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WORLD & NATION

Monday, October 23, 1989

Officials say U.S. bitterness impedes ties with Vietnam

Administration denies link between policy, legacy

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Bush administration's reluctance to grant diplomatic recognition to Vietnam stems from the bitter legacy of military defeat, say a handful of congressmen who argue that Vietnam has met U.S. requirements for improving ties.

"We're punishing Vietnam for inflicting a very embarrassing failure on the U.S." 14 years ago, Rep. Robert Mrazek, D-N.Y., said.

Sen. Robert Kerrey, D-Neb., who lost part of a leg in Vietnam, said the administration "isn't thinking through its Asian policy very well. It is driven by the same lack of understanding that led us to the bumbling mistakes of Vietnam."

That argument, however, is rejected by administration officials and what appears to be a majority in Congress.

"Obviously there's a bitter legacy, but it doesn't dictate our policy," a senior administration official said, who spoke only on condition of anonymity.

As a condition for establishing diplomatic relations with Vietnam, for the first time since the fall of the U.S.-backed Saigon government in 1975, the Bush administration demanded an end to the 11-year Vietnamese military occupation of neighboring Cambodia.

The Vietnamese say the last of their troops withdrew from Cambodia last month. But ties are being stalled over the make-up of a new Cambodia government that the Bush administration seeks to replace. Vietnam installed Hun Sen who remains in power despite U.S. pressure.

The dispute over the Cambodian government, the Bush administration official said, "is not a new barrier we've erected to protect ourselves from the specter of normalization" with Vietnam.

Critics of administration policy say recognizing Vietnam would raise U.S. influence throughout the region.

"We must, for our strategic and national interests, get back to Vietnam" to reassert U.S. influence in Southeast Asia, and compete with China, the Soviet Union and Japan, Mrazek said.

U.S. policy is still influenced by "feelings of anger and desire for revenge . . . motives that ill suit a just and powerful nation," Rep. Chester Atkins, D-Mass., said.

At an international conference on Cambodia in Paris in July, Vietnam refused to support a proposal to include Cambodia's Khmer Rouge guerrillas in an interim government that would be led by U.S.-backed opposition leader Prince Norodom Sihanouk.

The Khmer Rouge, who ruled Cambodia 1975-79 while in power killed an estimated 1 million compatriots in an effort to restore the nation to a primitive agrarian society.

Khmer Rouge leaders, now fighting a guerrilla war in the jungles along the Thai-Cambodian border, claim to have changed their ways, and have strong Chinese backing to be included as one of four Cambodian factions in a coalition government.

In Paris, the Vietnamese balked at including the Khmer Rouge and are backing Hun Sen.

The United States accused Vietnam of intransigence, saying inclusion of the militarily strong Khmer Rouge — loathsome as it may be — is essential for achieving a negotiated settlement in Cambodia. Such a settlement would include a halt of foreign arms supplies to all parties, an international monitoring force and free elections.

Mrazek and several other lawmakers argue that it is hypocritical to criticize Vietnam for opposing the Chinese-backed Khmer Rouge, and accuse the administration of backing a Khmer Rouge presence in an interim government for fear of antagonizing China.

Lebanese parliament passes peace accord; Christians reject pact

TAIF, Saudi Arabia (AP) — The Lebanese parliament on Sunday passed a new power-sharing accord to end the country's 14-year-old civil war, but Christian leader Michel Aoun appeared ready to reject the pact.

Fifty-nine of 62 deputies present voted for the draft charter but made their action contingent on approval by Aoun and his rival, Moslem leader Salim Hoss. Two deputies abstained, and one voted against the agreement.

Just as the session began, Arab League envoy Lakhdam Ibrahim fled to Beirut, Lebanon, for separate talks with Aoun and Hoss. The Arab League has been sponsoring the peace efforts.

Aoun heads a Lebanese Christian government competing for legitimacy with the predominately Moslem Cabinet headed by Hoss.

In Beirut, Aoun appeared ready to oppose the peace plan, saying acceptance would be "a crime."

Aoun said at a news conference the plan did not meet his demands for a specific timetable for a Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon. He said he accepted political changes that would give more power to the Moslems.

"But I reject the part concerning Lebanese sovereignty. We don't know what the Syrian role will be in Lebanon — what for and how long," he said.

Aoun also said that if the Syrians threaten to resume fierce shelling that battered Beirut from March to

September, he is ready to defend himself.

The general proposed putting the peace plan to a referendum of the Lebanese people since the parliamentary deputies had "exceeded their jurisdiction and legal powers by voting in these ambiguities that compromise Lebanon's sovereignty."

There was no immediate reaction from Hoss.

Despite Aoun's comments, Ibrahim told reporters after his meeting with Aoun that he was pleased that there had been no new fighting in Beirut. He also said he hopes "that the atmosphere of optimism and the steps that have begun materializing will continue to ensure the interests of the Lebanese people and end their plight."

In Washington, the White House declined to discuss the proposed accord. "We're going to withhold comment until things are pinned down a little bit more," a White House official said on condition of anonymity.

The parliament met to consider the peace plan after Saudi Arabia guaranteed it would be implemented and Christian deputies approved it.

The proposal calls for Syria to pull its soldiers out of a 6-mile radius around Parliament in Beirut.

Kazem Khalil, a Shiite Moslem deputy, said the deputies "achieved a historic mission today for Lebanon and the Arab world."

Report says exports lag in Mexico

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Although Mexico has opened its borders to imports in order to meet international standards for exports, its industry has not responded by stepping up exports, news reports said Sunday.

Newspapers quoted Jorge Kahwagi Gastine, president of the National Chamber of Manufacturing Industries, as saying Sunday, "We have the most widely opened borders, in exchange for nothing." Kahwagi was speaking at the Second International Trade Seminar of the National Polytechnic Institute.

He was quoted as saying that only 150 companies in Mexico, most of them foreign-owned, make up 80 percent of Mexico's exports. The official said that these companies send profits out of the country, leaving little for the Mexican economy.

"We must have a development strategy for our own companies to keep wealth from leaving the country," Kahwagi said.

Another speaker at the seminar said that despite these problems, Mexico must not close its borders to foreign products and investment as before.

"The opening is irreversible," Manuel Angel Nunez Soto, director of foreign promotion of the Foreign Trade Bank, said. "We are fully convinced that we are going to come out ahead."

Atlantis will return early to avoid predicted high winds at landing site

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — Atlantis' astronauts stowed their gear and tested the shuttle's steering Sunday after Mission Control told them to come home three hours early Monday to avoid high winds at the Mojave Desert landing site.

NASA earlier worked out a plan to land one orbit early but decided after looking at the forecast Sunday to cut short the five-day mission by two 90-minute orbits and land at Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., at 9:32 a.m. PDT.

The shuttle's main business — sending the \$1.5 billion Galileo probe on its way to Jupiter — was accomplished 6-and-a-half hours after liftoff Wednesday. The craft operated flawlessly nearly 900,000 miles from Earth on Sunday, NASA said.

In relaying the decision to return early, Mission Control reported the Edwards forecast called for afternoon winds gusting to 35 mph, too high for shuttle safety rules, which limit crosswinds to 18 mph and headwinds to 29 mph.

At the new landing time, headwind gusts of no more than about 23

mph were forecast, flight director Ron Dittmore said Sunday. Crosswinds are not a problem, because the astronauts have six runways to choose from at Edwards.

"Everything looks real good," Dittmore said.

"We have no concern about flying it right out to those limits because we know it's been done before, and it's been done safely."

— Don Williams,
Shuttle commander

more said. "The crew is in fine shape. The orbiter is in good shape also, we're not working on any problems. (We're) just looking at the weather tomorrow at Edwards, and we don't expect a problem there either."

Asked in a news conference from space if the winds concerned him, Atlantis commander Don Williams

replied, "We have no concern about flying it right out to those limits because we know it's been done before and it's been done safely."

Williams, who flew on a shuttle mission in 1985, described what re-entry through the atmosphere would be like in the interview with CNN News Network.

"Re-entry heating is rather spectacular if you see it in the darkness. . . . It looks like you're inside a fire looking out," he said.

Another crew member, Franklin Chang-Diaz, spoke of the Galileo probe sent on a six-year, 2.4-billion-mile voyage to explore the colors of the solar system.

"We all certainly breathed a sigh of relief when it went according to plan, and we kept hearing all the good news from the ground that the spacecraft had done all the things that it had to do to get on its way," he said.

To get ready for the return home, Williams and pilot Mike Smith tested Atlantis' flight control systems and fired one of its steering thrusters.