



Press Conference by Deputy Secretary Negroponte in Phnom Penh, Cambodia

John D. Negroponte, Deputy Secretary of State
Phnom Penh, Cambodia
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QUESTION: When you talk about the 1.8 million in funding to the KRT, will it be contributed directly to the UN side or the Cambodian side – this is the first question. Secondly during you talk with the Prime Minister Hun Sen, did he ask for UN intervention on the issue of the border problem with Thailand.

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: On the first question subject to correction by the Chargé d'affaires I believe that the contribution will be made to the UN side – the 1.8 million and I would stress again that this is an initial contribution and I think the important point about the contribution is that it represents a threshold contribution by the United States to provide material support to the tribunal.



Your second question I believe related to the dispute with Thailand over the temple, and what I would like to say here is that we think that this is a dispute a difference that should be resolved peacefully between Thailand and Cambodia and that it should be preferably resolved bilaterally between the two countries. We think that is the most effective way of dealing with this problem, and we think that it is important that the use of force or coercion be avoided at all costs because that would risk undermining some of the great progress that has been achieved in this region in terms of peaceful economic development.

QUESTION: Good morning Deputy Secretary – my name is Douglas from the Cambodia Daily and I'll try and be brief. I have two questions regarding the Khmer Rouge tribunal. One was that as you well know there has been a congressional ban on funding the tribunal pending a finding by the State Department that the Cambodian judiciary is free and fair and that the court meets international standards. If you could tell us about that review – whether or not it has been completed.

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: Let me first say that my understanding is that that ban no longer exists – it expired about two years ago. That would be the first point – the second is that I think I'll ask the Embassy to put out a fact sheet about the tribunal so that some of the details that I may not have complete mastery of can be made clear but I think what my point that I would make is that we believe that the conditions are both appropriate and opportune to make this contribution and we have been talking to our congress and those who are interested in the tribunal and I think there is generally a consensus that this is a good time to move forward in support of the tribunal.

QUESTION: Just quickly my second question concerned the fact that the funding for the court would soon expire this would appear to be one moment where donors have the greatest leverage to request changes in the court. Could you tell us how the US feels about the possible investigation of corruption claims in the court and any changes that need to be made?

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: Well as I mentioned in my prepared statement we think it is important that the court be managed properly and we will certainly spare no effort on our part to ensure that not only our resources but the resources of the international community as a whole are put to good use and this is certainly one of the themes that we will be emphasizing with those concerned. There have been some issues about the management of the court but they have not risen to the level where we felt that it justified withholding any contribution to the court. We think it is a good time to go ahead, we'll have as a result of that a voice along with the other donors and certainly when we see issues and problems we're going to be sure that they are called to the attention of the right people.

QUESTION: Ker Munthit from AP – can you elaborate a little bit whether there will be conditions or a mechanism that the US will attach to the contribution to make sure that the money...

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: I think I said - at the risk of being repetitive I really believe that I've said all that I can say. If you want further background from the Charge d'affaires or the Embassy I would refer you to them after the press conference.

Question: Good morning to you sir – I am Madra from Reuters – sir you said Washington is going to fund 1.8 million for this year – will the US look to further contribute to the tribunal in the future?

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: Yes – I think that is our hope, it definitely is in our planning and we have included a proposal in the budget for future years that calls for continued contributions to be made to the court. That of course will require, any budget in any system requires the approval of the legislature but that is certainly the position of the executive branch so we'll make this initial contribution but in future fiscal years we hope to be able to continue to make a contribution and hopefully even increase the size.

QUESTION: Hello sir – another quick question. Why the US want to give funds to the KRT now, why not before.

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: Well I mean I think one of the reasons that was mentioned is there had been reservations in the past on the part of our Congress but I think the point to make here is first of all we have decided to go forward, and secondly I think that like many other people we think it is important that this tribunal be able to carry out its work and succeed. There have been a number of people arrested now who are awaiting trial. There is a trial that is about to take place perhaps as early as November. I had the opportunity to meet a Canadian prosecutor. So this seems to be a distinctly opportune moment to make an announcement about our contribution but I think the main thing is that we want to help this tribunal succeed, and we think it definitely has the chance to succeed.

QUESTION: Just today you met the opposition leader and what did you talk about with them and what about the compromise between the opposition leaders and Hun Sen's government

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: Well I think it would probably not be very prudent of me to comment in any detail about questions that have to do with the relationship between the government and the opposition I did have a opportunity to meet with a couple of opposition leaders, those who had members elected to the national assembly and in the election that took place in July I also had a chance to meet with members of civic society both here and when I was up in Siem Riep. I think the point that I would make is that in July Cambodia had its fourth national election since 1993. You've had elections for a national assembly in 93, 98, 2003 and now in 2008 and this for a country that emerged from such difficult circumstances this is a very positive track record a very positive development and each of these elections have been progressively less violent and have been carried out under better and better conditions so we welcome that and we think that that bodes well it augers well for the future of Cambodian democracy.

QUESTION: Did you advise them to go to the swearing in ceremony in the palace?

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: Look – I didn't offer any particular advice frankly. I listened more than I gave advice. I haven't been to Cambodia in many many years and for me this was an opportunity to listen and learn about what is happening here and certainly it is not for me to give advice, specific tactical advice to the political actors here. We certainly favor democracy, we favor human rights, we support elections and we want them to be fair and free but I think that our concerns and the kind of advice we give is at a more general level than what is being suggested by your question.

QUESTION: Good morning, my name is (inaudible) – I would like to ask you could you please tell us about FBI progress in the investigation of the journalist's killing in July, Mr. Kim Sambo from Mnesekah Khmai?

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: Right – I'm aware of the fact that the FBI is cooperating with the Cambodian authorities in investigating this killing, and I think that is a positive thing I think it is a welcome development and we want to be as helpful as we can but I happen not to know what progress is being made and normally as you can appreciate even if I was aware of some of the details we would probably not reveal them at this stage because investigative matters are usually kept confidential until they are ready until the investigators or the investigative authority is prepared to make its findings public, so even if I did know any of the details it would not be appropriate for me to reveal them publicly. I think perhaps I'll take one more question.

QUESTION: I'm from the Phnom Penh Post – for military relations between the US and Cambodian government – what further developments can we expect, and can we expect the US to provide lethal material to Cambodia.

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: I think that the focus of our effort is in such areas as peacekeeping, support for peacekeeping efforts and we welcome Cambodia's role in that, especially as I said in my statement they have been the beneficiaries of peacekeepers in the past, and they have peacekeepers in the Sudan. Demining efforts, perhaps some officer training in exchanges, so it's that kind of focus that we have at this particular time. Another would be ship visits, visits by some of our naval vessels, we've had several in the past year and we can imagine, we can visualize those continuing and perhaps increasing but those would be the kind of areas in which we contemplate a military cooperation between the two countries. I want to thank you for this opportunity – ok – one last question.

QUESTION: Just would like to know will the White House invite Prime Minister Hun Sen. Is there any plan for that to happen?

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: Well I'm not aware of any such plan and at the moment as you know we're in the final stages of our own electoral campaign between now and the 4th of November and we will have a new administration in January so I would think that any possible meetings at that level and in Washington would probably have to wait till the next administration although I wouldn't rule out the possibility that our leaders might meet one way or another during the course of some of the international meetings that are taking place between now and the end of this year.

Thanks you very much.

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