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Police Arrest Sam Bith in Battambang

BY MATT MCKINNEY
AND THET SAMBATH
THE CAMBODIA DAILY

Former Khmer Rouge military commander Sam Bith was arrested at his Battambang province home early Wednesday morning and flown to Phnom Penh by helicopter for questioning about his role in a 1994 train ambush that killed some 16 people, including three western backpackers who were taken hostage and later executed, officials said.

Sam Bith was told by officials that he had been implicated in the ambush by Nuon Paet, a former soldier who had been under Sam Bith's command, according to Interior Ministry official Sok Phal. Sam Bith did not put up a struggle, and quietly accompanied officials out of his home, located on the road between Battambang and Pailin, Sok Phal said.

The arrest comes less than a month after newspaper reports revealed he was living freely at the Battambang house, despite a warrant for murder and kidnapping that was issued more than two years ago.

Sam Bith, who once reported to Pol Pot as the military commander of the Khmer Rouge's southeastern zone near Kampot province, is expected to appear in Phnom Penh Municipal Court

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US Television Broadcast Spotlights Angkor Wat

BY KAY KIMSONG
THE CAMBODIA DAILY

SIEM REAP - As soon as the plane touched down, the television personalities poured out and hurried toward the stage. Makeup was dabbed on, spotlights were rolled into place, and the cameras were ready to roll. There was little time to spare.

The real star of the show, however, had waited patiently for hundreds of years. Angkor Wat got possibly its widest exposure yet last week when US television network NBC broadcast live from the temple complex during its popular "Today" show. About 7 million

people watch the show every morning, and Cambodian tourism officials hope the broadcast will give the country's biggest attraction a boost.

"We hope the smile of Cambodia will be seen around the world," said Thong Khon, secretary of state for the Ministry of Tourism. His ministry hopes to increase Angkor Wat tourism by 25 percent to 30 percent each year.

Certainly, there were plenty of examples of the famous Cambodian smile around the set at Angkor Wat Thursday evening. About 20 local children and elderly villagers who lived nearby were

placed in front of a camera to smile and wave before and after commercial breaks—a long-standing "Today" tradition.

Meanwhile, a few dozen more people, mostly foreign tourists and tourism officials, gathered behind the cameras to watch the show unfold. The show began at about 6 pm so the show would appear live on televisions in the eastern US at about 7 am.

Spotlights lighted the famous Angkor Wat—which towered just behind the anchors—to a near-daylight intensity. The lights awoke the cicadas in the trees;

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Police...

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

today.

"I expect that he will confess what he has done," said Mong Mony Chakriya, investigating judge of the Phnom Penh Municipal Court.

News of the arrest was welcomed by western diplomats who have regularly urged the government to pursue its investigation of the bloody train massacre, an event that garnered international press as the hostages—Australian David Wilson, Briton Mark Slater and Jean-Michel Braquet of France—were held for nearly two months and then slain on Phnom Voar in Kampot after a ransom deal was botched.

"We're delighted by the report that Sam Bith has been detained," British Ambassador Stephen Bridges said. "We hope that the judicial process will take its due course and that all those responsible for the deaths of British citizens between 1994 and 1996 will be brought to justice."

Australian Ambassador Louise Hand said the Wilson family was immediately notified of Sam Bith's arrest.

"We strongly welcome this outcome," Hand said. "We see it as a significant and positive development in a long running follow-up to this tragic case."

An official at the French Embassy said the embassy has regularly asked Cambodian



Sam Bith

authorities to search for the people responsible for the train ambush and prosecute them.

Sam Bith was being held at the Ministry of Interior Wednesday. He is now the second highest ranking former Khmer Rouge official in custody.

Former Khmer Rouge military

commander Ta Mok has been awaiting a genocide trial for more than three years while detained in the Phnom Penh Military Prison.

Sam Bith defected from the Khmer Rouge in 1996 and was made a two-star RCAF general, advising the Cambodian government on military matters and attending meetings in Phnom Penh while frequently traveling between the capital and his home in the northwest.

He testified in the June 1999 criminal trial that led to a conviction and life sentence for Nuon Paet for the train ambush and backpackers' deaths. Nuon Paet wrote letters to each of the backpacker's families alleging that he was acting on Sam Bith's orders.

The only other man to face criminal charges for the train attack, former Khmer Rouge commander Chhouk Rin, was cleared of accusations that he led the

ambush when a court ruled in July 2000 that an amnesty granted to defecting Khmer Rouge meant he could not be prosecuted for the attack. Chhouk Rin defected to the government 10 weeks after the attack.

Government investigators at one time said it was possible that Sam Bith was not involved in the train attack, saying in mid-2000 that they had received evidence that Sam Bith was not present when the three backpackers were killed. Kar Savuth, Sam Bith's lawyer at the time, said he knows six people who would testify on Sam Bith's behalf.

Sam Bith has had a warrant issued for his arrest since he skipped a Jan 26, 2000, court hearing stemming from the government's investigation of the train attack.

He was suspended from his RCAF post in June 2001.

NATIONAL Briefing

Factory Workers Strike

More than 850 Phnom Penh garment factory workers walked off the job Wednesday after the company allegedly fired two security guards for organizing a union, union officials said. The Wilson garment factory fired Peng Sydorn, 28 and Ben Tekla, 27, allegedly for their union work, Cambodian Apparel Workers Union Vice President Um Visal said. In response, the factory workers struck at noon Wednesday, Um Visal said. On Tuesday Peng Sydorn and Ben Tekla had drawn up a sign-up sheet for workers to join the union, largely over the issue of company meals served to workers, Um Visal said. The factory serves low-cost meals, but workers say it is not enough to live on. (*Yun Samean*)

VN To Grant Tourists Visas on Arrival in Hue

Vietnam will allow foreigners to obtain tourist visas on arrival for the first time at Hue's Phu Bai Airport, a report in The Saigon Times Daily said Monday. The move could indirectly benefit the tourism industry in Siem Reap, where Vietnam's state-run airline is preparing to begin direct flights to and from the former imperial capital of Hue. Vietnam Airlines official Thanh Duc said from Siem Reap Monday that regular service flights could begin in the next few months. Two trial flights were carried out earlier this year. (*Matt Reed*)

Australian Police Open Phnom Penh Post

Australia formally opened a federal police post in Phnom Penh Tuesday aimed at increasing cooperation between Australian and Cambodian law enforcement in a variety of investigations. An Australian liaison officer has been in place since July, shortly before a vessel containing 241 illegal immigrants bound for Australia was intercepted by national police in Sihanoukville. Several human smugglers were arrested and convicted, demonstrating Cambodia's commitment to fighting international crime, Australian officials said. But the incident raised concerns that Cambodia could become a hub for people-smuggling, a top issue in Australia. (*Richard Sine*)

NATIONAL

Over 2,000 Protest on You Hockry's Behalf

BY SAING SOENTHRITH
AND THET SAMBATH
THE CAMBODIA DAILY

About 100 truckloads of alleged supporters of co-Minister of Interior You Hockry gathered Wednesday at Funcinpec headquarters in Phnom Penh, demanding justice for the embattled party official who is facing the loss of his ministerial post as well as his senior position in the party.

The demonstration came to a climax late in the afternoon, when You Hockry and at least 50 representative of the more than 2,000 supporters were allowed inside the Funcinpec compound and met with Funcinpec Secretary-General Prince Norodom Sirivudh.

Speaking after the meeting in front of his supporters, You Hockry said no decision has been reached yet as to whether he will be fired.

The move to oust You Hockry came to light in mid-March, when at least 1,000 former resistance fighters demanded he be fired from his position in the Interior Ministry amid allegations of corruption and nepotism.

Since then, the Funcinpec Steering Committee has gathered a majority of signatures for an order to fire You Hockry—who is also a top committee member—from his posting. The order was sent to Funcinpec President Prince Norodom Ranariddh, who is scheduled to meet with You Hockry today.

Speaking before the National Assembly Wednesday, Prince Ranariddh stopped short of saying whether You Hockry would be fired.

"I invited You Hockry to meet me and implore him to think about his reputation and his future in the party, but he doesn't listen to me," Prince Ranariddh said Wednesday. "I have no choice besides putting this issue to the Funcinpec Steering Committee, which will end it soon."

Sambo Che, You Hockry's son-in-law and a former undersecretary of state for the Ministry of Tourism, said Wednesday that You Hockry has "done a lot for Funcinpec," and been involved in other works such as the construction of schools and pagodas.

"Why are they trying to dis-

miss him without giving him a reason? I would like to ask who has done more for Funcinpec than You Hockry?" Sambo Che said.

Many of the Kompong Cham supporters also defended You Hockry, saying that he has built schools and developed villages for their province.

One supporter, Kim Yeng, 60, from Kang Meas district, said he had nothing against Prince Ranariddh but wanted justice for You Hockry "because he is not guilty." He added, however, that an unidentified group of people gave him food, drinks and free travel to come to Phnom Penh.

Other supporters of You Hockry also said they were given food and drinks to come to Phnom Penh while at least two supporters in front of the Funcinpec headquarters Wednesday said they did not know why they were demonstrating.

"I do not know well about You Hockry's problem—they called me here to come," said Koent Khon, 57. "I never came to Phnom Penh for free like this. They paid me food and drinks."

CPP: Funcinpec Charges Hurt Coalition Gov't

BY LOR CHANDARA
THE CAMBODIA DAILY

Influential CPP legislators charged Wednesday that Funcinpec's accusations of ruling party vote-buying during the February commune council elections could damage the coalition agreement between the two parties.

"We should avoid making discontent with each other in parliament while we are in a coalition," CPP lawmaker Cheam Yeap said during a National Assembly session. "[The National Assembly] is not a forum to campaign politically here, so please think it over and stop this activity from now on."

If royalist lawmakers didn't stop making claims against the CPP, Cheam Yeap said, Funcinpec would be breaking the coalition agreement signed by the presidents of both parties in 1998.

Cheam Yeap's call for "harmony" in parliament and the government came one day after Funcinpec National Assembly member Phan Chantha's allegation that the CPP broke the commune election law by bribing voters during the 24-hour period before voters cast their ballots for com-

mune council members earlier this year.

"[These accusations] are affecting the CPP strongly," Cheam Yeap said. "Please put the nation's interests above party interests when debating in parliament."

Cheam Yeap defended the CPP against the bribery allegations by saying the election results have been accepted worldwide as fair.

"Why is it necessary to bring them up again?" he asked.

Funcinpec President Prince Norodom Ranariddh, who is also president of the National Assembly, made a plea Wednesday for calm and reminded lawmakers that they are banned from attacking individuals and parties during specific debates at the National Assembly.

"According to the assembly's internal rules, the MPs are only allowed to talk about the issue," the prince said. "I would like to ask you to avoid [hurting] individuals and any parties even if they are with the coalition—we do this to maintain peace."

Despite the prince's calls for peace, CPP lawmaker Sar Kapun

demanding that Phan Chantha be punished for his accusations against the CPP and called on Prince Ranariddh to stop any further claims by the legislator.

"I appeal to millions of CPP members, especially in Battambang, to condemn Phan Chantha's attacks against the CPP," he said Wednesday.

Funcinpec has lately faced a multitude of problems, the most serious being the move to oust co-Minister of Interior and top Funcinpec member You Hockry, who has been accused of corruption and nepotism.

Also, Prince Norodom Chakrapong, the former CPP member who was later exiled after being accused of plotting a coup in the mid-1990s, has recently declared that he will start a second royalist party, sparking fears among Funcinpec officials that the new party could divide Funcinpec and royalist voters. Prince Chakrapong is the half-brother of Prince Ranariddh.

A statement from the Royal Palace Wednesday re-asserted King Norodom Sihanouk's "100 percent neutrality to all political parties."

NATIONAL

Newsman Returns to Highlight Angkor Wat Instead of War

BY BRIAN CALVERT
THE CAMBODIA DAILY

For television cameraman Peter Chhun, leaving Phnom Penh in March 1975 was easy. That's because he didn't know at the time that it would be 11 years before he would return to his native Cambodia.

Nor did he know he would never see his mother again.

"I never believed the Khmer Rouge would come so soon," says Chhun, now 54, and still with the NBC television network that originally hired him in Phnom Penh. "I felt the pressure. I knew they were close to the city. But in my heart, I never believed it."

He dutifully shot footage at the Bangkok airport as refugees arrived in April 1975.

"Then I starting seeing US officials [from the Phnom Penh embassy]. Then the flag. Then the ambassador," he says.

Phnom Penh had fallen.

"I started crying, crying, crying," he recalls. "The main thing was my mother. I left her behind."

"I lost contact completely. You can't call in," he says. "I mean, the city's empty, right...? At that time, I tried to picture my mother,

"I never believed the Khmer Rouge would come so soon. I felt the pressure. I knew they were close to the city. But in my heart, I never believed it."

—PETER CHHUN,
NBC NEWS EDITOR

walking with them" as everyone in the city was marched into the countryside.

He wound up in Los Angeles, still working for NBC, building a life in the US. It was a strange twist for a boy who had grown up in Siem Reap province, was educated in French and who had originally wanted to be in the movie business.

In 1970, Chhun was 22 years old. He started as a "runner," then became a cameraman. He was "thrilled" to be working with foreigners and befriended NBC newsman Welles Hangen, who disappeared down Highway 3 in Takeo province along with four other journalists in 1970.

Chhun spent another 20 years looking for the remains of his lost friend. "We spent a lot of time on the front line together," he says. "There was a bond between us. I just wanted [closure]."

One day in 1971, without telling anyone, he jumped onto his Honda motorcycle with fake humanitarian aid identification and information on the possible whereabouts of Hangen and the others.

He traveled 6 km beyond the lines of the government troops, deep into territory tightly controlled by hardened Khmer Rouge fighters, and enlisted the help of an old man and his two sons to dig where he thought his friends were.

They unearthed the remains of two men, buried in a shallow grave. "The smell was terrible," Chhun says.

They raced back to Phnom Penh, parking the Honda and its morbid cargo in front of the Monorom Hotel, where NBC was headquartered. After Chhun explained what he'd been up to, his superiors called US authorities, who had the remains sent to Ho Chi Minh City, then called

Saigon, for forensic tests. They were not those of his comrade.

In fact Hangen's remains were not found until 1992, according to the US Embassy. Chhun had failed in 1986 and again in 1990 to find his friend.

In 1990, he learned his mother had died nine years earlier, after surviving the Khmer Rouge and finding her way back to her home village.

Chhun went on to become a successful television newsman. Last week, he led a news team to Angkor Wat, where he produced a program for the station's "Today" show that highlighted the beauty of Angkor Wat. "It's been a dream of mine," he says.

When he retires, he says he wants to come back and help Cambodia, maybe even boost the quality of television programming here with a televised news magazine, or original Khmer dramas. He says he wants to do something to make up for being so lucky, for escaping when so many didn't.

"The guilt's always there. I mean, why am I here?" he says. "But what can you do? I make the best out of it."

Television...

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

the jungle seemed to reverberate to their screeching song.

The show's co-anchor Matt Lauer and other "Today" staff went on a whirlwind tour by corporate jet to five different locations around the world last week, broadcasting from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Scotland and other locations. The cast spent a mere six hours in Cambodia last week, including the three hours of the "Today" show itself.

But an NBC camera crew of 30 had spent three weeks touring Cambodia and speaking to villagers and NGO workers.

The show included about 45 minutes on Cambodian history and current conditions. Apsara dancers also performed live.

"This is a chance to introduce our culture to every country in the world," said apsara dancer On Sophearika, 21.

Keith Miller, senior foreign correspondent for the show, came to Cambodia 15 years ago to do a story about the Vietnamese troops then staying in Cambodia. He said Cambodia has changed

greatly since then.

"At that time there were almost no cars on the road, no hotels, and there was fighting.... Now I find that Cambodians are smiling again, and the people have become more gentle."

The "Today" show, which airs every weekday morning, includes news, business and entertainment coverage. Spokeswoman Allison Gollust said that broadcasting from Cambodia should encourage US citizens to visit.

"It's obviously not an easy trip here from the US, but I think we'll show people, based on the stories we tell, that it's well worth the visit."

As soon as the broadcast was over, Lauer—famous in the US for his personable demeanor and high salary—rushed off to his airplane.

Even with his limited time on the ground, however, he pronounced the temple "gorgeous" and said the people "couldn't be nicer."

"I think this will encourage people to get out and go to exotic places they don't go to often. And I think Cambodia will rank right up there as one of the best locations we've ever done," he said.

THE CAMBODIA DAILY MOSQUITO NET CAMPAIGN

Mutated Mosquitoes Put Bite on Malaria, Researchers Say

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

PARIS - Gene engineers say they can deliver a stunning blow to malaria by modifying mosquitoes so that they no longer pass on the parasite that causes the disease.

The transgenic insects can "add a new weapon to the arse-

nal" of drugs and insecticides against a disease estimated to kill up to 2.7 million people a year, say a team led by Marcelo Jacobs-Lorena at Case Western Reserve University in the US state of Ohio.

The technique attacks the microscopic parasite Plasmo-

dium at one of the key points in its complex cycle.

Mosquitoes pick up the embryonic parasite by sucking up blood, its food, from an infected human. The parasite then lodges in the mosquito's gut, where it develops into thousands of worm-like creatures called sporozoites.

These then emerge into the mosquito's saliva glands; when the insect feeds again, it spits them out, thus infecting the next person.

The Jacobs-Lorena team created a strain of mosquitoes that carry a gene that controls a peptide—a short chain of amino acid—that prevents the sporozoites from moving from the gut to the saliva glands, thus blocking off the transmission phase of the cycle.

Genetically modified mosquitoes that had fed on infected mice were at least 80 percent less effective at spreading the parasite than their unmodified cousins.

The amino acid gene is inserted in the "germ line" of the mosquitoes, which means that it is handed on to ensuing generations through reproduction and

does not merely die out with the insects that have been modified.

That opens up the exciting prospect that mosquitoes could eventually be reduced to the level of a harmless pest rather than a vector that blights populations in tropical countries.

The research, published today in the British journal *Nature*, has several hurdles to overcome.

It must be tested on the human form of malaria rather than the mice type, and on strains of mosquitoes that exist in the wild rather than those that were bred in laboratories.

Also unclear is the environmental impact of releasing these genes into nature.

"This is a proof of principle and as such is a milestone in malaria research," comment Gareth Lycett and Fotis Kafatos of the European Molecular Biology Laboratory in Heidelberg, Germany.

"Molecular biologists who study mosquitoes fully appreciate the length of the road ahead...the new work is exciting, nonetheless, and represents a new era of malaria-related research."

SAVE THREE LIVES FOR \$5

The Cambodia Daily Mosquito Net Campaign was started in 1997 to collect money for mosquito nets for Cambodia's rural poor. To contribute to this campaign and save three lives for only \$5 (the purchase of one family net) send your donation (cash or check) or bring it in person to Nuon So Thero or Sing Seda at The Cambodia Daily, 50B Street 240, Phnom Penh. For details, telephone 855-23-427-823 or 855-12-911-859 or check out our Internet site at www.save3lives.com. Checks should be made out to The Cambodia Daily Mosquito Net Program. Donations may also be deposited directly into account number 30-060-2750 (Mosquito Net Appeal) at the Foreign Trade Bank of Cambodia. Credit card donations are also accepted. Please provide credit card type, number and expiration date by fax to 855-23-426-573. Donations are tax deductible in the US and Japan.