

Meeting With the Staff and Families of Embassy Hanoi

Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary of State
Embassy Hanoi
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AMBASSADOR MICHALAK: Ladies and gentlemen, it's my great honor and privilege to welcome back to Vietnam the Secretary of State, Ms. Hillary Rodham Clinton.

(Applause.)

AMBASSADOR MICHALAK: All I want to do, Madam Secretary, is introduce you to what I think is the best mission in the world, with some of the most creative, intelligent, award-winning officers, LES's, civil service, foreign service, other agencies -- and if I forgot anybody, I'm sorry. But anyway, ladies and gentlemen, welcome Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

(Applause.)

SECRETARY CLINTON: Thank you. Well, it is wonderful to see all of you here, and to have this chance to be back in Vietnam and in this beautiful city. Thank you so much -- where did the ambassador go? There he is. Thank you so much, Ambassador. And it's a delight meeting Yoshiko, as well. Thank you all for everything you've done in preparation for this trip. It's an exciting time to be here, on the 15th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic ties, and to see all of the progress that our two countries are making together.

And I have to echo the ambassador. The extraordinary nature of our relationship and so much of what we have done over the last 15 years would not have been possible without all of you and your predecessors. You have worked tirelessly to overcome the legacy of war, restore trust, and build a strong, vibrant relationship. And our cooperation has grown to encompass more than \$15 billion in bilateral annual trade, significant investment in health to fight HIV/AIDS, a 16-fold increase in the number of Vietnamese students studying at colleges and universities in the United States, and so much more. You have really helped to create bonds, not only between our governments, but between businesses and academic institutions and, most importantly, our people.

The ASEAN regional forum, which is meeting here as well, showcases the work you've done to cultivate a greater U.S. presence in Vietnam, and demonstrates American commitment to the Pacific region. So thank you for all the extra work that you have put in, in preparation for my visit. I hope, when I finally leave Vietnam, that you will get some time to rest and catch up on what you have had to do.

I really want to recognize Ambassador Michalak and DCM Virginia Palmer. They have been dedicated leaders for this mission over the last few years. And I really congratulate the ambassador for his recent departmental award and your more than 30 years of service to our nation. We wish you well as you move toward a really well-deserved retirement. You will be missed, but your work and legacy will be remembered.

And the ambassador was not the only award winner from Embassy Hanoi last year. Andrew Hera and Jane Bakledge were recognized for their outstanding achievements as well. And congratulations to you. Where are Andrew and Jane? Are they here? They're at their site. So maybe I will see them and congratulate them. If I miss them, tell them I mentioned it.

And I also want to thank our locally engaged employees, as well. We have had several FSN of the Year award winners from our Vietnamese staff in recent years and everyone knows that you're doing a tremendous job. The work that you do, your dedication, is really at the heart of the spirit of this relationship. We have nine different U.S. Government agencies working here together, and that cooperation is fundamental to any of the advancements in our foreign policy that we have seen.

Now, of course there is more work to be done. I wish I could wave a magic wand and improve the conditions in which you work. Not only do you need a bigger staff, you need a chancery that matches your workload. And as the ambassador can tell you, I raised that directly with the foreign minister earlier today. We are doing everything we can to get you what you need, and we will continue to request that the Government of Vietnam work with us so we can improve the staffing situation and secure a new embassy site. In the meantime, I wish to thank not only those of you who work, but your family members as well, including the children that I see down here. Everybody makes sacrifices to serve overseas. And please know how much President Obama and I and the entire Administration value your dedication, your sacrifice, and the long hours you put in. Now, I have been around long enough -- sometimes longer than I care to admit -- so I know that there is such a thing known as a wheels up party. And I think it's only fitting, especially since I am going to be leaving on a Friday, that there be such an occasion here in Hanoi, Ambassador. So I will leave it to your imagination to envision and plan such a wheels up party. But as I continue the rest of my program today and tomorrow, I will have the benefit of seeing your work. And I will remember, as I leave, the extraordinary commitment and dedication that you show to this mission.

And now, I would like to come down and shake your hands and personally thank you. Thanks again.

(Applause.)

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