

A quick look at the State Department's annual Human Rights report on Vietnam, however, reveals the opposite. According to the 2004 report released just three months ago:

"Vietnam is a one-party state, ruled and controlled by the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV). . . . The Government's human rights record remained poor, and it continued to commit serious abuses. The Government continued to deny citizens the right to change their government. Several sources reported that security forces shot, detained, beat, and were responsible for the disappearances of persons during the year. Police also reportedly sometimes beat suspects during arrests, detention, and interrogation. . . . The Government continued to hold political and religious prisoners. . . . The Government significantly restricted freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, and freedom of association. . . . Security forces continued to enforce restrictions on public gatherings and travel in some parts of the country, particularly in the Central Highlands and the Northwest Highlands. The Government prohibited independent political, labor, and social organizations. . . . The Government restricted freedom of religion and prohibited the operation of unregistered religious organizations. Participants in unregistered organizations faced harassment as well as possible detention and imprisonment. The Government imposed limits on freedom of movement of some individuals whom it deemed a threat. The Government did not permit human rights organizations to form or operate.

Moreover, in September 2004, the State Department designated Vietnam as a "Country of Particular Concern" or "CPC" for its systematic, ongoing, egregious violations of religious freedom.

Congress has also expressed its grave concern about the state of human rights in Vietnam. The House of Representatives has twice passed legislation authored by me on human rights in Vietnam. H.R. 1587, The Vietnam Human Rights Act of 2004, passed the House by a 323–45 vote in July of 2004. A similar measure passed by a 410–1 landslide in the House in 2001. The measures called for limiting further increases of non-humanitarian U.S. aid from being provided to Vietnam if certain human rights provisions were not met, and authorized funding to overcome the jamming of Radio Free Asia and funding to support non-governmental organizations which promote human rights and democratic change in Vietnam. Regrettably, both bills stalled in Senate committees and have not been enacted into law.

I regret that no one from the State Department was available to participate in today's hearing to explain the incongruity of United States support for the government of Vietnam, as expressed in our close and growing-ever-closer trade and military relations, and U.S. concern for the appalling lack of respect for the basic human rights of its citizens that the Vietnamese government has consistently demonstrated.

The Human Rights Reports, the Report on International Religious Freedom, the Trafficking in Persons Report, the reports of leading international human rights organizations, and countless witnesses, some of whose testimonies were provided today, give evidence to the fact that the government of Vietnam has inflicted and continues to inflict terrible suffering on countless people.

It is a regime that arrests and imprisons writers, scientists, academics, religious leaders

and even veteran communists in their own homes, and lately in Internet cafes, for speaking out for freedom and against corruption. In fact, the comments I am making right now would easily fetch me a 15-year prison sentence replete with torture if I were a Vietnamese national or Member of Parliament making these comments in Vietnam.

It is a government that crushes thousands of Montagnard protestors, as they did in the Central Highlands during Easter weekend in 2004, killing and beating many peaceful protestors.

The government has forcibly closed over 400 Christian churches in the Central Highlands, and the government continues to force tens of thousands of Christians to renounce their faith. I would note here that it is inspiring but not unexpected that many of these Christians have steadfastly resisted those pressures and refused to renounce Christ. One pastor estimated that 90 percent have refused to renounce their Christian faith, despite government efforts to compel them to do so.

This is a government that has detained the leadership of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam and continues to attempt to control the leadership of the Catholic Church.

This is a government that imprisoned a Catholic priest by the name of Father Ly and meted out a 10-year prison sentence. Father Ly was imprisoned in 2001 when he was arrested after submitting testimony to a hearing of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom. In his testimony, he criticized the communist government of Vietnam for its policies of repressing religious freedom. In fact, I was the author of H. Con. Res. 378, which called for the immediate release of Father Ly and cleared Congress 424–1 on May 12, 2004.

Thankfully Father Ly, along with Dr. Nguyen Dan Que, were released from prison earlier this year, in all likelihood due to the pressure from the United States with its CPC designation.

Their release was part of a process called for in the 1998 International Religious Freedom Act, which I cosponsored, which mandates that the U.S. government engage in dialogue with severe violators of religious freedom to improve conditions or face "Presidential actions," which could include sanctions or withdrawal of non-humanitarian assistance.

The Vietnamese government also took some other positive steps in response to the CPC designation, including a new law streamlining the application process for religious groups registering with the government and prime ministerial directives which prohibit forced renunciations of faith and allow Protestant "house churches" in ethnic minority provinces to operate if they renounce connections to certain expatriate groups, particularly the Montagnard Foundation, which is based in the United States.

And in May, the State Department announced it had reached an agreement on religious freedom with Vietnam. Under the agreement, the Vietnamese government committed to:

Fully implement the new legislation on religious freedom and to render previous contradictory regulations obsolete;

Instruct local authorities to strictly and completely adhere to the new legislation and ensure their compliance;

Facilitate the process by which religious congregations are able to open houses of worship; and

Give special consideration to prisoners and cases of concern raised by the United States during the granting of prisoner amnesties.

Time will tell whether the government will respect this agreement and comply with its provisions, or whether there will be a return to business as usual once the spotlight is removed. But the agreement does show that the provisions of the International Religious Freedom Act seem to be helping to improve the respect for religious freedom in some of the worst violator countries.

The more important point is that religious freedom is not a matter of compliance with an agreement, but an attitude of respect for citizens who choose to worship and peacefully practice their religious beliefs that extends from the highest government leaders down to local authorities and the village police.

In a recent interview given prior to his visit to the United States, Prime Minister Khai stated, "we have no prisoners of conscience in Vietnam," and declared that "political reforms and economic reforms should be closely harmonized."

His statement is typical of the attitude of the government of Vietnam, which has scoffed at the Vietnam Human Rights Act and dismissed charges of human rights abuses, pleading the tired mantra of interference in the internal affairs of their government and that our struggle is some way related to the war in Vietnam. They say, Vietnam is a country, not a war. That is their protest, and I would say that is precisely the issue.

The hearing we held today was about the shameful human rights record of a country, more accurately, of a government that abuses the rights of its own people. And, of course, Vietnam is a country with millions of wonderful people who yearn to breathe free and to enjoy the blessings of liberty. We say, behave like an honorable government, stop bringing dishonor and shame to your government by abusing your own people and start abiding by internationally recognized U.N. covenants that you have signed.

When is enough, enough? Vietnam needs to come out of the dark ages of repression, brutality and abuse and embrace freedom, the rule of law, and respect for fundamental human rights. Vietnam needs to act like the strategic partner of the United States we would like it to be, treating its citizens, even those who disagree with government policies, with respect and dignity.

Human rights are central, are at the core of our relationship with governments and the people they purport to represent. The United States of America will not turn a blind eye to the oppression of a people, any people in any region of the world.

INTRODUCTION OF THE WEATHER MODIFICATION RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER AUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2005

HON. MARK UDALL

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 20, 2005

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Weather Modification

Research and Technology Transfer Authorization Act. This bill will increase and enhance research and development in weather modification to better understand its effectiveness in addressing drought in our country.

The western part of our country, including my own state of Colorado, has experienced drought conditions in recent years. Efforts have been made to address drought recovery, preparedness and mitigation. However, little fundamental research has been done to better understand weather modification, which some believe can increase the snowpacks that provide water resources for several western states.

The National Academies of Science report Critical Issues in Weather Modification Research, released in 2003, noted that there is no scientific proof that weather modification is effective, however attributes this to a lack of understanding of "critical atmospheric processes" that has caused unpredictable results with weather modification, not a lack of success with such efforts. The report called for a national program for a sustained research effort in weather modification research to enhance the effectiveness and predictability of weather modification.

There is currently no federal investment in weather modification, though there are private funds that are largely going toward unproven techniques. My bill, similar to a bill introduced in the Senate by Senator KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON, establishes a federal research and development effort to improve our understanding of the atmosphere and develop more effective weather modification technologies and techniques.

Specifically, the bill creates a Weather Modification Advisory and Research Board in the Department of Commerce to promote the "theoretical and practical knowledge of weather modification" through the funding of research and development projects. The board will be made up of representatives from the American Meteorological Society, the American Society of Civil Engineers, the National Academy of Sciences, the National Center for Atmospheric Research, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, a higher education institution and a state which is currently supporting operational weather modification projects.

In Colorado, a large portion of our water source comes from the snowpack run off each year. A better understanding of weather modifications has the potential to enhance our snowpacks, and thus assist in addressing drought concerns.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to support the expansion of the research and development of weather modification and urge a swift passage of this bill.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. GENE GREEN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 20, 2005

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to include this personal explanation in the RECORD.

On June 17, 2005, I was unable to be present for rollcall vote #265 to the Fiscal Year 2006 Science, State, Justice, and Commerce Appropriations Act. I was unavoidably detained by other Congressional duties related to the 29th District of Texas.

I would have voted "no" on the Moran amendment to prohibit Federal funds from being used to license the export of .50 caliber firearms. Federal agencies already have the ability to prohibit exports of certain firearms to certain countries or groups when that is in the national interest. In addition, there are countless sources of firearms in the global marketplace. Unfortunately, this amendment would not have provided any benefits in terms of reducing terrorists' access to firearms.

CONGRATULATIONS TO DR.
RICHARD WALLINGFORD, JR.

HON. MICHAEL H. MICHAUD

OF MAINE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 20, 2005

Mr. MICHAUD. Mr. Speaker, doctors of optometry from around the nation will convene in Dallas, Texas, from June 22–26 for Optometry's Meeting, the American Optometric Association's 108th annual convention. On Saturday, June 25, they will elect Dr. Richard Wallingford, Jr. as the association's 84th president.

Dr. Wallingford is a resident of Rockwood, Maine, on Moosehead Lake. He is a native son who has practiced optometry in our state for 30 years. He is a graduate of the University of Maine at Orono and the College of Optometry at the State University of New York. He currently serves as Director of Clinical Services at Vision Care of Maine in Bangor.

Dr. Wallingford has been a leader in his profession at the state, regional and national levels. He has been a member of the Maine Optometric Association since 1975, and served as president in 1982. He was appointed to the Maine Board of Optometry in 1989, and he served until 1999. He was also a member of the New England Council of Optometrists, and he currently serves on the Board of Trustees of the New England College of Optometry.

At the national level, Dr. Wallingford has been a member of American Optometric Association (AOA) since 1971, and has served in the association's volunteer structure since 1983. He was elected to the AOA Board of Trustees in 1998 and was re-elected in 2001.

Remarkably, Dr. Wallingford has maintained his hectic schedule while battling multiple myeloma, a form of blood cancer. Diagnosed with the disease in 2000, he began an aggressive treatment plan last year which included six rounds of chemotherapy and two stem cell transplants. In January, Dr. Wallingford received good news that the myeloma was in remission.

In his community, Dr. Wallingford was elected to the board of Maine School Administrative District (MSAD) #67, where he served as chairman for two years. He was president of

the Lincoln Rotary Club and chairman of the Lincoln Recreation Committee. He also coached youth baseball and basketball.

In addition to his professional responsibilities, Dr. Wallingford is a devoted outdoorsman. He has been a member of the National Ski Patrol since 1989 and serves on the Squaw Mountain Ski Patrol. He is a licensed whitewater guide and has a land and sea rating as a licensed private pilot. Dr. Wallingford also owns and manages the Moosehead Lake Sporting Camps and Mt. Kineo Cabins.

Dr. Wallingford and his wife Elaine have been married for 35 years and they have three children. Richard III is a physician and is completing his residency in psychiatry at Harvard University. Denise holds a Master's Degree from Boston College and is an elementary school teacher. Tiffany is a graduate student at Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo, California.

The American Optometric Association is the professional society for optometrists nationwide and has more than 34,000 members. Dr. Wallingford will lead the association on its mission to improve eye and vision care in the United States.

Dr. Richard Wallingford has built a distinguished record of service and leadership in his profession and in his community. I am confident that he will have a very successful term as president of the American Optometric Association. I join his family, friends and colleagues in congratulating him on this achievement and wishing him good luck and good health.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JIM McDERMOTT

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 20, 2005

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I missed votes on Friday, June 17, 2005 due to a previously scheduled event in my district. Had I been able to, I would have voted:

Against the Royce amendment to H.R. 2745 (rollcall vote No. 274).

Against the Fortenberry amendment to H.R. 2745 (rollcall vote No. 275).

Against the Flake amendment to H.R. 2745 (rollcall vote No. 276).

For the Chabot amendment to H.R. 2745 (rollcall vote No. 277).

Against the Pence amendment to H.R. 2745 (rollcall vote No. 278).

Against the Gohmert amendment to H.R. 2745 (rollcall vote No. 279).

Against the Stearns amendment to H.R. 2745 (rollcall vote No. 280).

For the Lantos amendment to H.R. 2745 (rollcall vote No. 281).

Against Final passage of H.R. 2745 (rollcall vote No. 282).