

The strategic defence partnership

INTERVIEW WITH SENIOR LT. GEN. NGUYEN CHI VINH

DEPUTY MINISTER OF DEFENCE, THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM



NGUYEN CHI VINH was appointed Vietnam's Deputy Minister of Defence in 2009. The son of a renowned Vietnam War-era general, Vinh became an intelligence officer in the Vietnam People's Army at the age of twenty-four. Prior to his appointment, he served as chief of the intelligence unit at the Ministry of National Defence from 2002 to 2009. He received his PhD in International Affairs in 2003.

Please outline the UK's role within the two countries' strategic partnership in helping Vietnam prepare for its first UN peace-keeping mission, scheduled for this year in South Sudan?

Defence cooperation is an important pillar in the Strategic Partnership between Vietnam and the United Kingdom. In this respect, the UN peacekeeping cooperation is a highlight which is increasingly interested in and regularly discussed at the annual Defense Policy Dialogue.

To date, cooperation between the two countries in this field has focused on: (i) exchange of delegations at all levels; (ii) UK support in English language training; (iii) exchange of expertise, sharing of capacity building experiences; (iv) consultation and mutual support in multilateral forums; (v) invitation and funding Vietnamese officers to participate in UN peacekeeping training courses and exercises.

It can be said that the support and assistance of the UK plays a very important role in Vietnam's preparation and readiness to deploy its Level 2 Field Hospital to South Sudan in the coming time. This is shown remarkably in these aspects: The UK is a supportive and decisive voice for Vietnam to be selected as a replacement for the UK Level 2 Field Hospital in South Sudan. The UK is valuably assisting Vietnam in English training as well as improving the professional capacity of the Level 2 Field Hospital of Vietnam. The UK is always supporting Vietnam in the process of preparation for the Level 2 Field Hospital, for example the UK supports Vietnam in receiving

UN delegations to inspect, counsel and evaluate the preparation process. Moreover, the UK is committed to continuing its support in the field during the early challenging phase when the Field Hospital of Vietnam will be newly deployed.

What is Vietnam's position regarding the growing militarisation of the South China Sea?

In the area, there is a country which has basically completed the expansion of geographical structures that are illegally occupied. Military and dual-use equipment has been set up and established on the accreted islands of both the Spratly and the Paracel group. Other illegal activities are also being implemented. Those activities have fundamentally changed the status quo, enhancing military capabilities and capacity for air and sea monitoring and surveillance of that country in order to effectively control the entire East Sea. These actions go against the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS 1982), the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC), which have triggered concerns among the international community.

Regarding the East Sea, Vietnam's consistent policy is to resolve disputes by peaceful means through diplomatic and legal processes based on international law, including UNCLOS 1982. Vietnam opposes any unilateral action to change the status quo and is committed not to use force or threat to use force in the settlement of any disputes, denying any act of using force and threatens to use force in any form. **E**



Meeting between Senior Lt. Gen. Nguyen Chi Vinh and Rt Hon Earl Howe – April 2017