

# Vietnam War

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## No Recognition for Hanoi!

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One of the more emotional U.S. foreign policy issues currently on the table involves diplomatic recognition of our former enemy, Vietnam. The Clinton Administration has been pushing to extend full diplomatic recognition to the Communist regime, but the many wounds still being felt by Americans who fought in Vietnam (or who lost their loved ones there) stand in the way. The fundamental reason for denying recognition — which few want to discuss publicly — is that Vietnam remains a repressive Communist dictatorship and deserves no recognition from a nation dedicated to liberty.

Proponents of recognition don't want to admit it but Mr. Clinton's disgraceful conduct during the Vietnam War (evading the draft, lying about it, journeying to Moscow to protest American policy) can't but enter into the equation. With a presidential re-election effort looming on the horizon, it would suit Bill Clinton and the Democratic Party just fine if others would carry this ball for them.

### An Unlikely Duo

Stepping forward on behalf of recognition of the Hanoi government are Senators John McCain (R-AZ) and John Kerry (D-MA), both decorated veterans of the Vietnam War. As a U.S. Navy pilot, John McCain was shot down over Hanoi in 1967. He spent more than five years in a POW camp where he received brutal attention from his captors because his father, Admiral John McCain, was commander of all U.S. forces in the Pacific. The senator's willingness to forgive and forget all that he was subjected to at the hands of the North Vietnamese is an interesting story in itself. His current stance on the recognition issue makes him one of President Clinton's chief allies on this matter.

John Kerry earned three Purple Hearts, plus Silver Star and Bronze Star medals during the war. But after he came home from Vietnam, Kerry led numerous antiwar protests and earned high praise in front-page coverage in the Communist Party/USA newspaper **Daily World**. The December 12, 1971 **Boston Herald-Traveler** noted that the group Vietnam Veterans Against the War, with Kerry as its leader, participated in anti-war rallies actually organized by the Communists themselves. The newspaper noted Kerry's admission that he welcomed the Communists and expressed concern that any attempt to exclude them would result "in seriously dividing and weakening the movement." The article stated that the Kerry-led demonstrations were "characterized by an abundance of Vietcong flags, clenched fists raised in the air, and placards plainly bearing legends in support of China, Cuba, the USSR, North Korea and the Hanoi government."

Elected to the U.S. Senate in 1984, John Kerry is now a member of the Council on Foreign Relations. As in 1971, he is still promoting the cause of the Communists in Vietnam.

### Vietnam Today

The 1973 Paris Peace Accords ended U.S. participation in the Vietnam War. Of the more than 2,500 U.S. POWs known to have been captured alive by the Vietcong, fewer than 600 were released and came home. The North Vietnamese have been anything but cooperative in providing an accounting of the remainder.

Once our nation's participation in the war ended, the Hanoi government turned its attention to brutalizing all of South Vietnam. Millions of South Vietnamese fled in rickety boats to escape privation and death. How many perished in the seas will never be known, but the number is surely huge. Over one million Vietnamese now live in the United States, having fled from the Communist campaign of terror. Many who didn't escape have languished for years in Vietnam's prisons.

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U.S. State Department officials acknowledge that the Hanoi government continues to oppress religious leaders and political dissidents who peacefully express opposition to the government. But Nancy Ely-Raphael, a State Department expert on human rights abuses, maintains that human rights conditions in Vietnam “are going in the right direction.” Looking at the situation from Vietnam’s perspective, so is the policy of the Clinton Administration. In February 1994, the U.S. government lifted a 19-year economic embargo against Vietnam. Last January, diplomatic liaison offices were opened in each nation. San Francisco and Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon) have just completed a friendship pact, the first between American and Vietnamese cities.

## **Different Treatment**

Over the past 25 years, the U.S. government helped to bring down friendly anti-Communist governments in Rhodesia, Iran, and Nicaragua. Each was replaced by Communist and pro-Communist leaders whose horrific human rights records were well known. Recently, our leaders pressured South Africa to accept unrepentant Communist revolutionary Nelson Mandela as its new leader. The case of South Africa is especially revealing because the former government’s alleged violations of human rights had never stemmed the tide of millions who fled *into* the country. In Vietnam, millions have fled *out* of the country and more still seek to leave. It is hardly excessive to state that our government’s policy — once again evidenced by actions being taken with regard to Communist Vietnam — is pro-Communist and anti-freedom.

If U.S. leaders would cease meddling in the affairs of other nations the world would be a far better place. Instead, administration after administration helps Communists, harming those who wish to be friends, and pushing all nations into a new world order. That is what the current move to legitimize Vietnam’s government is truly all about.