

US-Vietnam Military Cooperation Directed Against China

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U.S., Vietnam Hold Talks Amid China Concerns

HANOI: Former foes Vietnam and the United States on Aug. 17 stepped up cooperation by holding their first high-level defense dialogue, amid concerns over China's military build-up.

Robert Scher, the U.S. deputy assistant secretary of defense for South and Southeast Asia, met Lieutenant General Nguyen Chi Vinh, Vietnam's deputy minister of defense, for talks in Hanoi on ways to enhance cooperation by the two sides, they said.

The talks – 15 years after normalization of diplomatic relations – represented “the next significant historic step in our increasingly robust defense relationship which is based on mutual trust, understanding and respect for independence and sovereignty,” Scher told reporters.

Previous security talks, which started in 2008, were held at the foreign ministry and State Department level.

“I did share at the meeting our impressions of Chinese military modernization,” Scher told reporters at a joint news conference with Vinh.

On Aug. 16, the U.S. Defense Department, in an annual report to Congress, said China was ramping up investment in an array of areas including nuclear weapons, long-range missiles, submarines, aircraft carriers and cyber warfare.

The report predicted China may step up patrols in the South China Sea, an area where Vietnam and China have conflicting territorial claims.

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton last month said resolution of those territorial disputes – which also involve other nations – was “pivotal” to regional stability.

A U.S. Navy destroyer last week became the latest U.S. warship to dock in Vietnam since the war ended in 1975.

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