

February 2nd, 2019

Jeff Herrmann
President/Scout Executive
Orange County Council, BSA
1211 East Dyer Rd
Santa Ana, CA 92705

Dear Mr. Hermann:

I was surprised and perplexed to receive your letter. Your letter indicates a break with the International Central Committee of Vietnamese Scouting (ICCVS), an action that would cause a major shift in policy for the BSA and damage to a long and fruitful partnership between ICCVS and the Orange County Council. I would like to help inform you of ICCVS history and its long relationship with BSA, and to help resolve any misunderstanding.

Over the last 35 years, since 1983, ICCVS has served as a voice of unity and leadership for Scouts of Vietnamese descent in the U.S. and across many countries, and has been to date, an effective and loyal partner to the Orange County Council, the National Council, and other BSA councils across the Nation.

It was thanks to the work of members of ICCVS that since the early 1980s, ICCVS was able to successfully promote and recruit thousands of youths of Vietnamese ancestry in the U.S and in countries around the globe to join the BSA and other Scouting organizations in their countries of residence. ICCVS's contributions have resulted in an exponential increase in BSA membership by more than tenfold for Scouts of Vietnamese descent. ICCVS's presence has helped to build Vietnamese Scouting in Orange County Council into the powerhouse that it is today, with one of the highest ratios of Scouts to the general population among the ethnic groups.

In the U.S., ICCVS is affiliated with 37 Charter Organizations to support 36 Packs, 38 Troops, and 35 Crews, serving over 3000 youths (both Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts). ICCVS Charter Organizations utilize the Scouting program to deliver their missions of fostering youth character development and promoting community services. The National Vietnamese Scouting Committee members are not elected or nominated by the Vietnamese Scouting Units or leaders. They often do not work with the Vietnamese units to reach out to listen to their concerns.

Reading your letter, I feel that you may have been misinformed by a few individuals, specifically by members of the BSA National Vietnamese Scouting Committee (NVSC). These individuals do not represent Vietnamese Scouting, our views, our Scouting values, and they do not represent

the volunteers and leaders of Vietnamese Scouting units in the Orange County Council and other BSA councils.

I would like to address a few critical issues and ask a number of clarifying questions in regard to matters you raised in your letter:

I, along with the thousands of Scouts in our units and their families came to Scouting because of both the Scouting program and the desire to preserve and enrich our Vietnamese heritage. We joined the Boy Scouts of America and recruited thousands of others to join the BSA, because it supports our identity as Vietnamese-Americans, and as Scouts. For Scouts in our units, some families have chosen to drive over an hour each way to join a Vietnamese Scouting unit, instead of driving just a few minutes to join a local Scout unit that does not integrate both the Scout program and programs to preserve and promote the Vietnamese culture. In the current partnership, BSA offers the Scouting program and ICCVS supports cultural enrichment for Scouts. ICCVS's mission is to preserve and promote the Vietnamese tradition, kinship and cultural heritage in addition to and along with the BSA's Scouting programs including those of the BSA. ICCVS does nothing wrong on our activities for the youth. We have been following the BSA's Guide to Safe Scouting and the GSUSA's Safety Wise. ICCVS' activities in Orange County include celebrating Lunar New Year Flag Ceremony to celebrate Lord Robert and Olave Baden-Powell's birthdays. This tradition has been admired and expected by the Vietnamese community for the last 21 years. The Southwest Region multilevel unit jamboree (Lien Ket Camp) have been successfully with 16 jamborees. Both events provide opportunities for the youth to learn about their heritage, cultures, sister and brotherhood of scouting. You attended or visited and were welcomed at these events.

1. Your letter noted that ICCVS is not recognized by BSA and WOSM. The facts are contrary to your statement:

ICCVS was created at the request of the World Organization of the Scouting Movement (WOSM) and the BSA in 1983. Dr. Laszlo Nagy, then Secretary General of WOSM, met with the founding members of ICCVS along with BSA leadership to push for the formation of ICCVS. In a letter from James W. Sands, Director of BSA International Division to Dr. Philip Nguyen Van Tho, dated June 10, 1983, BSA invited Mr. Tran Van Khac and Dr. Philip Nguyen Van Tho "to organize a central committee that would represent Scouters of Vietnamese origin no matter where they live in this world". See Attachment #1 and Attachment #2.

ICCVS represents Vietnamese Scouting in Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the United States and Elder Scouts. ICCVS contributions have been recognized by WOSM in its official report and there have been numerous official communications between ICCVS and BSA. In 2006, Mr. Scott Teare, then Director of BSA International Division, who later became Secretary General of WOSM, issued an official letter to greet ICCVS newly elected chairman. See documents attached. See Attachment #3 and Attachment #4.

2. ICCVS supports the success of BSA and operates similarly to any strong partner association of BSA such as the Rotary International, Lions Clubs International, churches, and other major charter organizations. ICCVS members help to form units and recruit volunteers and Scouts for BSA as do churches and Rotary International members form Scouting units. Scouts are encouraged to participate in events hosted by their partner associations and to provide community service, while proudly wearing their BSA uniform.

In your letter, you stated Vietnamese Scouting units are forbidden to participate in events hosted by ICCVS. **Based on which BSA rule, regulation, or policy, are you citing that our Scouts are sanctioned from participating in events hosted by an organization that supports Scouting like ICCVS?** Please explain why this applies only to ICCVS and not to any other partner association, e.g., churches, community organizations, and associated events.

3. ICCVS has a long history with the Orange County Council for over 35 years, and has, among many other cooperation, partnered with Orange County Council and other councils across the Nation to host and support eleven International Jamborees of Vietnamese Scouting that have gathered tens of thousands Scouts and families from across the globe to the United States. We have worked closely with you, your predecessors, and Scout Executives in other councils to accomplish these great achievements.

The latest example which demonstrated a true partnership between ICCVS and BSA was the successful delivery of Thang Tien XI, the 11th International Jamboree of Vietnamese Scouting, hosted by ICCVS and co-sponsored by BSA National Capital Area Council and the Girl Scouts of Nation's Capital, held last summer 2018 in Virginia. I encourage you to reach out to Les Baron, former Scout Executive of the National Capital Area Council to see what can be accomplished when strong partners support each other. Les Baron was also the Scout Executive in the Orange County Council when ICCVS partnered with BSA to host yet another extremely successful jamboree, Thang Tien VIII in 2006. See Attachment #5, Attachment #6, and Attachment #7.

These international jamborees had the strong support and participation of the leadership of WOSM. Chairman of World Scout Committee, Mr. Neil Westaway, opened Thang Tien V in Sydney, Australia in 1995. Mr. Kim Kyu Young, Regional Director of the Asia-Pacific Region of the World Scout Bureau from 1990 to 2002, attended both Thang Tien V in Sydney, Australia in 1995 and Thang Tien VI in Virginia in 1998. See Attachment #8 and Attachment #9.

4. The partnership between ICCVS and BSA is well documented and widely shared across the world as it was a true brotherly gesture by the BSA to extend a helping hand to Vietnamese Scouts who have lost their homeland to war and Communism. I am sharing with you documents written by BSA in recognition of our partnership since 1983 signed in Costa Mesa, CA. In these documents you will find that BSA welcomes ICCVS as a

true partner and as the official voice of Scouts of Vietnamese descent in the U.S. and overseas.

You will also find that BSA policy supports and welcomes ethnic groups within BSA. The policy provided to ICCVS since its inception states clearly that members of ethnic groups within BSA “if they so desire, may wear an identification patch or badge indicating national origin above the Boy Scouts of America strip over the right pocket of the uniform shirt and a small insignia of their previous association, if in existence, pinned or sewn at the side of their Boy Scouts of America badge of rank on the shirt pocket...”

Our members found Michael Lo Vecchio (Program - Advancement Specialist)’s announcement dated 1/9/18 confusing. He announced that units may not wear the Huong Dao Viet Nam banner. **Based on which BSA policy, rule, regulation is he making this prohibition?**

5. I would like to know **which U.S. law or BSA policy you are applying to request that ICCVS, an established organization, to dissolve.** As you know, freedom of association is guaranteed by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and allows for individuals the right to join others for a legal common cause without interference. It is an individual right to join with other individuals and collectively express, promote, pursue, and defend common interests. **Which authority allows you to ask ICCVS to stop sharing our bylaws with our own members?** An adult volunteer of the BSA has the right to be a member of any organization, e.g., be a member of his/her Church that is affiliated with his/her Scouting unit.
6. Vietnamese Scouts have a voice, leadership, and support through ICCVS. We would love for the Orange County Council to get to know ICCVS better so that together, both organizations can provide the best programs for our youths and shared members. This is the same spirit that was expressed in our original partnership and documented in the attached BSA files.
7. The Annual Unit Charter Agreement between the Charter Organization and the Local Council stated, “the Local Council agrees to provide primary general liability insurance to cover the Charter Organization, its board, officers, COR, employees, and Scouting members and volunteers for authorized Scouting activities.” What is an “official Scouting activity?” Any activity that is planned by a unit and stated to the unit that it is a unit activity is covered. This includes any activity stated in any unit outing plan, calendar, unit email, Scout book, or similar unit communication. The Charter Organization is responsible for authorizing their Units Scouting activities. As long as the Charter Organization authorizes an activity, it is covered by the Charter Organization, Local Council of the BSA, and the National BSA Insurance Policies. See attachment #10.

Mr. Hermann, your letter may be the result of a misunderstanding about the role of ICCVS and how it serves to support and enrich BSA units. I along with our ICCVS representatives are happy to sit down with you to discuss a path forward so that we can maintain a solid and supportive

relationship between BSA and ICCVS, one that we all have worked very hard to foster for over 35 years.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Yours in Scouting,

Tammy Nguyen
ICCVS, USA Southwest Region Representative

cc:

ICCVS Executives, Representatives, and Advisors
Affiliated Charter Organization Representatives and Multi-Level Scout Units Chief Leaders of
USA Southwest Region

Attachments included:

Attachment #1 BSA pushed for establishment of ICCVS 1983
Attachment #2 WOSM pushed for establishment of ICCVS 1983
Attachment #3 WOSM Recognized Contribution of ICCVS 2005
Attachment #4 BSA Congratulated Newly Elected ICCVS Chairman 2006
Attachment #5 BSA National Capital Area Council Sponsored Thang Tien XI 2018
Attachment #6 Girl Scouts of Nation's Capital Sponsored Thang Tien XI 2018
Attachment #7 BSA Orange County Hosted TT VIII Conducted by ICCVS 2004
Attachment #8 Chairman of World Scout Committee at Thang Tien V 1995
Attachment #9 Asia-Pacific Regional Director of World Scout Bureau at Thang Tien V 1995
Attachment #10 The Annual Unit Charter Agreement Between Charter Organization and Local Council, BSA