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**TOP EXPERTS EXPLORE U.S. RELATIONS WITH
“NEW” VIETNAM, SOUTHEAST ASIA STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT**

MISSOULA –

At a time when more tumultuous events elsewhere on the globe have grabbed the headlines, The University of Montana’s Maureen and Mike Mansfield Center will mark its 26th anniversary by bringing high-level experts to the University to look at the impact of a quieter revolution: the emergence of a dynamic and Western-looking Vietnam.

The public portion of the program, titled “Vietnam and the Regional Architecture in Southeast Asia,” will run from 2 to 5 p.m. Wednesday, April 13, in the Dell Brown Room of UM’s Turner Hall. It is free and open to the public.

The event will feature a keynote speech on U.S.-Vietnamese relations by Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Kurt Campbell. An informal discussion panel will follow that includes Raymond Burghardt, former U.S. ambassador to Vietnam; Nguyen Duc Hung, a senior adviser for strategic studies at the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam; Fred Brown from the School of Advanced and International Strategic Studies at Johns Hopkins University; and Tom Byrne, a senior vice president for Moody's in Singapore.

Mansfield Center Director Terry Weidner said the Mansfield conference will serve to highlight and synthesize closed-door discussions that will be held in Big Fork earlier in the week.

“We have an astonishing group of good people attending, ranging from senior and former State Department and Vietnam Foreign Ministry personnel to top academics and representatives of a bright ‘new generation’ of Hanoi officials, all of whom will have been engaged in very

candid discussion while here in Montana,” Weidner said. “The public conference will offer the most up-to-date and authoritative summary possible on current conditions in Vietnam and our bilateral political and economic relations.”

Weidner noted that speakers’ comments also will almost certainly touch on strategic relations in the region, particularly on regional perceptions of China. Vietnam has recently announced it will join the Philippines in sharply increasing its defense budget, presumably in response to Chinese actions in the South China Sea, he said.

The Mansfield Conference is co-sponsored by the Maureen and Mike Mansfield Foundation, based in Washington, D.C.

Organizers said the focus on Vietnam for this year’s Mansfield Conference seemed logical in light of the fact that 2010 marked the 15th anniversary of the normalization of relations between the U.S. and Vietnam; the objective importance of Vietnam’s emergence in Southeast Asia and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, which currently attracts almost three times the U.S. investment as China; and because of UM’s burgeoning relations in the nation.

UM has played a role in a U.S. State Department Task Force on Vietnamese Education and has developed partnerships with two of Vietnam’s most prestigious universities: Vietnam National University in Hanoi and Cantho University in the Mekong Delta.

The Mansfield Center has also created a special Vietnam-based study program on climate change and is in the midst of a three-year environmental training program, funded by the U.S. Department of State, for outstanding Vietnamese and other Southeast Asian undergraduates.

For more information visit the Mansfield Center website at <http://www.umt.edu/mansfield>, call Weidner at 406-243-2281 or Deena Mansour at 406-243-2988, or email terry.weidner@umontana.edu or deena.mansour@mso.umt.edu.

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