



Southeast Asia Resource Action Center

May 22, 1995

Representative Christopher H. Smith, Chairman
International Relations Subcommittee
on International Operations and Human Rights
The U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515-3004

By fax: 225-7768

Re: H.R. 1564

Dear Congressman Smith,

I am writing first of all to thank you for your commitment to right the wrong of leaving behind those Vietnamese who sided with the U.S. during the Vietnam war. As you so insightfully realize, we Americans (and Vietnamese-American citizens) do have a special relationship to the people who have managed to escape from Vietnam.

It is with this sense of responsibility that I share with you the Southeast Asia Resource Action Center's statement on H.R. 1564. Our statement following my meeting with you and Joseph Rees and other refugee advocates on March 9, offers several practical recommendations for fine-tuning the Bill language so as to rescue as many people as possible. We must get it right this time; there will not be another opportunity.

As you'll note in reviewing our statement, we feel that the "Track II" option offers the most practical and workable solution. In fact, if you agree, we would like to invite you to take the lead to ensure that Track II becomes a realistic and viable option for all Vietnamese asylum-seekers who seek to begin a new life in the United States. We are fully committed to work with you and your designated staffpersons to make this happen.

We also seek your help in terms of getting word to the asylum-seekers still incarcerated in the detention centers of Southeast Asia and Hong Kong. The attached *New York Times* newsclip and letter from an American physician working for *Medecins Sans Frontieres* in Thailand outline some of the dangerous consequences of raising the asylum-seekers' expectations. We are deeply concerned that there not be any further violence or loss of life due to confusing messages regarding the possibility of resettlement in the U.S.

Congressman Christopher H. Smith
May 22, 1995
Page Two

As Co-Chair of the InterAction Task Force on the CPA (Comprehensive Plan of Action), I would like to meet with you at your earliest convenience to discuss: 1) Bill language refinements, 2) informing asylum-seekers in detention camps about the options your legislation offers, and 3) next steps we can take together.

I will call Joseph Rees of your Subcommittee staff to set up a time for our meeting.

In closing, let me once again express my personal appreciation for your attention to the plight of the Vietnamese asylum-seekers. You have taken a politically-costly, courageous stance – one that is much needed if we are to close out this chapter of history in a compassionate and humanitarian manner. Thank you.

Most sincerely,



Le Xuan Khoa, President
Co-Chair, CPA Task Force

Attachments

- SEARAC Statement (2 pages)
- MSF Letter (1 page)
- New York Times article (1 page)