

Committee on International Relations

March 27, 1995

Honorable Benjamin A. Gilman
Chairman, International Relations Committee
United States House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Chairman:

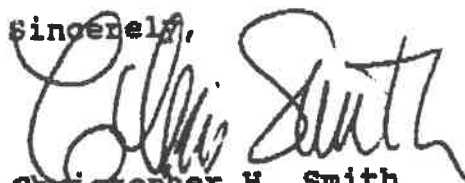
This is to request that the Committee authorize a delegation to visit refugee camps in Thailand and Hong Kong. As you know, these camps currently hold thousands of Vietnamese boat people and members of the Hmong ethnic minority from Laos. They are scheduled for repatriation at the conclusion later this year of the Comprehensive Plan of Action (C.P.A.) and serious questions have been raised about the appropriateness of such repatriation. A fact-finding visit by a Committee delegation would be most helpful to me and to other members of the Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights in its oversight and legislative functions with respect to refugee programs.

It is currently anticipated that the delegation will consist of Committee staff members, including Paul Berkowitz of the full Committee staff as well as Grover Joseph Rees, the Staff Director and Chief Counsel of our Subcommittee. We have also extended an invitation to Democratic staff members through Robert King, the Minority Staff Director on the Subcommittee. With your concurrence, I would also like to extend an invitation to all Members of the Committee who might wish to participate in the delegation.

The delegation would leave on April 8 and return on April 15. I am enclosing a tentative itinerary.

Thanks so much for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Christopher H. Smith
Chairman,
Subcommittee on International
Operations and Human Rights

Tentative Itinerary for Delegation to Southeast Asia & Hong Kong

Saturday April 8:

12 noon Leave Washington

Sunday April 9:

11 p.m. Arrive Bangkok

Monday April 10:

10 a.m. Meet with U.S., Thai, UNHCR & NGO officials
4 p.m. Leave for Sikiew camp (4 hours drive)

Tuesday April 11:

8 a.m. Visit Sikiew camp
4 p.m. Leave for Ban Napho (Hmong repatriation camp)

Wednesday April 12:

8 a.m. Visit Ban Napho
2 p.m. Leave for Bangkok/Hong Kong
11 p.m. Arrive Hong Kong

Thursday April 13:

8 a.m. Meet U.S. and Hong Kong officials
12 noon Visit High Island Detention Centre
5 p.m. Meet with human rights lawyers and camp workers

Friday April 14:

8 a.m. Visit Tai A Chau Detention Centre
3 p.m. Press conference
9 p.m. Leave Hong Kong

Saturday April 15:

9 a.m. Arrive Washington

NOTE: If one of you are interested in going to Thailand and join the delegation, please let me know immediately (ASAP). Maybe we can arrange from here for you. This would be an advantage for LAVAS and would be an opposite experience comparing to INTERACTION's delegation. Thanks, H. Chau