U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

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ICE Assistant Secretary Myers signs historical MOU with Vietnam

MOU will allow for the repatriation of Vietnam Citizens who entered the United States on or after July 12, 1995

WASHINGTON, D.C. – A path to diplomatic cooperation and partnership between the U.S. and Vietnam was sealed today after Homeland Security Assistant Secretary for Immigration and Customs Enforcement Julie L. Myers and Deputy Foreign Minister for the Government of Vietnam Mr. Dao Viet Trung signed a memorandum of agreement (MOU). The MOU, signed during a special ceremony at the Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Office in Hanoi lays out a framework for the prompt and efficient repatriation of Vietnamese nationals who have been ordered removed by the U.S. Government.

The repatriation MOU is the culmination of almost a decade of negotiations between the United States Department of State and the government of Vietnam. Under this agreement, Vietnamese nationals who arrived in the United States on or after July 12, 1995 are subject to return to Vietnam. To date, this will affect approximately 1,500 Vietnamese nationals currently living in the U.S.

"This agreement between our countries reflects the commitment of our respective nations to come together and craft viable partnerships that work for both of us," said Julie L. Myers. "Agreements such as this are the building blocks of diplomacy. This agreement allows us to carry out a judge's order to remove individuals from our country in a safe and humane manner."

As part of the agreement the U.S. government will pay for the cost of repatriating individuals under the agreement. Once the Vietnamese government has issued a travel document, the U.S. Government will provide at least fifteen (15) days notice of the flight and travel arrangements by which the person will be returned to Vietnam.

On par with hundreds of other ICE repatriation missions across the globe, ICE will also manage the repatriation of Vietnamese nationals with equal care and commitment. The missions will be carried out in an orderly and safe way, and with respect for the individual human dignity of the person being repatriated.

The Vietnamese Government will provide a prompt response to the U.S. Government on cases referred for their review. If it is determined that a person whose name and file has been provided to the Vietnamese Government is a national of Vietnam and has been ordered to be removed from the U.S., the Vietnamese Government will issue a travel document authorizing that person's return to Vietnam.

The MOU will enter into force sixty (60) days from the date of signature, January 22, 2008 and will be valid for five years. The MOU will be extended automatically for terms of three years thereafter unless written notice not to extend is given by one government to the other at least six months prior to the expiration date of the Agreement. The MOU may be amended or supplemented by written agreement of the Vietnamese government and the U.S. government through appropriate diplomatic channels.

Efficient and expedient removal procedures are an important part of ICE's strategy to support the Secure Border Initiative (SBI), a comprehensive multi-year plan by the Department of Homeland Security to secure America's borders and reduce illegal migration.

Under SBI, Homeland Security seeks to gain operational control of both the northern and southern borders, while re-engineering the detention and removal system to ensure that illegal aliens are removed from the country quickly and efficiently. SBI also involves strong interior enforcement efforts, including enhanced worksite enforcement investigations and intensified efforts to track down and remove illegal aliens inside this country.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.