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Asia & the Pacific

Vietnamese Ministry Tours U.S. Following Historic Agreement

Delegation of Vietnamese demining experts visits James Madison University's Mine Action Information Center as part of State Department-sponsored U.S. tour. Visit follows the United States's provision of \$3 million in landmine aid to Vietnam.



■ Deputy Commander Quang Khanh (second from right) is greeted by JMU professor Helmut Kraenzle (far right). *c/o MAIC*

by Keith Feigenbaum, MAIC

A five-man delegation of Vietnamese humanitarian demining experts recently toured the United States to gain an appreciation of the American view of humanitarian demining concepts and operations.

The U.S. Department of State-sponsored visit with the Vietnam Ministry of Defense included meetings with top officials in the State Department and the U.S. Department of Defense. The trip was highlighted by visits to training sites, corporations involved in mine action, and the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA)-sponsored MAIC.

The arrival of the Vietnamese Ministry of Defense followed close on the heels of the signing of a historic agreement that will provide Vietnam with over \$3 million (U.S.) in land-

mine assistance in the coming years.

After visiting the U.S. Army's Humanitarian Demining Research & Development Center in Fort Belvoir, Va., and leading U.S. demining organizations in the Washington D.C. region, the delegation made its way to JMU for briefings organized by the MAIC. The Vietnamese delegation was led on a campus-wide tour of JMU and was briefed by U.S. and MAIC officials on demining information management. The MAIC also provided the results of its mine awareness campaign in Vietnam's Quang Tri province (site of the former DMZ).

Although the Vietnamese defense officials were concerned primarily with mine clearance activities, they showed special interest in the MAIC's efforts to help the local populace in Quang Tri province spot and avoid mined areas. The delegation, led by Truong Quang Khanh, deputy commander of Vietnam's Ministry of National Defense, was addressed by JMU professors Anne Stewart and Terry Wessel, who ran the mine awareness program from October 1998 – March 2000.

Tom Smith, DSCA program manager for humanitarian assistance and demining programs, outlined the program management role his office will play in shaping the emerging U.S.-Vietnam landmine project.

About the visit to the MAIC, a State Department humanitarian

demining officer remarked, "The visit to JMU was great. It shows that [the United States] can do more than just provide equipment and gear to the Vietnamese mine action effort."

The visit came just months after the United States and Vietnam signed a historic bilateral agreement that will allow the Vietnamese to receive modern demining equipment and other mine-related assistance through the U.S. Humanitarian Demining Program. The Vietnamese will receive \$1.75 million worth of demining gear under the June 2000 agreement to aid in the removal of the estimated 3.5 million mines, as well as vast amounts of UXO that contaminates its countryside and snarles its infrastructure.

The State Department also plans to provide \$1.4 million to conduct a Level One impact survey which will help the Vietnamese to prioritize those areas which pose the greatest immediate threat to civilians, arable land and infrastructure. The DoD will target \$200,000 for technical mapping of those selected sites, and \$80,000 for mine awareness education and landmine database support.

Following its tour of the MAIC, the delegation visited mine action-related facilities at the Global Training Academy in Somerset, Texas, the Humanitarian Demining Training Center at Ft. Leonard Wood, Mo., and the U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) and Asia-Pacific Network in Hawaii.