



Young girl in Sapa/Lao Cai carrying her brother on a mountain bridge.

# MILPHAP-19 (Vietnam, MD) News Letter 2006



## Medical Visit to Vietnam's Most Remote Area



Hospital reception at Bac Ninh

Our last medical visit to Vietnam was in April of this year. I was accompanied by Dr. Jerome Siegel, a nationally known and recognized gastroenterologist who specializes in endoscopic surgery for the relief of biliary obstruction due to stones or tumors. We visited three hospitals in the most northern region of Vietnam. We evaluated their endoscopic programs in gastroenterology and urology. The hospitals that we evaluated were Bac Ninh, a suburb of Hanoi; Viet Tiep, the province hospital of Hai Phong; and by far the most interesting hospital was that





Left:  
Hospital reception  
at Lao Cai

Bottom:  
Black H'Mong town  
meeting

in Lao Cai, which is at an elevation of 5,000 feet in the mountains on the border with China.

In Bac Ninh and Hai Phong, both Dr. Siegel and I were able to evaluate the status of their present programs, to determine what equipment they would need to improve the delivery of surgical services, and to evaluate how we might help them in the future. Dr. Siegel has made tentative arrangements with the medical directors at both centers to have future symposiums to try to improve the endoscopic capabilities of both institutions.

Lao Cai is a very small, quaint town situated on the Chinese border. In the town there is a bridge which crosses the Red River in to China. The area is almost entirely aborigine and consists of an ethnic minority called the



MILPHAP has established surgical training programs in the cities indicated in red.





*Kitchen of orphanage in Lao Cai*

With the help of my charitable friends and patients, I think that MILPHAP-19 has been able to make a very substantial impact on the delivery of medical care in diverse regions of Vietnam. As you know, we have already established programs in Vinh Long, Nha Trang, Qui Nhon, Buon Ma Thout, Kon Tum and Lao Cai. The delivery of medical and surgical services at these hospitals has been greatly impacted by MILPHAP. My future plans are to establish programs in Pleiku, Ghia Nghia and Phan Thiet, which are in the central highland and costal areas.

I thank you for your support and hope that it will continue in the future.

Tax-deductible contributions can be made to:

**MILPHAP-19**  
c/o Gerald Zelikovsky, M.D.  
5 East 84<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10028

Black H'Mong. The "black" referring to their native dress. The physicians at this hospital could not have been nicer and could not have been more excited about our visit. Endoscopic capabilities, both urological and gastroenterological were extremely limited in that the community is very poor and the hospital has almost no endoscopic equipment. MILPHAP donated a complete set of endoscopic urological equipment, which is necessary to perform observations of the prostate and bladder to determine obstruction

or tumor and perform surgical correction of these conditions.

The hospital had scheduled patients requiring endoscopic prostatic surgery. I performed the first resection of the prostate in Lao Cai with the local physicians. The Lao Cai physicians were very enthusiastic, very attentive and learned quickly. It is my feeling that they will be able to perform minor surgery with the equipment that we donated to them. The community was so enthusiastic, that we appeared on local







*Dr. Zelikovsky performing prostatic surgery in Lao Cai*



*Dr. Jerome Siegel instructing Vietnamese gastroenterologists in Lao Cai*

TV and there was an article in the local newspaper about our visit.

**D**r. Siegel offered them a gastroenterological endoscope, which is necessary for surgery to relieve obstruction of the bile

ducts. These are procedures, which are almost completely unknown in Vietnam and there is no surgical capability in all of Vietnam, with the exception of Saigon, where this procedure could be performed.



*Diverse ethnic tribes of Vietnam-Red Zao*





*Dr. Siegel with patient and wife in Bac Ninh*

While in Lao Cai we visited a local government orphanage, which once again, was very poor and had very few amenities. Their kitchen consisted of two

pits carved in the ground with a wood fire and a cauldron being heated. They had no refrigeration in the kitchen, so we purchased and donated a refrigerator and freezer for the orphanage.

It was very exciting for us to visit Lao Cai in that this is an extremely poor province, which consists mainly of ethnic minorities. These are very

wonderful and gentle people, who live scattered throughout the countryside and mountains in the northern part of Vietnam at an elevation of 5,000-10,000 feet. For Dr. Siegel and myself



it was very rewarding to know that we have introduced endoscopic surgical capabilities in a very remote area where these people would not have any possibility of being treated. My plan is to continue supporting the hospital in Lao Cai province and bringing modern surgical treatment to this very remote and poor region of Vietnam.



*Dr. Zelikovsky performing open prostatic surgery in Bac Ninh with Dr. Dung, Chief of Urology of the province hospital.*

I will be returning to Vietnam in November of this year. The purpose of this trip would be to visit hospitals that I have previously established urological surgical programs in, to see what their level of sophistication is and how I can help them advance in the future.

Vietnam has a very high incidence of urinary stone disease of the kidney and bladder. I will be donating an electrohydraulic lithotripter to the hospital in Buon Ma Thuot. This is a machine, which can break up stones with shock wave treatment, therefore eliminating the need for open surgery. I have also been notified that the operating room has a lack of cardiac monitors and will be donating a cardiac monitor as well.



*Above:  
Black H'Mong family at home*



*Right:  
Dr. Siegel with staff in Bac Ninh*

Dr. Siegel successfully performed this operation on two patients with the assistance and aid of two Vietnamese gastroenterologists. He taught them the technique and was very pleased to see how quickly they learned.

Dr. Siegel has also made preliminary arrangements to have future seminars in Lao Cai with the express purpose of improving the gastroenterological endoscopic capabilities of the local physicians.