU, and programs in Hanoi for visiting INSS study groups. Moreover, the SRV embassy was primed to include INSS on the dance card for future official delegations that passed through Washington. At a minimum, this meant annual U.S. engagement with the two committees of the National Assembly—Foreign Affairs and National Defense, as well as the General Staff's deputy director. A more direct and active engagement between NDU and NDA would occur in the next year.

In early November 2009, on the margins of the 13th ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)

Heads of Defence Universities, Colleges, Institutions Meeting (HDUCIM) in Bangkok, Vice Admiral Rondeau met with then commandant of the NDA, General Nguyen Nhu Hoat. They agreed that the first step should be reporting the substance and positive tone of this first meeting to their respective headquarters, followed by working-level efforts to outline the possibilities for enhancing bilateral relations between the two institutions. Importantly, the two leaders agreed to consider planning a meeting between their respective staff and specialists responsible for teaching, research, curricula development, international outreach, publication production, and regional studies institutions for the purposes of an "information exchange."

General Hoat agreed with the idea of a more robust bilateral relationship and stressed an interest in cooperating on "strategic studies." He agreed to invite the United States to send a student to the next iteration of Vietnam's NDA international students' course and stated his

readiness to send an officer student to NDU. He agreed that the next logical step would be to define an opportunity for selected faculty and staff to meet and share basic information about respective organizational structure, curriculum, teaching practices, and rules and regulations for students and faculty. General Hoat thought that NDU and NDA should look at a range of interactions including scholar-to-scholar exchanges and student fellowships at the point where the respective defense establishments were prepared to accept such activity in the context of bilateral defense engagement.

Making the Case at the Ministerial Level

In December 2009, General Phung Quang Thanh, SRV minister of defense, became the second defense minister to visit NDU.² General Thanh endorsed the approach that emerged from the discussions between Vice Admiral Rondeau and General Hoat in Bangkok, voicing confidence in his NDA director. General Thanh invited Vice Admiral Rondeau to visit Vietnam, an invitation that was reiterated during his meeting with Secretary of Defense Robert Gates on the margins of the annual Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, hosted by the International Institute for Strategic Studies in May/June 2010.³ His commitment to the notion of NDU relations with NDA was the motivation for pressing forward with the initiative.

In August 2010, an interagency delegation led by Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (DASD) for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs, Robert Scher traveled to Hanoi to participate in the inaugural U.S.-Vietnam Defense Policy Dialogue. Lieutenant General Nguyen Chi Vinh, deputy defense minister, led the Vietnam delegation. The meeting derived from the Secretary of Defense's commitment to General Thanh to establish a mechanism between OSD and MND to exchange policy-level perspectives on bilateral, regional, and global issues of mutual concern. The importance of establishing institutional connections between the two national level defense universities was part of this bilateral military dialogue and would be reflected in a formal memorandum of understanding that would be presented to Vietnam the following month and amplified in subsequent discussions at NDU.

Role of Defense Universities

On September 19, 2011, the DASD for South and Southeast Asia (OSD Policy) and

Vietnam's Deputy Defense Minister Vinh signed a memorandum of understanding for "advancing bilateral defense cooperation." The document identifies five areas in which both sides will work to expand cooperation: maritime security cooperation, search and rescue cooperation, peacekeeping operations, humanitarian and disaster relief, and cooperation between defense universities and research institutes.

The document speaks to the principles of cooperation, essentially enshrining the Vietnamese preoccupation with friendship, trust, mutual respect, and nonalignment ("independence, self-reliance and sovereignty"), and reiterating the U.S. concern that the relationship is mutually beneficial and resonates positively with regional defense and security equities. It provides a "framework" for cooperation aimed at expanding practical bilateral engagement in the defense and security realm and calls for the promotion of a "common vision" for defense cooperation and the establishment of a "mechanism" to identify and implement new areas for defense cooperation. This could be as simple as the existing interagency paraphernalia for policy

language referenced bilateral interaction between U.S. and Vietnamese "research institutions," which was meant to signal abiding interest in sustaining the link originally formalized between INSS and MSI. From the perspective of NDU, such engagement should place a primacy on exchanging delegations, students, and publications of mutual interest; promoting interaction and engagement among faculty, staff, and students; developing dialogue between U.S. and Vietnamese subject matter specialists; and promoting the exchange of ideas and resources.

Importantly, momentum for the idea of a defense cooperation framework agreement between senior defense officials resulted from the discussions between Secretary Gates and Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung during his mid-2008 visit to the Pentagon, when both leaders agreed to establish a mechanism between OSD and MND to exchange policy-level perspectives on issues of mutual concern. The inaugural session of that dialogue took place in August 2010 and established the basis for discussion of ways to improve bilateral defense cooperation in several areas. The United States came away from the session

the United States identified a newfound willingness on the part of the Vietnamese to advance bilateral cooperation in the form of joint exercises

decisionmaking or the emergence of an ad hoc alliance of DOD, State, and USPACOM planners and policy advisors who would do the brunt of the coordination.

The proposed agreement was approved at the prime ministerial level. The defense minister's "informal" triangle of policy advisors—the Military Strategy Institute (MSI), Institute for Defense International Relations (IDIR), and External Relations Department—was involved in reviewing the proposed U.S. text, hammering out Vietnamese counterproposals, and managing the discussions that led to the emergence of the memorandum (the MSI was renamed the Institute for Defense Studies in 2011). In the text of the document regarding defense university relations, the United States sought to encompass institutions and entities beyond just the NDU-NDA relationship. Seeking to operationalize what was intended by such a relationship, the

with the sense that the discussion was open and candid, and identified a newfound willingness on the part of the Vietnamese to advance bilateral cooperation in the form of joint exercises.

In the first months of 2011, OSD drafted a U.S.-Vietnam Strategic Defense Framework document that was circulated on April 1, 2011. This document derived, ultimately, from the initiatives first suggested during Vietnamese Defense Minister Phung Quang Thanh's visit to Washington on December 14–15, 2009, following a stop in Hawaii where he met with the USPACOM commander. During the Washington portion of his trip, Defense Minister Thanh met with the Secretary of Defense, and struck an agreement in principle regarding the terms for expanding bilateral cooperation in five key areas: establishing regular, high-level dialogues between DOD and MND, maritime security, search

and rescue, peacekeeping operations, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.⁴

Getting Down to Business

On September 28, 2010, Vice Admiral Rondeau welcomed Lieutenant General Nguyen Chi Vinh as a distinguished guest to NDU. Lieutenant General Vinh came to Washington for a 4-day visit with the goal of discussing Vietnam's support for the upcoming ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting, which was held in Hanoi the following month and occurred during the last few months of Vietnam's tenure as the ASEAN chair. This was the first meeting of this group of regional defense leaders plus dialogue partners, including the United States. While attending this event in Hanoi, Secretary Gates conducted counterpart talks with the leadership of the Vietnamese defense establishment.

Lieutenant General Vinh's secondary purpose in coming to Washington was to discuss with NDU the possibility of a formal relationship between INSS and two defense ministry institutes, the IDIR and MSI. The deputy minister agreed to consider meetings between staffs and specialists responsible for teaching, research, curricula development, international outreach, publication production, and regional studies institutions for the purposes of "information exchange." While the general endorsed the idea of a more robust bilateral relationship with NDU and stressed an interest in cooperating on conferences in the area of "strategic studies," he was not quite ready to commit to joint research. He agreed that both sides should look for opportunities to host delegations of staffs and specialists, and agreed to invite the United States to send a student to the next iteration of Vietnam's NDA international students' course. Lieutenant General Vinh stated his readiness to send an officer student to the National War College in 2011 and identified the IDIR director as the likely candidate. Additionally, the general seemed animated at the thought of a Vietnamese cadet attending West Point.⁵

High-level Support

During Secretary Gates's October 2010 meeting with Defense Minister Thanh on the margins of the Shangri-La Dialogue, the two endorsed the results of the September 28 meeting, which launched official relations among INSS, IDIR, and MSI. Defense Minister Thanh noted that he had invited the NDU

president to visit Vietnam during his December 2009 appearance at Fort Lesley J. McNair, and asked Secretary Gates to convey the reiterated invitation. The Secretary replied that he would ask Vice Admiral Rondeau to make plans to visit Vietnam as early as possible.

During the 14th ARF HDUCIM, hosted by Vietnam's NDU in November 2010, General Hoat's replacement, General Vo Tien Trung, formally invited the NDU president to visit Vietnam and NDA in 2011. General

professional military educators were in a good position to take the steps necessary to bring defense intellectuals, strategists, and students of defense and security affairs together to achieve the goals discussed during the October 2010 meeting between Secretary of Defense Gates and Defense Minister Thanh.⁷

During her visit, the NDU president stressed that the defense universities each need to identify a single subject matter specialist who can draw on relations throughout

Vice Admiral Rondeau placed appropriate primacy on allowing American professional military education specialists to meet their counterparts and establishing a formal channel of communication

Trung and Vice Admiral Rondeau discussed promoting relations between the institutions through exchanges of delegations, students, and publications. The two leaders also discussed how NDU could contribute to enhancing the strategic academic dialogue on these issues in Southeast Asia.

General Trung discussed the Vietnamese proposal to create an ASEAN Institute for International Security Study, which would allow ARF members to cooperate more closely by working together to study nontraditional challenges and enhance information-sharing among regional academic institutions. Vice Admiral Rondeau offered to work bilaterally with the Vietnamese on this proposal to see if NDU could help accelerate the process in establishing such an institute, noting that India and South Korea were interested in developing similar regional institutes and that there might be a way to gain some momentum by working with interested parties within this organization.⁶

A Friendly Visitation

Vice Admiral Rondeau and a delegation from NDU visited Vietnam in April 2011. This was a well-organized visit marked by a constructive itinerary that demonstrated Vietnamese seriousness about the relationship. Press coverage of the admiral's meeting with the minister of defense underscored the mutual interest in efforts aimed at adding strategic depth to the bilateral defense relationship; it also underscored the increasing recognition that strategic thinkers and pro-

his or her respective communities to contribute to a monthly exchange of news about university developments—courses offered, organizational changes undertaken, new faculty, conferences held, seminars planned, and travel by faculty and staff to foreign countries. Agreeing to that arrangement as a starting point would overcome the most obvious objection to pursuing this first step in building a basis for communication between the two schools, which should be aimed at keeping each side aware of developments, plans, and intentions in the area of professional military education and strategic studies. Focusing on this link should add a level of connectivity to a relationship that would otherwise depend on infrequent and irregular visits by delegations, for example, as the basis for interaction.

The NDU delegation told its interlocutors that the university was looking to develop informal communications between Vietnamese and American national defense scholars who are intent on comparing notes, sharing publications, cultivating personal relationships, and developing a momentum that would be the basis for a continuous dialogue between teachers and between researchers. To serve that interest, the delegation recommended following through on the initiative aimed at receiving working-level delegations and study groups from the respective sides.

Acknowledging a key step in their relationship, Vice Admiral Rondeau told her hosts that NDU was looking forward to the arrival of Senior Colonel Ha Chung Thanh, the



Lieutenant General Trung of Vietnam's National Defense Academy lectures to students and faculty at NDU

People's Army officer who would be a member of the National War College class of 2012. Vice Admiral Rondeau identified a support group that will be responsible for working with the senior colonel during his residence in Washington to ensure that he has the chance to make the most of this opportunity. The NDU delegation stressed the importance of reciprocity, arguing that the United States looks forward to working with the NDA to send a U.S. military officer or civilian academic from NDU to participate in seminars for foreign participants offered at the academy.

During its visit to Vietnam, the NDU delegation met with the new head of the Economics and Research Department, and received a briefing on the Vietnamese military's mission and leadership organization. Vice Admiral Rondeau seized the chance to reaffirm friendship with senior leaders who had visited Vietnam. A courtesy call on the minister and a chance to meet with Vice Defense Minister Nguyen Chi Vinh helped anchor the visit to important moments in the relationship up to that point. The NDU

delegation received a full briefing at NDA on the People's Army military education system and a tour of the facility. Finally, the admiral addressed the NDA. In her remarks, she placed appropriate primacy on allowing American professional military education specialists to meet their counterparts and on the importance of establishing a formal channel of communication.

As a final part of the visit, the NDU president and her staff met with the IDIR for a session that was yet another opportunity to discuss plans for a regular exchange of publications between INSS, IDIR, and MSI, and to encourage reciprocity in the relationship, establish the basis for continuous communication, discuss the terms of reference for supporting working-level study group visits between the United States and Vietnam, and encourage the MND to send Vietnamese military officers to U.S. military academies. After this trip, NDU leadership focused on the working-level initiatives intended to operationalize some of the goals and took steps to sustain the existing programs

of engagement, including the INSS–SRV Embassy Informal Dialogue, INSS–Defense Academy of Vietnam relationship, emergence of an INSS dialogue with IDIR, and efforts to move the relationship toward joint research/joint publication/hosting of seminars and workshops/continuous interaction between traveling study groups.

NDA Commandant Visits NDU

NDA Commandant Lieutenant General Vo Tien Trung visited Washington in early October 2011, conducted meetings at NDU, and conferred with U.S. congressional staffers on bilateral defense relations.

Lieutenant General Trung, a “Hero of the People’s Armed Forces” and former deputy commander of Military Region 5, is a member of the National Assembly representing Phu Yen Province. He was born into a family with a revolutionary tradition. His father was Vo Mien, the chairman of the committee of Duy My village, Duy Xuyen District, responsible for direct action during the August revolution in 1945.

At NDU, the focus of Lieutenant General Trung's visit was on developing a comprehensive work plan for the next year that would operationalize the commitments contained in the memorandum of understanding for advancing bilateral defense cooperation. The work plan was to feature bilateral cooperation on peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief as the focal point for the two academic institutions. Beyond serving the overall strategic interests of the relationship by shouldering the responsibilities for peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief as articulated in the memorandum, NDU sought to continue to focus on the nuts and bolts of building a credible relationship between schools by encouraging discussions about curriculum issues, working toward joint research projects, sharing publications, exchanging delegations, discussing the art and science of professional military education, and organizing opportunities for the exchange of viewpoints between strategic thinkers.

Lieutenant General Trung's speech to an assembly of NDU faculty, students, and invited guests derived from the December 2009 white paper, "Vietnam's National Defense," which has provided the basic narrative for the senior Vietnamese defense leadership since early 2010. He spoke about the great and sprawling historical record of the formation of a Vietnamese nation, the prolonged conflict deriving from the historic intentions of "northern countries" that has compelled generations of Vietnamese to fight invaders, the struggle against colonialism and the contests waged to liberate the South and unify the nation, and the fight to protect the southwestern and northern borders from 1977 to 1989.

The general spoke about Vietnam's "national defense strength" and the intangible dimension of the national character that places a primacy on "all People Defense," an approach that integrates reliance on organization and machinery as much as on national soul, character, and the vigorous historic spirit that drives the Vietnamese to protect their nation. He also described the calculus of Vietnamese military organization and its sustained focus on local defense, militia units (at the commune and precinct level), and self-defense organizations. Importantly, Lieutenant General Trung described Vietnam's continuing commitment to enhancing national defense capabilities in a fashion that recognized the contribution of both intangibles and

modernizing forces to the goal of creating a capable, professional military force:

Based on the foresaid viewpoints, enhancement of Vietnam's national defense potentials must be realized comprehensively, not only political strength, economic strength, but also science and technology potentials and military potentials. . . . We hold the view that in any national salvation, human factor is decisive, weapons and equipment play an important role; those two elements are interdependent. . . . In order to build the political and spiritual strength, firstly we fortify the whole national solidarity, building a wholesome political system with a government of the people, for the people and by the people.

The general spoke to the ancient conflict with China, mentioned the relevance of current disputes over land borders and maritime and territorial claims, and described Vietnam's national goal of achieving a defense capable of coping with intrusions and disputes that go to the core of Vietnam's sense of sovereignty.

Accordingly, his effort to define the basis for expanded defense and security cooperation with the United States and other countries can at least in part be explained as a Vietnamese attempt to hedge bets in a contest with an assertive and aggressively inclined China focused on maintaining a stable environment on its periphery and encouraging economic relationships that will contribute to modernization. The Vietnamese, in that argument, see the acceptance of the formality of defense relationships as one way of coping with China's strategic intentions of increasing its influence in East Asia. Beijing's efforts to prevent "containment" of China have, from the perspective of that explanation, compelled Vietnam to enter into a closer and more completely normal relationship with the United States, especially in the realm of defense and security.

It seems that at this point, much more of Vietnam's interest in enhanced defense cooperation with countries including the United States is explained by focused attention of the People's Army to modernize the military and rationalize its defense relationships in order to bring the force into the 21st century. Lieutenant General Trung summarized these ideas in his reference to the army's concerted efforts to "construct and develop into 'a professional, elite and gradually modern force.'"

After Lieutenant General Trung's visit to the United States, the work between NDU and NDA was focused on achieving the basis for agreement to a comprehensive work plan for 2012 that would operationalize the commitments contained in the memorandum of understanding. Beyond serving the overall strategic interests of the relationship—by shouldering the responsibilities for developing capabilities in the areas of peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief as articulated in the memorandum—NDU seeks

the role of National Defense University in shaping strategic-level exchanges must be featured as an important contribution to the emergence of a "strategic partnership" with Vietnam

to continue to focus on the nuts and bolts of building a credible relationship between the defense schools.

NDU Vice President for Research and Applied Learning Hans Binnendijk visited Hanoi in early December 2011, and signed an agreement with the IDIR focused on the involvement of INSS in a joint research project on maritime security issues and a possible peacekeeping operations simulation. The NDU delegation received a second document setting the parameters for a broadened NDU–NDA relationship that will bear the signature of both Lieutenant General Trung and Vice Admiral Rondeau as well as provide the structure for expanded engagement between the two defense institutions.

Conclusion

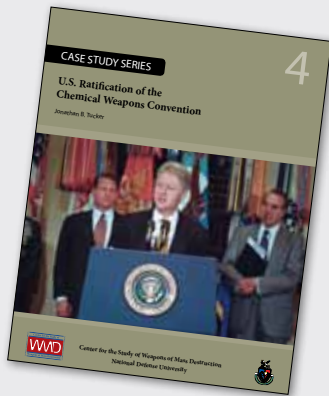
The role of National Defense University in shaping strategic-level exchanges, sustaining dialogue on issues of strategic importance, and developing sturdy connections between subject matter experts must be featured as an important contribution to the emergence of a "strategic partnership" with Vietnam.

NDU has now hosted two Vietnamese defense ministers and hopes to be a permanent part of the itinerary of future senior military officials. Defense Minister Phung Quang Thanh visited the NDU campus in December 2009 for a fruitful talk with the NDU



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Case Study 4

U.S. Ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention

By *Jonathan B. Tucker*

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), an international agreement signed in Paris in 1993, was the culmination of a 70-year global effort to ban chemical arms. The United States was one of the 130 original signatories to the CWC, but it would not become a full party to the convention until the U.S. Senate ratified the treaty by a two-thirds majority vote. Achieving a supermajority of 67 votes is one of the most challenging tasks facing any administration. Moreover, for various reasons described in this case study, the CWC proved to be far more controversial than originally anticipated. In April 1997, however, the Senate finally ratified the treaty. This study examines the long ratification process in fascinating detail, addressing such questions as who the key players were, what positions they staked out in advance, and how the shifting political landscape shaped the outcome.



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president and a plenary session with senior fellows from NDU and the National War College, a particularly meaningful moment that suggested NDU had become part of the all-of-government effort to build a sustained, focused relationship with Vietnam.

It is important to remember that no aspect of this relationship—or any other policy achievement for that matter—would have emerged as a potentially important connection and a clear dividend for U.S. policy in Southeast Asia had those involved in the earliest efforts to broach military relations with Hanoi accepted conventional wisdoms, or unquestioningly embraced the priorities that guided and structured U.S. defense thinking about Indochina. None of this would have emerged as a possibility had working-level Vietnamese and U.S. counterparts failed to understand the need to step outside the box and explore new ways of thinking about old problems. It is now up to INSS and the NDU community to determine the level of investment necessary to make a difference. **JFQ**

cooperation during Secretary Gates' visit to Hanoi in October 2010.

⁵ Additionally, INSS engineered a relationship with the Foreign Ministry's National Defense Academy of Vietnam (DAV), which was seeking to become a degree-granting academy supporting Ph.D.-level students from the Foreign Ministry. The DAV has welcomed INSS study groups in Hanoi and participated in several meaningful roundtables at National Defense University (NDU) since 2008. The DAV has also responded positively to the idea of enlisting INSS senior fellows as "outside readers" of completed dissertations should they elect to require outsiders as part of the process of providing guidance to students writing theses, or reviewing the final text before granting the degree. That was a potentially important starting point for spotting new strategic intellectuals and gifted policy talent on the Vietnamese side.

⁶ General Trung was elected to the Central Committee at the 11th VNCP Congress in January 2011.

⁷ The NDU visit was featured prominently in the *Army Newspaper Online*, April 7, 2011, available at www.qdnd.vn/qdndsite/vi-VN/61/43/4/37/37/144262/Default.aspx.

NOTES

¹ By September 2009, the Institute for National Strategic Studies (INSS) sought to develop the basis for an exchange of publications between the Center for Strategic Research and Vietnamese Military Publishing House. That remains a work in progress, but combined with several other opportunities, it suggested that in the face of increasing Vietnamese confidence in this kind of cooperation, joint research between U.S. and Vietnamese government analysts and national defense scholars is not entirely out of the question.

² Pham Van Tra was the first in 2003.

³ Thanh was reelected to the Politburo at the 11th Congress of the Vietnamese Communist Party (VNCP) in January 2011, and received the highest vote total in the National Assembly in the 2011 election (97.4 percent), assuring his second term as defense minister.

⁴ In specific terms, the Vietnamese defense minister agreed to every one of the U.S. Department of Defense's five proposals to expand military-to-military relations: commencement of a policy dialogue in 2011, a search-and-rescue exercise, joint patrols, more active participation in the Global Peacekeeping Operations Initiative, and enhanced humanitarian assistance/disaster relief cooperation. The two sides continued to discuss these terms of reference for expanded defense relations at the Bilateral Defense Dialogue in August 2010, and reaffirmed the agreed upon areas of enhanced