



## Armed Conflicts Report

### Cambodia (1978 - first combat deaths)

**Almost a decade after the 1991 Paris Peace Accords mapped out a peace process for Cambodia, the country has been removed from the list of armed conflicts because both years 2000 and 1999 saw fewer than 25 deaths arising from political conflict. The recent disbandment of the Khmer Rouge and a beginning to demobilization of government troops reinforced the relative peace.**

#### Summary

#### Type of Conflict

#### Parties to the Conflict

#### Status of the Fighting

#### Number of Deaths

#### Political Developments

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#### Summary:

**1999** After final defections to the government, the Khmer Rouge ceased to be a military threat. Extrajudicial killings by the police and military continued, but there were no reports of politically-motivated killings.

**1998** Following a February ceasefire between forces loyal to Prince Ranariddh and the government, armed clashes largely arose from government pursuit of the remnants of Khmer Rouge troops in northern Cambodia. Several villagers died in Khmer Rouge attacks, but most of the more than 70 civilian deaths in 1998 were attributed to political killings by government forces, and to violence before and after July elections.

**1997** After months of escalating political tension and violence, government forces loyal to “second” Prime Minister Hun Sen staged a July coup that ousted “first” Prime Minister Norodom Ranariddh and executed leaders of his royalist troops. Despite mass defections and internal divisions that resulted in the execution of a former defence minister and the reported imprisonment of leader Pol Pot, Khmer Rouge guerrillas continued extrajudicial killings and, after July, cooperated with royalists in fighting government troops.

**1996** A costly offensive by government troops early in 1996 failed to capture the Khmer Rouge centre of Pailin. Although thousands of Khmer Rouge troops defected by year-end, rising tensions within the coalition government provoked shoot outs between rival government troops.

**1995** Early clashes between Khmer Rouge rebels and coalition government troops, as well as Thai-Cambodian border skirmishes, gave way to smaller-scale fighting later in the year amid mounting concern about government repression.

#### Type of Conflict:

State control

## Parties to the Conflict:

1) Government: Controlled by the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) led by Hun Sen.

Following 1998 elections declared free and fair by the international community but protested as fraudulent locally, the final results were announced as:

- 64 of 122 seats to the CPP;
- 43 seats to the FUNCINPEC party led by Prince Norodom Ranariddh;
- 15 seats to the Khmer Nation Party (KNP) led by Sam Rainsy.

The CPP and FUNCINPEC formed a coalition government (to create the 2/3 of total seats necessary) in December 1998.

The Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (RCAF) are the recognised security force. Most of its soldiers are old members of the communist armed forces. The RCAF receive training and other military aid from Australia, France, Indonesia, Malaysia, North Korea, the US [*Jane's Defence Weekly*, 25 March 1995] and China [*Jane's Defence Weekly*, May 8, 1996]

"U-S defense attache Colonel Victor Raphael said the U-S humanitarian military aid package would total around 11-million dollars in direct assistance for the upcoming fiscal year." [VoA, September 29, 1995] [This compares to "about \$50 million in aid to Cambodia for the 1995 fiscal year,... including money to rebuild the road to the port at Sihanoukville, support for democratic institutions and \$5 million in emergency food aid." [*The Guardian Weekly*, December 31, 1995]]

"In response to international pressure, the government is moving to reduce the size of the 140-thousand strong army -- by nearly half over the next two years." [VoA, April 14, 1995]

2) Rebels: the Khmer Rouge (PDK), until 1997 led by Pol Pot.

Its military wing is the National Army of Democratic Kampuchea (NADK). After defections, the Khmer Rouge faction associated with Pol Pot was reduced to an estimated 2,000 in July 1997 and to as low as 1,000 following his imprisonment.

"The most widely quoted estimates of Khmer Rouge strength still range as high as ten-thousand." [VoA, April 14, 1995] although defections up to and through 1996 suggest figures as low as 4,000. There are ongoing reports of Thai forces' support for the Khmer Rouge and trade relationships between the rebels and Thai businesses.

## Status of Fighting:

**1999** After final defections to the government, the Khmer Rouge ceased to be a military threat. Extrajudicial killings by the police and military continued, but there were no reports of politically-motivated killings.

"For the first time in 30 years, the Khmer Rouge was not a political or military threat. ... The military forces and police were responsible for dozens of extrajudicial killings, and impunity remains a problem since the Government rarely prosecuted the perpetrators of such killings. However, unlike the previous year, there were no reports of politically motivated killings." [*Cambodia Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1999*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, US State Department, 2000].

**1998** Following a February ceasefire between forces loyal to Prince Ranariddh and the government, armed clashes largely arose from government pursuit of the remnants of Khmer Rouge troops in northern Cambodia.

"Since his violent removal from office last July by Cambodian strongman and co-premier Hun Sen, the prince's remaining troops have retreated to a remote base at O'Smach on the Thai border." [*Reuters*, June 11, 1998]

"The head of Cambodia's royalist troops, Gen Nhek Bun Chhay, surrendered command of this forces on 3 December, paving the way for their re-integration into the national army after a 17-month conflict. Gen Bun Chhay has been pardoned, following his conviction for treason." [*Jane's Defence Weekly*, 16 December 1998, p14]

**1997** After months of escalating political tension and violence, forces loyal to "second" Prime Minister Hun Sen staged a July coup that ousted "first" Prime Minister Norodom Ranariddh and executed leaders of his royalist troops. At least 200 soldiers and civilians died as a result of the coup or in fighting near the Thailand border between the forces of the former coalition government partners. Despite mass defections and internal divisions that resulted in the execution of a former defence

minister and the reported imprisonment of leader Pol Pot, Khmer Rouge guerrillas continued extrajudicial killings and after July cooperated with royalists in fighting government troops.

"On July 5 and 6, this coalition collapsed after months of escalating political tensions and partisan violence, when forces loyal to Second Prime Minister Hun Sen of the CPP defeated FUNCINPEC forces loyal to First Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh in Phnom Penh. The CPP's decisive military victory ousted Ranariddh from power. The fighting was followed by a period in which CPP militants sought out additional FUNCINPEC security and political officials, some of whom they executed and others they detained. [Cambodia Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1997, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, US State Department, 1998].

"With several Funcinpec politicians, Ranariddh fled the country while, human rights groups say, many of his military and intelligence aides left behind were summarily executed." ["Lurching Toward Another Year of Tumult," Satya Sivaraman, *InterPress Service*, Dec 21, 1997]

"Since the July violence, Khmer Rouge troops have cooperated with resistance forces loyal to FUNCINPEC against government troops in the northwest.... Khmer Rouge forces committed numerous extrajudicial killings and were responsible for disappearances, forced labor, and restriction of freedom of speech, the press, assembly, association, religion, and movement." [Cambodia Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1997, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, US State Department, January 30, 1998]

**1996** A costly offensive by government troops early in the year failed to capture the Khmer Rouge centre of Pailin. By year-end, rising tensions between the two government coalition parties provoked shoot outs between rival government troops.

"Khmer Rouge guerrillas claimed to have killed 134 government soldiers in one week of fighting in the latest dry season offensive. Government sources admit 28 fatalities." [*Jane's Defence Weekly*, 28 February 1996, p.13]

"Feuding between Hun Sen and Prince Ranariddh worsened in March and was spurred on, it seemed, by the surrender to the government of tens of thousands of Khmer Rouge guerrillas. The defections, which would have strengthened the government's hand, instead fuelled tensions between the two prime ministers as their supporters fought to gain their former enemies' support. Earlier this month, shootouts took place between the CPP-aligned military police and Funcinpec aligned soldiers in the northeast Cambodian province of Battambang and Banteay Meanchey." [*InterPress Service*, December 27, 1996]

**1995** Early in the year, clashes between the Khmer Rouge and the government security forces continued mainly in the north of the country. Dry season heavy fighting near the city of Battambang displaced thousands. By year end however, the Khmer Rouge were "reduced to making small-scale attacks." [*The Guardian Weekly*, December 31, 1995] On the Thai-Cambodia border, government troops from both nations died in related skirmishes that included Thai shelling of Cambodian territory.

**1994** During 1994, peace talks collapsed and fighting intensified between coalition government forces and the Khmer Rouge. Despite early defeats, and the loss of troops under a government amnesty program, the Khmer Rouge regained their lost headquarters in May and renewed kidnapping and other terror tactics.

## Number of Deaths:

**Total:** Estimated combat deaths from 1978 to 1991 exceed 60,000.

According to *World Military and Social Expenditures 1996* (Sivard), there were 65,000 (14,000 civilian and 51,000 military) "war-related" deaths between 1978 and 1989.

**1999** There appeared to be no combat-related deaths in 1999. Nevertheless residual landmines killed or wounded over 800 people.

"Land mines killed or wounded over 800 persons." [Cambodia Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1999, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, US State Department, 2000].

"Research conducted by ADHOC and LICADHO found that police, military, gendarmerie, militia members, or local officials allegedly killed at least 263 people during a twenty-two month period from January 1997 through October 1998. While many of these murders appeared to have been deliberate executions, few of the perpetrators had been brought to justice by the end of 1999." [*Human Rights Watch World Report, 2000*]

**1998** Several villagers died in Khmer Rouge attacks, but most of the more than 70 civilian deaths in 1998 were attributed to political killings by government forces, and to violence before and after July elections.

"Political killings of government opponents continue in Cambodia, and the evidence against the security forces in some cases is overwhelming." [*Amnesty International* Release, March 2, 1998]

"UN human-rights workers have received nearly 200 claims of political intimidation or violence, including 22 killings, in the past two months." [*The Economist*, July 18, 1998, p36]

"Two people were killed during the street protests but the U.N. rights office said 16 bodies including three women and two people in monks' robes had been found dumped in ditches and shallow graves around the capital since September 7." [Reuters, September 17, 1998]

**1997** At least 200 soldiers and civilians died during the coup, in the summary executions of opposition leaders that followed, in skirmishes between the forces of the former coalition partners near the Thailand border, or in politically-motivated bombings.

"The Khmer Rouge continued to kill civilians, including 11 of the 15 members of an official FUNCINPEC team sent to contact Khmer Rouge representatives in Siem Reap province in February." [*Cambodia Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1997*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, US State Department, 1998]

"A March 30 blast in Phnom Penh, which killed at least 15 people, may well be a prelude to more violence. The attack, apparently meant to kill Sam Rainsy, an opposition politician allied with the royalist FUNCINPEC party of Ranariddh, was immediately blamed on Hun Sen's Cambodian People's Party." ["Democracy Bleeding From Violence, Infighting," Teena Amrit Gill, *InterPress Service*, April 25, 1997]

"Thai military sources estimated that each side lost about 50 soldiers during the 10 days of clashes at O'Smach." [*Globe and Mail*, August 25, 1997]  
"The government forces were suffering 10 to 15 casualties a day and were often pinned down and forced to move only at night due to the royalists' fire from the hills..." ["Cambodian Fighting Flares Despite Call for Truce," *Reuters*, August 27, 1997]

**1996** Casualties from the four-month government offensive were not announced but were reported as high. During one week alone, the government troop death toll figure ranged from 28 to 134.

**1995** Early in the year, there were reports of kidnapping and murder of civilians, and burning of villages by the Khmer Rouge as well as reports of civilian concentration camps where hundreds died.

"On the government side, this strategy [Khmer Rouge push to capture Battambang] has resulted in about 1000 casualties, mainly wounded by landmines, with no solid indication of the number killed." [*Jane's Defence Weekly*, 25 March 1995, p.12] Also, "Phnom Penh Government officials claim to have killed 43 Khmer Rouge guerrillas in Preah Vihear, Battambang, Banteay Meanchey and Siem Reap provinces between 16 and 23 April." [*Jane's Defence Weekly*, 13 May 1995, p.15]

**1994** Over 2,000 (according to International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies).

## Political Developments:

**1999** UN plans for an international tribunal to try Khmer Rouge leaders were blocked by the Cambodian government early in the year. Further tribunal talks made little progress.

"Plans for a UN tribunal, strengthened by the report of a three-member commission chaired by Ninian Stephen, have been dealt a severe blow by Cambodia's refusal to allow a non-Cambodian court to try Khmer Rouge suspects." [*InterPress Service*, 21 March 1999]

**1998** Former Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot died in April amid continuing defections by his troops. Following a showcase trial and subsequent royal pardon, Prince Ranariddh returned from exile to participate in July elections which, despite many claims of fraud, were declared sufficiently free and fair by international observers. The CPP won most seats but in the post-election climate of distrust and political violence could not arrange a coalition government with Ranariddh's party until December.

"The Japanese 'four pillars initiative' was approved by the group of countries known as the 'Friends of Cambodia' on 15 February 1998 and backed by Prince Ranariddh and Hun Sen. Its four components include no military cooperation with the Khmer Rouge, an immediate cease-fire, the speedy conclusion of Prince Ranariddh's trial followed by an immediate amnesty, and his participation in the July elections." [*Amnesty International* Release, March 2, 1998]

"Despite opposition party complaints of fraud, the international community said the July 26 election and subsequent count were sufficiently free and fair to reflect the will of the people." [*Reuters*, August 5, 1998]

"Among the international bodies that have endorsed the election results are the United Nations, the European Union, the Association of South-east Asian Nations (ASEAN) and a host of other independent pollwatch groups." ["Truce May Not Heal Deep Political Wounds," Boonthan Sakanond, *InterPress Service*, September 16, 1998]

"The 'foes today friends tomorrow' motif of Cambodian politics was on display again when arch rivals Hun Sen and Prince Norodom Ranariddh patched up bitter differences last week, and agreed to share power in a coalition government." ["No High Hopes After Power-Sharing Accord," Boonthan Sakanond, *InterPress Service*, December 2 1998]

**1997** Both defectors and remaining Khmer Rouge guerrillas continued to wield political power through their alignment with government rivals. Following the partisan fighting in the north and northwest, approximately 50,000 refugees left the country for temporary refugee camps in Thailand.

"The first news of serious divisions inside the Khmer Rouge emerged with the dramatic announcement last week that Son Sen, former defence

minister in the Khmer Rouge regime in the mid-seventies, had been shot dead along with his entire family." ["Breakup of Khmer Rouge Creates New Political Woes," Teena Amrit Gill, *InterPress Service*, June 17, 1997]

"Under a patchwork of cease-fire agreements, its [Khmer Rouge] regional commanders retain their territory, troops, police forces and their local support, and they are already said to be at work to create a new unified leadership. For months, mass defections by Khmer Rouge troops have been part of a power struggle between the country's feuding co-prime ministers... Their separate envoys have sought to win the military and political allegiance of the various Khmer Rouge commands as they enter the Cambodian mainstream." ["Khmer Fallout: Cambodia's Internal Cold War," *New York Times*, June 16, 1997]

"Following partisan fighting in the north and northwest, approximately 50,000 refugees left the country for temporary refugee camps in Thailand." [*Cambodia Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1997*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, US State Department, 1998]

"Ung Huot, a member of a left-leaning faction of FUNCINPEC, Tuesday won the post of first prime minister when 86 of the 99 members of the National Assembly remaining in Cambodia voted in his favour." ["CAMBODIA-UN: Royalists Condemn Selection of New Prime Minister," *InterPress Service*, August 6, 1997]

**1996** Khmer Rouge defections continued in 1996. Ieng Sary, a senior Khmer leader sentenced to death earlier for his role in mass executions, was granted amnesty in September, and two months later, at their Pailin base, over 900 of his troops were integrated with government forces.

Government repression of the press and political violence reinforced fears of a declining human rights climate aggravated by rising tensions between the two government coalition parties.

"Breakaway Khmer Rouge forces took part in a ceremony at their Pailin base on 6 November to integrate their troops with those of the government after two months of negotiations. Just over 900 guerillas participated." [*Jane's Defence Weekly*, 13 November 1996, p.19.] Led by another senior commander, Ny Korn, about 800 Khmer Rouge soldiers joined government forces in late December (or early January?) ["Feud forces leaders to woo Pol Pot defectors," Nick Cumming-Bruce, *Guardian Weekly*, January 12, 1997, p7]

"The shaky relations between Cambodia's two majority coalition partners took a turn for the worse in 1996, and with elections looming on the horizon, the power struggle is certain to heat up even more in 1997." [*InterPress Service*, December 27, 1996]

**1995** From 2,000 to 7,000 Khmer Rouge forces defected by the end of an amnesty period in January, contributing to what is perceived to be a declining Khmer Rouge influence. Also, a joint Thai-Cambodian military border commission was established in September in response to border tensions.

Meanwhile, there is growing evidence of authoritarianism by the coalition government elected in 1993. Human rights workers warn that a network of paramilitary groups or death squads, accused of silencing the opposition in 1993, are already being mobilised by the government. The government has cracked down on the country's press, having taken to court, shut down or fined more than a dozen newspapers in recent months. "The events that have taken place in the last year have consistently been an attempt to neutralise all opposition in Cambodia to the current government," said a foreign human rights observer. "This is creating a climate of fear and intimidation throughout the country." [*InterPress Service*, 24 November 95, Andrew Nette]

This may explain the case of "Prince Sirivudh, half brother of King Norodom Sihanouk, [who] was arrested on Tuesday in connection with an alleged plot to assassinate Second Prime Minister Hun Sen, head of the formerly communist Cambodian People's Party (CPP)." [*InterPress Service*, November 24, 1995] Sirivudh proclaims innocence and his arrest is seen by some observers as an attempt by the government to consolidate their position in advance of upcoming elections.

## Background:

Cambodia has suffered over a quarter-century of civil war, including four years beginning in 1975 of mass genocide (resulting in the deaths of two million people according to recent estimates) and economic ruin under a Khmer Rouge government. Vietnamese troops drove out the Khmer Rouge in early 1979 to establish a communist government of the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) led by Hun Sen. Resistance forces made up of the Khmer Rouge and non-communist forces under former Cambodian leader Prince Sihanouk and his son Prince Ranariddh fought the Vietnamese-backed government until the Paris Peace Accords of 1991.

Before it withdrew in November 1993, the large-scale UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) oversaw successful elections, a new constitutional monarchy, and a coalition government under Sihanouk as king, but it failed to reach planned demobilization levels. The Khmer Rouge, which did not participate in the 1993 elections, returned to insurgency and the new security forces uneasily combined former CPP and royalists troops. In 1997, after months of escalating political tension and violence, the coalition ended when Hun Sen staged a coup and

Ranariddh's forces joined Khmer Rouge guerrillas in the northwest in fighting post-coup government troops. In April 1998 former Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot died amid growing defections by Khmer troops. Prince Ranariddh returned from exile to participate in July 1998 elections which, despite many claims of fraud, were declared sufficiently free and fair by international observers. Hun Sen's CPP won the most seats but he could not arrange a coalition government with Ranariddh's party until December.

### Arms Sources:

The government recently received weapons from China, the US and the Czech Republic, as well as military aid and training from several countries. The Khmer Rouge has reportedly traded gems and lumber for money and arms with military and business groups in Thailand.

### Government:

SIPRI (Yearbook 1999) lists the delivery of 6 Czech jet trainer aircraft to Cambodia beginning in 1997.

"Cambodia took delivery of 116 trucks and 70 utility vehicles in mid-December as part of an aid package from China. The package also includes a supply of ammunition. Most of the vehicles are destined for use with Cambodia's armed forces." [*Jane's Defence Weekly*, 7 January 1998, p14]

WMEAT 1998 states that China was a major arms supplier to the Cambodian government for 1995-1997, with other sources in the Middle East and East Asia.

"According to this report, Cambodia has acquired an undeclared number of AK 47 rifles from South Africa; 40 T-55 tanks from the Czech Republic; and 50 T-55 and T-76 tanks from Poland". [Vol.94, No.15, 16 December 1994, *Military and Arms Transfers News*]

"Phnom Penh has also pursued conventional procurements from a number of suppliers, including the Czech Republic, Israel, Poland and the Seychelles." [*Jane's Defence Weekly*, 25 March 1995, p.12]

### Rebels:

"Global Witness says that Thai firms fund the guerrillas in their war against the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces by paying 'road taxes' to the rebels on timber passing through Khmer Rouge-controlled areas on the way to 'rest areas' in Thailand, where it is stored prior to processing or shipment." [VoA, 8 June 1995, Susan Litherland]

"Cambodian Military Officials claim that Thai Military and business figures continue to secretly provide Khmer Rouge with arms, ammunition and supplies. These are said to include tanks, artillery, heavy weapons and anti-aircraft weapons; previously the Khmer Rouge had mainly small arms and light weapons". [Vol.95, No.9 6 Jun 95, *Military and Arms Transfers News*]

"Speaking on the problems of supply networks, Gen Bun Chhay [of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces under Prince Ranariddh] said, "Some [supplies] are provided by soldiers inside Cambodia and some from people outside; Khmers in the USA, UK, Australia, France. Ammunition comes from inside, from [government] soldiers. If Hun Sen's soldiers have ammunition, I have ammunition." [*Jane's Defence Weekly*, 3 June 1998, p104]

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