(SBU) Post Investigation Restores Child to Birth Family - An April 9 investigation of a relinquishment case in Kien Giang province revealed that the biological parents had sent their child to a hospital for medical treatment a few days after her birth only to discover three days later that their child had disappeared. Two months later, the couple heard an advertisement that orphanage officials were searching for the child's family. When the couple contacted the orphanage, the orphanage sent a representative to the family's home to give them the following message: your child is alive, and if you want it back you must give the orphanage 1,250 USD. Unable to pay this fee, the couple was told that they would have to sign a relinquishment form as they were too poor to care for their own child. The family, very emotional, told HCMC FPU that they want their baby back.

HCMC FPU then visited the orphanage, where director initially told investigators that if adoption paperwork had been started, a child cannot be returned to its biological parents. The director then changed his statement, saying that as long as a visa has not yet been issued to the child, the child can be returned to its birth parents. He told the team that no payment was required in order for a family to take its child back. When HCMC FPU confronted the director with the family's statement, he assured HCMC FPU that if the birth parents wanted their child back, he was ready to help and that no payment would be required. He stated that the parents would need to come to the orphanage with some form of identification and he would assist with the paperwork. He signed a sworn affidavit saying that the biological parents could take their child back at any time upon providing proof of identity and that no payment was required. A follow up interview with the birth parents confirmed that they had returned to the orphanage and had been able to bring their child home.

(SBU) Blocked Investigations - More Delays in Phu Tho - The Director of Phu Tho External Relations Office, Mr. Vinh, contacted post this morning to inform us that they were not yet able to schedule our visit. He stated that due to the Hung King's Anniversary and the Young Sport Festival, officials in the province were too busy to arrange the trip. Vinh stated that the request for meetings will be granted, he just didn't know when.

(SBU) AP Journalist Interviews Dr. Long - Prior to his interview with the DCM, AP journalist Ben Stocking interviewed Dr. Long. He told us that Long said that he thought it would be difficult for Vietnam to reach a new adoption agreement with the US, because the US wants things that Vietnam can not give, such as a schedule of fees, and permission for investigations. Stocking said that Long did not deny that there were problems in the adoption system, but he said the problem is not baby buying or kidnapping. Instead Long felt that bribes were being paid so that an ASP could expedite processing of cases. Long stated that the DIA plans to process all cases in which a referral was made before September first, but that cases where the dossier is pending and no referral has been made will not be processed. (Note: Post has heard multiple and conflicting statements from Dr. Long regarding processing of cases after September 1.)

(SBU) Norway working on Adoption Agreement - This morning ConOff meet with the Norwegian consul, who confirmed the Norway was working on an adoption agreement with Vietnam. He stated that the issue was being worked in Oslo and that he was not aware of the terms of the agreement or the state of the negotiations. Post agreed to share information on adoption with Norway and to coordinate on technical assistance. However, given the limited local involvement it may be useful to meet with the Norwegians in Washington.
(SBU) PAPs in Vietnam? - A significant number of PAPs appear to have ignored public warnings not to travel prior to receiving pre-approval from USCIS and have traveled to Vietnam. The exact number of PAPs currently in Vietnam is unknown, but post believes it is significant. In recent weeks, post has received numerous phone calls from PAPs whose numbers appear as local, Hanoi phone numbers. Further, during a recent investigation to a Hanoi orphanage, the investigation team discovered that an infant whose case was being investigated had already been picked up by its adoptive parents and was no longer in the care of the orphanage. To date, none of these families have contacted post to say that they are in Vietnam, however, we are concerned about what appears to be a growing trend and its impact on the Orphan's First program.

(SBU) Personnel Note - Eric Alexander will be out of the office on Monday April 28.