

## How the CPP Assured Political Dominance Over Funcinpec From the Barrel of a Gun

By William Shaw  
And Thet Sambath

Despite growing political tension in the previous weeks, Phnom Penh's American community wanted their Independence Day celebrations to go ahead as planned on July 5, 1997.

Beneath marquees on Sisowath Quay, dozens of resilient US nationals gathered at 8 am on the banks of the Tonle Sap, setting out folding tables, burger and hotdog stands, and kegs of Tiger beer.

Bretton Sciaroni, head of the International Business Club, drank beer with the owner of a local restaurant as the party tents went up around them.

On the other side of town, the tension that had hung over the city for weeks like a black, ominous rain cloud was about to burst.

Some of the first droplets fell in the shape of mortar shells slamming into the sparsely populated neighborhoods around then-Pochentong Airport.

On Sisowath Quay, the party was over as the sound of heavy machine gun fire echoed out in the distance and a thick plume of black smoke broke the far-off skyline.

"No one was going to turn up after that," Sciaroni recalled in a recent interview. "The show was up."

As the Americans began packing up their food and dismantling the tents, residents across the city began shuttering their shops and locking their doors. Many had stocked up on supplies of water and food in previous days in anticipation of a siege. The braver of those who stayed in Phnom Penh would later emerge on their balconies to watch the violence that would rage over the next two days.

Others wise to the ways of urban warfare placed mattresses and furniture against their windows and doors, fashioning makeshift residential bomb shelters.

Many people boxed up their belongings and began an exodus out of the capital in their cars, on motorcycles and cyclos, in buffalo-drawn carts or on foot for safer ground in the provinces.

The morning's fighting behind Pochentong Airport was just the opening volley in the factional fighting, July 5 and 6, 1997, between forces loyal to then-second Prime Minister Hun Sen and then-first Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh.

This week marked the 10th anniversary of the street battles that Funcinpec later described as a pre-planned coup d'etat, in which Hun Sen

bypassed key members of his own party, reversed the results of the 1993 elections and undid the democratic system that the UN had tried to put in place.

The CPP would accuse Prince Ranariddh and his followers of trying to stage their own coup, of infiltrating Khmer Rouge troops into the capital, and of trying to destroy their party and kill their second prime minister, Hun Sen.

Amid the conflicting interpretations of the decade-old fighting in Phnom Penh, one thing can be said for certain: The CPP consolidated its political power in the aftermath of the conflict, won the 1998 national elections and has maintained an iron-grip on government ever since.

Funcinpec was never the same party after the fighting eviscerated its ranks and today, crippled and fractured by internal dispute, is a pale shadow of the political party that won the country's first election in 1993.

Time has muddied the memories of those who were present, and written reports on the violence offer contradictory accounts. But most observers agree that the weeks preceding the violence were extremely tense as the coalition government between Funcinpec and the CPP imploded.

Early in the morning of July 5, sometime after 7 am, a wave of CPP troops armed with AK-47 assault rifles and heavy machine guns mounted on pick-up trucks advanced on Funcinpec's Tang Kasaing military base as Chris Fontaine, then a reporter at the Cambodia Daily, looked on.

"The sound of machine gun fire started in the distance and all the soldiers ducked for cover," Fontaine said in a telephone interview from Geneva.

"We ended up essentially behind the second ring of advancing CPP soldiers," he said.

Inside the base, General Nhieik Bun Chhay, Funcinpec's first deputy RCAF chief of staff, was hunkered down with at least 500 of his men and a small number of tanks.

The CPP had been disarming Funcinpec troops outside Phnom Penh in proceeding days and morale was low, Nhieik Bun Chhay recalled in an interview. A clash now seemed inevitable.

As the CPP moved in on the base that morning, Nhieik Bun Chhay's troops opened fire. But Nhieik Bun Chhay quickly realized that his resistance would ultimately fail.

Five months earlier, Funcinpec had formed a new political alliance with the

Khmer Nation Party, a precursor to today's SRP, and the now-defunct Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party.

The partnership rattled the CPP as the parties were heading into the 1998 national elections, SRP President Sam Rainsy said. Protests were taking place regularly, and independent unions had begun to take root. On March 30, grenades were thrown at a peaceful protest that Sam Rainsy was leading outside parliament, killing at least 16 and injuring more than 100.

"What the CPP dreads most, what they fear most, is a coalition of anti-CPP forces," Sam Rainsy said. The fighting, he added, was as "a pre-emptive coup" to precede the election.

Few were caught by surprise.

On May 26, military authorities at Sihanoukville Port confiscated two tons of weapons and ammunition addressed to Prince Ranariddh and labeled "spare parts." The CPP said the shipment was illegal, though the prince responded that he did not have any choice but to build up weaponry to protect himself from growing CPP forces.

Both parties were also courting support from the last bastions of the Khmer Rouge, and were lobbying for the allegiance of the regime's diehard members in Anlong Veng district, now part of Oddar Meanchey province, said a historian who has studied the period extensively.

"Funcinpec in its usual hapless way was doing it [courting the Khmer Rouge] semi-overtly, and the CPP in its usual way was doing it covertly," he said.

Funcinpec reportedly reached an agreement with the Khmer Rouge on July 4, just one day before the fighting erupted, though there is no evidence that the party had immediate plans to deploy their new, battle-hardened allies against the CPP, New York-based Human Rights Watch said in a report at the time.

In Phnom Penh, both Hun Sen and Prince Ranariddh had ratcheted up their personal security details into well-equipped private armies.

Hun Sen's troops numbered more than 1,500 and Prince Ranariddh's approached 1,000, according to Human Rights Watch.

The mutual animosity between the bodyguard units boiled over June 17, when the rival forces clashed on Norodom Boulevard close to the homes of Prince Ranariddh and the CPP's National Police Commissioner Hok Lundy. Several people were killed.

Predictions for the country's future

days of street battles with Funcinpec



Tung Chhin Sothy

were grim when the International Business Club held its monthly lunch meeting in the capital on Wednesday July 2.

The head of the IBC's security committee presented a powerpoint display to the club members listing off factors to look out for if a country was about to descend into civil war or widespread unrest.

The members ticked off the boxes listed on the overhead one by one, and all the categories for serious trouble were met, Sciaroni recalled.

"You could see things were falling apart," said Sciaroni, who is also a legal adviser to the government.

Members of the business community considered telling Hun Sen and Prince Ranariddh directly that the tension was damaging Cambodia's business environment, but they realized that the two leaders were probably well aware of the situation.

"They had bigger things on their minds," primarily their own survival, Sciaroni said.

The following morning, July 3, some 200 CPP troops flagged down Prince Ranariddh's motorcade as it was returning from a speech the prince had delivered in Kompong Cham province. Prince Ranariddh's men were disarmed without serious incident. The prince had only managed to avoid the standoff by flying back to Phnom Penh by helicopter.

That evening, Funcinpec's top brass gathered at the prince's house on Street 214 and held crisis talks late into the night. An armed clash with the CPP was unavoidable, a former senior Funcinpec official who attended said on condition of anonymity.

As the official remembers it, Nhieik Bun Chhay and Interior Ministry Sec-

retary of State Ho Sok both tried to assure Prince Ranariddh that they had secured key fighting positions in Phnom Penh. However, for others at the meeting that lasted until 3 am, it was clear that Funcinpec was on the edge of an abyss.

Although the party had weapons, money and personnel, it was poorly organized, had limited strategy and military intelligence, and had few reserve forces or contingency plans, the historian said.

"It was so clear that we were defeated. The battle was lost in all possible ways. The only possibility was for the prince to leave without being captured," said the former Funcinpec official.

On July 4, Prince Ranariddh left Phnom Penh for France with a single suitcase, missing that evening's official Independence Day celebrations hosted by US Ambassador Kenneth Quinn at Hotel Cambodiana.

The prince's absence was not noticed. Hardly any members of the government cabinet or senior military officials from either party attended.

"There was only one CPP and one Funcinpec minister there. That was a rather ominous sign," a foreign diplomat posted to Phnom Penh at the time recalled.

Standing beside the CPP's Defense Minister Tea Banh, Quinn gave a speech in which he expressed hope that Cambodia would be at peace, and called for calm and restraint by all sides in the face of impending violence.

His words would go unheeded. Quite how prepared the CPP was for the next day's fight is still a matter of dispute.

The CPP released a white paper

shortly after the conflict in which it accused Prince Ranariddh of conducting a "campaign of provocation" against the CPP from early 1996 onwards. In a subsequent report issued by the Foreign Ministry in September 1997, however, the CPP took pains to stress that it had been caught off guard.

"The events of 5-6 July should not be referred to as Hun Sen's coup—they are more properly called Prince Ranariddh's attempted coup," the Foreign Ministry wrote in its report.

"[O]ne can see that the [Funcinpec] extremists were prepared for the fighting and the government forces were not," it added.

Human Rights Watch said in its report that there was strong evidence to suggest that Prince Ranariddh's overthrow had been contemplated since at least April.

One former Funcinpec official remembered driving back from the provinces July 4, and seeing clusters of 10 or 20 CPP soldiers stationed along National Route 5 every five or six kilometers from Kompong Chhnang province onwards. As Phnom Penh drew closer, the CPP soldiers, who were flagging down and searching cars, appeared to be in increasingly heavily-armed groups, the official said.

"There were hundreds and hundreds of Hun Sen soldiers 17 or 18 km from Phnom Penh," said the official who asked not to be identified. "They were ready for any fight, not just standing around."

Khieu Kanharith, CPP Information Minister and government spokesman, disputed this in an interview, saying it was in fact Funcinpec forces that had surrounded the city.

In its white paper, the CPP blamed

the violence on untenable aggression from Funcinpec.

"[T]he secret buildup of Funcinpec military units around Phnom Penh, the infiltration of Khmer Rouge elements into the city itself, and the budding alliance with the Pol Potists, dedicated to destroying Hun Sen and his party, required a response," the white paper stated. "Faced with imminent danger, the security organs of the state began to act."

RCAF officials began visiting Funcinpec installations and other sites to identify and disarm illegal Khmer Rouge soldiers, and the camps under suspicion fired on them, the white paper stated.

The fighting that broke out near the airport July 5 started after CPP troops began disarming Funcinpec soldiers stationed around the Tang Kasaing base. Backed by at least eight tanks and an armored personnel carrier, CPP troops surrounded a Funcinpec-controlled military post at Wat Phnead, about 8 km northwest of the airport.

After a brief exchange of gunfire, 120 Funcinpec soldiers surrendered and were taken captive. After securing Wat Phnead, CPP forces moved on a Funcinpec bodyguard base just west of Pochentong Airport and began shelling it, the historian said.

Heavy fighting also erupted in Preah Salah village, near the Tang Kasaing base, as CPP-led paratroopers took up positions along the railroad tracks near another pagoda where 559 Khmer Rouge defectors were being housed, officials said at the time. The paratroopers told reporters that two small groups identified as either Funcinpec soldiers or former Khmer Rouge had been trapped before they could make it back to

Prince Ranariddh's house the same morning. Inside the house, more than 100 bodyguards with AK-47s and B-40 rocket launchers were stationed, along with several armored vehicles, the historian said.

During the initial skirmishes, Hun Sen was conspicuously absent. According to the Foreign Ministry, he was at the Vietnamese resort of Vung Tau enjoying a beach holiday with his adult children who had returned from studying overseas. Informed of the brewing violence, Hun Sen took a helicopter back to his compound in Kandal province's Takhmau district at around 10 am. He appeared on the nation's airwaves shortly after.

"This illegal deployment of [Funcinpec] armed forces is a grave danger to the national security forces and people's safety," Hun Sen announced, adding that the fighting was "not a civil war" but a bid by the CPP "to defend social order, people's safety and national security against terrorist acts."

Hok Lundy also appeared on the radio, ordering all police in the country to be on the lookout for similar "terrorist acts," and urging his officers to cooperate with military authorities in disarming and apprehending "illegal" troops.

The Khmer Rouge also weighed in via their own clandestine radio station, accusing Hun Sen of plotting to overthrow Prince Ranariddh. The station had already been calling for public support for Prince Ranariddh and his party for several days.

"Hun Sen clearly intended to mount an armed coup d'etat to destroy Funcinpec and assassinate the Funcinpec leader," Agence France-Presse reported the Khmer Rouge as saying in their July 5 broadcast.

"Hun Sen...put his forces into position along strategic routes around Phnom Penh to set up checkpoints to conduct searches and to prevent Funcinpec troops from entering or returning to Phnom Penh," the Khmer Rouge claimed.

Many of Cambodia's foreign diplomats were in Paris on the morning the fighting started, attending the World Bank donor meeting during which donor institutions and countries had just pledged \$450 million to the now-defunct government of Prince Ranariddh and Hun Sen.

A second foreign diplomat then based in Phnom Penh recalled turning on the television in his Paris hotel room to see the fighting erupt on CNN.

"I immediately called to get a ticket back," said the diplomat, who spoke on condition that neither he nor his country be named.

"I didn't think [the fighting] was going to happen that quickly—I don't think any of us did," the diplomat added.

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The CPP's Finance Minister Keat Chhon, who was also at the Paris meeting, appeared to be another of those caught off guard by the street battles being broadcast from Phnom Penh, the diplomat said.

By 3 pm on the Western outskirts of Phnom Penh, a shell blew a 2-meter hole in the wall of Kossamak Hospital and rained shrapnel down onto the ground below where CPP military police were stationed with Sao Sokha, CPP deputy national military police commander.

Patients at the hospital nearby Nhiek Bun Chhay's compound would later recall being abandoned by their doctors as shells fell nearby.

Sao Sokha, who today is national military police commander, remembered being stationed at the hospital over the two days of fighting and waiting for orders from his superiors.

"I didn't stay in my office. I was in the battlefield to order the troops," he said, though he was reluctant to discuss the fighting further.

"Don't talk about the past. Forget it and let bad things be gone," he recommended.

As the shell hit the hospital, Janet Ashby, a long-time NGO worker, from her home on Street 51 spotted black smoke billowing across the rooftops and hurried to collect her 8-year-old son from a friend's house near the Russian Embassy. She sped back home through the empty streets on the back of a motorcycle-taxi, then covered the windows of her house with mattresses.

Ashby tried to telephone her colleagues to check on their safety, but all the lines were jammed. "No one knew what was going on," she said. However, Ashby added, "We didn't feel we were going to be targeted because it was very clear it was just between the Cambodian factions."

Bill Herod, a long-time NGO worker who was living near Phsar Thmei at the time and who with his colleagues sheltered 25 people fleeing fighting in the vicinity of Funcinpec's headquarters, agreed.

"It was very surreal because we were aware of heavy fighting going on nearby, we could hear the distant sounds, and yet we didn't seem to be in any danger," he said.

When the fighting subsided, Herod ventured out to take photos of a tank with six CPP soldiers perched on it outside the Foreign Trade Bank, located on Norodom Boulevard at the time.

"We were all like extras on a

movie set and they didn't care if I took their picture. They were on the winning side," Herod recalled.

As the afternoon of July 5 progressed, the diplomatic corps gathered at the Defense Ministry for a briefing by Tea Banh, who tried to assure them that the situation was under control, the first foreign diplomat said.

CPP officials handed out leaflets believed to be translations of Hun Sen's speech earlier in the day, in which he accused Prince Ranariddh of destabilizing the country and moving troops and weapons into areas near Phnom Penh.

"We were all sitting there and [Tea Banh] was telling us steps had been taken to bring things under control...and suddenly we could see out the window a huge explosion," the diplomat said. The meeting was abruptly adjourned.

By late afternoon, shells were falling a few hundred meters from the airport, and at least three people were killed when a stray shell crashed into a garage near the Royal University of Phnom Penh.

A battle also raged at the heavily fortified home of Chao Sambath, Funcinpec's deputy chief of the intelligence and espionage department at RCAF's supreme command.

Rockets rained down on Chao Sambath's home and his men inside fired back on the CPP's military police, as did troops sheltered in neighboring buildings and a pagoda, according to the Foreign Ministry report.

The CPP drove a T-55 tank up to the house, and Funcinpec soldiers scored a hit on it with an Ambrust anti-tank missile, the report stated. CPP tanks also opened fire on the building, the historian said.

Throughout the day, Fontaine had remained stuck in the battle zone behind the Tang Kasaing base, sheltered behind a mound of soil and unable to get back to the city center.

"There was enough ammunition flying around that every once in a while you'd hear a bullet flying over our heads," he said.

"The airport was surrounded and we couldn't get out. We started getting really scared when the sun started to go down."

Fontaine and his driver began weaving their way by motorcycle through the back streets to The Cambodia Daily office on Street 240, going via the heavily guarded InterContinental Hotel. When Fontaine visited the airport in the following days, there were burned-out tanks standing nearby.

By nightfall, CPP troops with scraps of red cloth pinned to their uniforms to identify them as Hun Sen loyalists had occupied strategic positions around the city and set up



Heavily armed CPP forces in Dangkao district eat bread while readying for battle with soldiers loyal to Funcinpec on July 5, 1997

roadblocks at the airport, at the Royal Palace and on Sothea Boulevard. Local radio and television stations announced a curfew from 8 pm to 6 am.

The first day's fighting died down, and the two political camps began preparing their next moves.

From France, Prince Ranariddh began calling the diplomatic corps, relating his concerns about the situation and presenting his position that the CPP was trying to take over the government, the first diplomat said.

At his home in Takhmau town, Hun Sen stayed up all night with his national command reviewing the situation, according to the Foreign Ministry. At 1:30 am on Sunday July 6, it was decided that a general "mopping up" operation should be carried out that day, to include the Tang Kasaing base, the area around the airport, and the homes of Nhiek Bun Chhay and Chao Sambath, according to the Foreign Ministry.

But despite the CPP's apparent confidence, Funcinpec was about to strike back and begin probably the most questionable military maneuvers of the two days of fighting.

At 4 am, two columns of soldiers and tanks rumbled out of the Tang Kasaing base, one of them advancing on the capital on National Route 4, the other following a parallel path along the railway line, the Foreign Ministry said.

Several hundred Funcinpec soldiers also left the base later in the morning to try to hold off hundreds of CPP soldiers armed with anti-tank weapons and B-40 rocket launchers who were spilling into Phnom Penh from across the Japanese Bridge, the historian said.

Nhiek Bun Chhay's apparent plan was to make a thrust into central Phnom Penh with 200 men, three T-55 tanks and three armored cars, and join forces with Funcinpec's co-Minister of Interior You Hockry and Ho Sok who were besieged inside Prince Ranariddh's house on Street 214.

As the Funcinpec forces advanced, they captured a CPP-con-

trolled arsenal containing several million bullets, and thousands of B40 rocket-propelled grenades, Nhiek Bun Chhay recalled.

Adding to Funcinpec's momentum, Prince Ranariddh appeared in Voice of America radio broadcast that morning, accusing Hun Sen of staging an "illegal coup" and urging his followers to resist.

"I would like to take this opportunity to appeal insistently, imploringly...to all forces loyal to the country, to the people who love justice and peace: Please stand up against Hun Sen and his partisans," Prince Ranariddh said from overseas.

Despite the momentum, Nhiek Bun Chhay's advance suddenly stalled when his men reached the vicinity of the Royal University of Phnom Penh, and he would not give the order for them to advance any further.

To this day, Funcinpec soldiers still don't know why Nhiek Bun Chhay did not order his men to push forward from the airport, then move on to secure central Phnom Penh, said Naranaridh Anandayath, who was then Prince Ranariddh's public relations officer.

"I'm still seeking an answer. Even the commanders are still seeking an answer from Nhiek Bun Chhay," said Naranaridh Anandayath who now is a special adviser to the Norodom Ranariddh Party. "I don't know the number of troops [he had] but he was able to hold his ground."

According to Nhiek Bun Chhay, the decision was a matter of simple survival, both for himself and Phnom Penh.

"There were [civilians] all over Phnom Penh," who would have risked being killed by fighting in the city center, Nhiek Bun Chhay said. "Who would have been held responsible for this? It would have been me and I would have been the first person to have been killed."

While Funcinpec might have been able to win the center of the capital and control it for a couple of weeks, he said, his troops would ultimately have been penned in and defeated by superior CPP forces

sent in from the provinces. "If they say I was a coward and a weak commander, let them say it, but I had to think of the lives of people and people's property," he said.

By the time Nhiek Bun Chhay's men halted at around 8 am on July 6, CPP military police were already there to fight them, and Hun Sen promptly ordered his bodyguard unit to move from Takhmau to join the fray, according to the Foreign Ministry.

"Fighting began in earnest, with the [CPP] military police holding their position against a superior force," the Foreign Ministry report stated. Three CPP tanks and three armored personnel carriers were brought in at 9:30 am for tank battles that raged for hours.

Phnom Penh residents flooded main streets as they scrambled to escape the city with their families by any means possible. Traffic jams clogged National Route 1 leading to the Vietnamese border as people tried to escape.

"You could feel the artillery impact in the center of the city and buildings were shaking from their foundations," the first foreign diplomat recalled. "People were fleeing from around Prince Ranariddh's house and Norodom and Monivong boulevards."

Around 9 or 10 am, junior Funcinpec officials made what appeared to be scripted phone calls to diplomats, claiming that their party was prevailing, that they were forming a new government and had begun issuing decrees, the first foreign diplomat said.

But their chance of victory had evaporated. Out near the university, Nhiek Bun Chhay's call to halt his men meant that they were about to be sandwiched between CPP forces.

By mid-afternoon, CPP forces from Military Region 2 were deployed to the western outskirts of the city and moved in on Funcinpec forces, while Brigade 444 from Military Region 3, supported by six tanks, arrived from Kompong Speu province and attacked Nhiek Bun Chhay's men from the rear, according to the Foreign Ministry.

"Heavy casualties were inflicted upon the extremist elements from the Tang Kasaing military base," the Foreign Ministry said.

By late afternoon, the CPP dispatched 15 tanks to attack the Tang Kasaing base, Nhiek Bun Chhay wrote in an autobiography entitled "A Luck in Thousand Dangers" published afterwards.

Fighting had also raged in the vicinity of Funcinpec headquarters, and the French Embassy next door took a direct hit from mortar fire, destroying the ambassador's and

the defense attaché's offices on the northwest corner of the main building on Monivong boulevard, embassy officials said at the time. At least two garment factories—one on Pochentong Boulevard and the other in Russei Keo district—were also hit by rockets.

By 7 pm, Funcinpec troops around the city were in full retreat or surrendering. According to Human Rights Watch, at least 65 people were killed and more than 200 had been wounded.

For most, the fighting had come to an end. But for the senior Funcinpec officials inside the prince's house on Street 214, the danger was about to escalate.

The house had been hit by a barrage of rocket-propelled grenades earlier in the day, causing parts of the compound to catch on fire. With the defeat of Nhiek Bun Chhay's men at the university, those inside the house knew their number was up.

Inside, co-Interior Minister You Hockry, Interior Ministry Secretary of State Kieng Vang, Prince Ranariddh's cabinet Director Ly Thuch and Ho Sok, huddled in terror, said Naranaridh Anandayath, who was also present.

Nhiek Bun Chhay had been in regular contact with the men earlier in the day by handheld radio, he said.

Through a crackling ICOM radio, Nhiek Bun Chhay told his colleagues that he would be unable to rescue them: "You take care of yourselves, I take care of myself," Naranaridh Anandayath recalled.

Crouched beneath one of Prince Ranariddh's glass-topped desks clutching two mobile phones, Naranaridh Anandayath, a US citizen, called whomever he thought could help. He called the US Embassy and CPP President Chea Sim who, Naranaridh Anandayath claims, was sympathetic to his plight and said he would try to help.

"I told him that too many children would die because of our differences in opinion on how the country should be run," Naranaridh Anandayath recounted of his appeal to Chea Sim.

"He said he'd talk to Hun Sen and try to [arrange a] cease-fire and have some sort of negotiation to stop the fighting, but it never materialized."

As the Funcinpec bodyguards inside Prince Ranariddh's house realized their side was losing, they changed into civilian clothes, hoisted white t-shirts on poles at around 4 pm and surrendered.

One of the bodyguards, aged about 20, emerged from the residence with a deep wound torn in his forearm by shrapnel. A human rights monitor at the scene recalled handing the young man some



(Top) A burned-down tank is taken away by crane from Pochentong Boulevard near the Royal University of Phnom Penh on July 8, 1997. (Below) A body of soldier loyal to Funcinpec lies dead on the ground near Pochentong Boulevard on July 7

money and telling him to return straight to his home village and avoid hospitals in the city where he would not be safe.

The Funcinpec officials inside the house were finally offered asylum by the nearby Malaysian Embassy and they decided to make a run for it, Naranaridh Anandayath said.

A bodyguard hammered a hole through the top of the wall surrounding Prince Ranariddh's compound, and the officials clambered over, hauling You Hockry with them. Gunfire in the street was too heavy for them to make it to the Malaysian Embassy, so they made their way to somewhere their safety was less assured: the Singaporean ambassador's residence where a cleaner let them in, Naranaridh Anandayath said.

Allowed to enter the residence, the officials were informed that they could stay, but only for one night, according to Kieng Vang who today is an SRP lawmaker.

Kieng Vang slept on a sofa in the ambassador's living room while several others found safer places elsewhere and slipped out of the house before nightfall.

The following morning, July 7, an uncomfortable peace hung over the city following the CPP's victory. With few other options, Kieng

Vang telephoned his de facto boss, the CPP's co-Interior Minister Sar Kheng, seeking sanctuary.

"I asked Sar Kheng to save my life," he said.

Sources say that Sar Kheng opposed the fighting and made concerted efforts in the wake of the CPP's military victory to ensure the survival of key figures within Funcinpec.

According to an unclassified, confidential US Embassy cable after the fighting detailing a meeting between Sar Kheng and Quinn, Sar Kheng lamented the failure of their efforts to avert the fighting.

"[Sar Kheng] said it was essential to try to stop the abuses of human rights, and he has himself endeavored to do so and has intervened in several sensitive cases," the embassy cable stated.

According to Kieng Vang, Sar Kheng told him to leave the Singaporean ambassador's residence July 7, and come to his residential compound on Norodom Boulevard.

Fearing that he would be killed on the way, Sar Kheng sent his adviser Prach Chan to collect Kieng Vang. Prach Chan, who is today the CPP's Battambang provincial governor, drove over to the ambassador's house and, with-

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Lang Chhin Sothy



Mak Remissa



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(Top) CPP forces carry looted motorbikes on their armored personnel carrier on Pochentong Boulevard on July 7, 1997. (Left) A cyclodriver transports a cycloload of looted motorbikes on Pochentong Boulevard the same day. (Right) A glass wall at Pochentong Airport stands shattered after the fighting



Mak Remissa

out saying a word, opened his car door and let Kieng Vang clamber in, Prach Chan said by telephone.

Although they belonged to different parties, Kieng Vang and Prach Chan had a rapport as they had worked together at the Interior Ministry and both hailed from Kampot province.

"It was my duty to help a person who had asked for help," Prach Chan said of Kieng Vang.

"This is a lesson to be unified with each other and that we have to respect the law and the government," Prach Chan said, adding that the fighting was terrible and frightening. "I was afraid," he said. "It should not have happened like this."

Arriving at Sar Kheng's nearby compound, Kieng Vang said he was surprised to see the US ambassador, who lived just across the road, step forward to shake his hand.

According to Cambodians who were present and the first foreign

diplomat, Quinn spent time at Sar Kheng's house over July 7 and 8 and urged him to help protect Funcinpec officials in the wake of the fighting.

From the vicinity of Sar Kheng's house, Quinn telephoned You Hockry. You Hockry arrived shortly after.

As Kieng Vang remembers it, Sar Kheng also sent out CPP bodyguards to retrieve Funcinpec Secretary-General Loy Sim Chheang, who had been hiding near the railway station.

Quinn had made other efforts to rescue Funcinpec fugitives. On the afternoon of July 6, Quinn met with Malaysian Ambassador Kamal Ismaun to decide how they could best help those in hiding, the first foreign diplomat said.

Funcinpec officials had been call-

ing foreign embassies for help during the day, but would not reveal where they were hiding because they were afraid their phones were being tapped.

"The Malaysian and the American ambassadors decided the best thing to do was to go there and find them, and by the presence of the ambassadors, prevent them from being shot," the first foreign diplomat said.

At around 4 or 5 pm on July 6, as CPP troops advanced on Prince Ranariddh's house, the two ambassadors walked with them.

The pair hoped that Funcinpec

members would come out from the house, and that they would be able to assure their safety, the foreign diplomat said. Nobody emerged from the battle-scarred house, however, and the two men returned empty handed to their respective embassies.

For Ho Sok, who had remained inside the Singaporean ambassador's residence on the morning of July 7, his capture was not long off nor was his cold-blooded killing inside the Interior Ministry. But quite why the 45-year-old secretary of state was singled out is uncertain.

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**Mars...**  
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Most days, Malin stopped by Edgett's office for a chat about what they'd just seen.

"Often out of those discussions came new discoveries," Edgett said. "I'm sure Lewis and Clark did that, too."

Edgett was fascinated by textures in the landscape. Around Alba Patera, a volcano in the north, the surface had a "bubbly" appearance. The equatorial region was sandy. The middle latitudes were scabby. In Noachis Terra in the south, there were huge dune fields. But these dunes were different from Earth's. Channels cut across their surfaces.

Edgett took notes on what he saw each day, compiling a diary of his journeys.

"View of north polar cap at the start of summer," he wrote one day. "Pretty cool image pair."

"Light-toned outcrops, ridgy surfaces," he added.

"Cool polygon patterns on or under north polar frost; lots of nifty polar layers."

His work schedule was relentless. Lunch was Subway. Dinner at Carl's Jr.

"You couldn't get me to go home. I would spend 12 hours a day, six or seven days a week" studying the pictures, he said.

Friends often asked him what Mars was like. Edgett had trouble answering.

He was one of the few to witness the beauty of Hellas Basin during the winter when the haze lifts and the atmosphere is crystal clear. He had wandered through the heavily cratered landscape of Arabia Terra and searched the hazy southern rim of Valles Marineris.

How could he describe the bizarre, Swiss-cheese pattern of the south polar icecap?

A colleague warned him that observing another planet was a

ignored him. He wasn't sure what he was looking for, but his goal was clear—to find some sign of past or present water flow.

Liquid water is crucial to any hopes of finding life on another planet. Basic biological processes, the ones we know about, require a liquid environment.

It took two years.

In 1999, Edgett scanned some images in which he spotted narrow gullies along a canyon wall. They were at most a few thousand years old. It could be an indication of water erosion. He decided to focus in on the gullies whenever Global Surveyor passed overhead to look for any changes.

"It was always kind of a joke," Edgett said. "Yeah, right, we're going to see change."

Then in 2005, he saw something unusual. Shiny, white, ice-like flows appeared in two of the gullies.

"Oh, that's different," Edgett said to himself. The flows were near the limits of the camera's resolving powers.

His diary entry recorded his excitement: "recently active gully?... I think we've got a story here."

He and Malin accounted for the time of day, the strength of the sun, every possible counter-explanation they could find.

"Then we were left with, 'Geez, maybe they are water flows,'" Edgett said.

They held onto their discovery for a year while they tested the theory and wrote it up for publication in the prestigious journal *Science*.

Edgett's best theory is that some underground heat source is melting subsurface ice.

The pressure from this underground reservoir builds up behind a plug of ice on the surface until the cap pops off. Water bursts onto the surface and flows downhill before flash-freezing.

In December 2006, Edgett and Malin announced their discovery, which was quickly hailed as one of the greatest solar system finds in

AS for the Global Surveyor, just a few weeks before Edgett and Malin announced their find, the probe fell inexplicably silent. NASA officially declared the spacecraft dead in January, the victim of a faulty software command from ground controllers.

Edgett said goodbye to the Global Surveyor with mixed emotions. There were days when he was in the thick of exploration that it seemed too much. His relationships outside work suffered; he didn't eat or sleep well.

But after journeying so many millions of kilometers, his life has become entwined with the planet.

"Mars is still this magical place to me," he said.

LOS ANGELES TIMES

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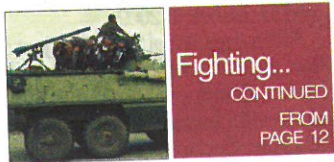
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**Fighting...**  
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Some claim he had a particular serious fallout with a senior official in the national police. Others, who describe him as "a wild card," say he may have played an important role in triggering the violence in the capital.

"[Ho Sok] had his own kind of highly disciplined, very tough fighters," the first foreign diplomat said. "He was a very tough fighter himself."

Naranaridh Ananayath believes that Ho Sok, because of his high position in the Interior Ministry, knew simply too many secrets.

Ho Sok had made frantic efforts to try to organize an escape plan but, shortly after leaving the residence on July 7, he was detained.

He was taken to the Interior Ministry and shot in the head in what human rights groups alleged was an execution. The following day, men in combat fatigues transported his body to Wat Langka, where he was hurriedly cremated, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights wrote in a report dated Aug 21, 1997.

According to the US Embassy cable, Sar Kheng later told Quinn that he deeply regretted Ho Sok's killing.

Ten years on, who killed Ho Sok, and why, is still a mystery. Interior Ministry spokesman Lieutenant General Khieu Sopheak was reluctant to discuss the Ho Sok case last month.

As the fighting ended, an orgy of looting swept parts of the capital.

Joe Cochrane, then a Cambodia Daily reporter and now a correspondent for Deutsche Presse-Agentur in Jakarta, recalled being out at the airport and watching victorious CPP troops steal anything they could carry away.

By the time the second diplomat made it back to Phnom Penh in the following days, the airport looked like a war zone and everything, from the X-ray machines to the plastic chairs, had been stolen.

For a 2-kilometer stretch along Russian Boulevard, anarchy reigned on July 7: Garment factories were looted, soldiers robbed civilians of their motorcycles, and civilians pulled apart gas stations.

"Each tank had 10 or 12 motorbikes on it," Cochrane recalled. "It was a free for all. Hundreds of people running around stealing whatever they could.... People were stealing [petrol] pumps, they were steal-

ing the metal casing around the pumps—they took everything."

Cochrane also witnessed CPP forces looting Prince Ranariddh's home, and making away with truckloads of the first prime minister's property.

"They systematically took everything out of his house—furniture, clothing, motorbikes, vehicles, artwork," he said.

In its report, the UNOHCHR said there had been 41, and possibly up to 60, politically motivated extrajudicial killings from July 2 onwards.

Almost all of the dead were affiliated with Funcinpec.

Chao Sambath and General Kroch Yoeum, a Funcinpec Defense Ministry undersecretary of state, were among those killed.

Both men were captured on July 8 in Kompong Speu province after being surrounded by Brigade 911 paratrooper commandos, according to the UN report.

Four security officers under Chao Sambath—Seng Phally, Lieutenant Colonel Chao Keang, Chao Tea and Thong Vickika—also came to gruesome ends. On the morning of July 7, their bodies were brought to Wat Ounalom after being found blind-folded, handcuffed, shot through the head and stuffed into the boot of a car near Wat Phnom, the UN report said.

Major Lak Ni, head of operations, research and intelligence at RCAF high command and an associate of Chao Sambath, was found dumped in Russei Keo district sometime around July 7, with marks on his neck indicating he had been strangled.

Lieutenant Colonel Sao Sopha, a Funcinpec officer at the first bureau of RCAF General Staff, was also executed. His handcuffed body was found clad only in underpants and with bullet wounds in the head, the UN report said.

Back in Phnom Penh, four unnamed bodyguards of Nhek Bun Chhay stationed at his house were also executed, then displayed on the street with their eyes gouged out.

The UN report said it was difficult to know whether some of the executions were ordered or whether rogue officials had taken the opportunity to settle old scores.

Japanese, British, Canadian, Australian and American envoys visited Hun Sen as the reports of extrajudicial killings emerged, and urged him to bring the situation under control, the second diplomat said.

"We all condemned the executions, no question," he said. "The blood bath could have been a lot worse if the international community did not have the influence that it

had then." Khieu Kanharith acknowledged that extrajudicial killings occurred, though he added that this was partly the nature of the turbulent 1990s.

"I don't think a lot of people were executed. There were some executions of high-ranking officers, we agreed on that. But how [many were] executions, how [many were] were killed on the battlefield?" he asked.

Khieu Kanharith attributed the executions to "hard-liners from both sides," whom he declined to identify. "We reached agreement that we don't talk about the past," he said. "Let bygones be bygones."

Though his troops were being rounded up and his party's officials either on the run or captured, Nhek Bun Chhay was somehow able to escape to Oddar Meanchey province's O'Smach area on the Thai border, in what has almost become a modern-day Cambodian legend.

In his autobiography, Nhek Bun Chhay described slogging through the provinces day and night aided by a small network of loyalists while the CPP hunted him.

The CPP dropped leaflets from helicopters with his photo on it and sent notices to every village describing him as a traitor, Nhek Bun Chhay recounted in his book. In an apparent bid to inspire bounty hunters, the CPP leaflets claimed that he was carrying more than \$2 million.

In the years since, some have come to question Nhek Bun Chhay's recollection of his escape. Some claim that with helicopters and Brigade 911 paratroopers involved in the hunt, he should not have escaped, and being a veteran of the northwest, he lacked the knowledge required to make a successful escape through central Cambodia.

One senior CPP source even claimed that his party gave Nhek Bun Chhay safe passage out of Phnom Penh through the outskirts of Tuol Kok district.

This, Nhek Bun Chhay said, is nonsense: The manhunt launched to track him down and his miraculous escape were completely genuine.

"When Kroch Yoeum and Chao Sambath were arrested, I was near them. Those soldiers looked for me. They were two meters away but they couldn't see me because I was hiding among bamboo trees," he said. "If they found me, I would have opened fire."

Back in Phnom Penh, hundreds of people and many Funcinpec officials had sought sanctuary at Hotel Cambodiana, including Ahmad Yahya, then a Funcinpec lawmaker and today an SRP parliamentarian.

Both the US and French embassies rented out the ballroom at the hotel for their nationals and, by the evening of July 6, about 150 for-



Foreigners board Thai plane out of Phnom Penh on July 9, 1997

igners had gathered at the hotel and snooker tables in the ballroom had been dragged out and replaced with mattresses.

The hotel was teaming with Funcinpec politicians, tourists, expatriates, and CPP spies, Ahmad Yahya said. Rumors circulated that CPP officials were searching rooms for Funcinpec members, he added.

Sebastien Marot, coordinator for the NGO Friends International, recalls visiting the Cambodiana in the days following the fighting, to find its inhabitants in a state of alarm.

"It was full of people crying and panicking. We tried to tell people it was over," but they didn't believe it, he said. Some Funcinpec officials who had been brought to the hotel by foreign embassies were later escorted to the airport and flown to safety.

On July 8, as flights resumed from Pochentong Airport, more than 1,000 shell-shocked foreign nationals were evacuated on eight

Thai military aircraft and a Malaysian passenger jet.

The factional fighting spread out to the northwest, and more than 40,000 Cambodians fled to the Thai border, according to Human Rights Watch. By the end of the year, some 400 Cambodian refugees had applied for asylum with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Bangkok.

In March 1998, Prince Ranariddh was sentenced in absentia to 35 years in prison for plotting a coup with the Khmer Rouge and illegally buying and transported weapons. He was pardoned by then-King Norodom Sihanouk within days, and was able to eventually return to home.

A significantly weakened Prince Ranariddh went on to form two more coalition governments with the CPP following the national elections in 1998 and in 2003. His political career spiraled in 2006 as his came under stiff criticism from his

overship and scathing attacks by Hun Sen over his private life.

Last October, Nhek Bun Chhay held a hastily convened Funcinpec congress during which Prince Ranariddh was ousted from the party's presidency, a position he had held since 1992.

Prince Ranariddh has since set up his own Norodom Ranariddh Party to compete against Funcinpec. In February, Nhek Bun Chhay threw his support behind a proposal made by Hun Sen for members of Cambodia's royal families to quit politics altogether.

In March, Phnom Penh Municipal Court sentenced Prince Ranariddh in absentia to 18 months in prison for breach of trust over the sale of Funcinpec's headquarters, in a trial that his supporters claim was politically motivated. He remains overseas.

The fighting caused some ripples in international diplomatic relations. Cambodia's entry to Asean was delayed and Germany suspended aid, according to Human Rights Watch. The US cut direct aid to the Cambodian government, only lifting its ban last year. But most countries were faster in agreeing to deal with the government, and to continue funding.

Diplomats in Phnom Penh ultimately drew mixed conclusions about the showdown between Hun Sen's and Prince Ranariddh's loyalists, and were generally skeptical of the accounts given by both parties, the second diplomat said.

"The CPP were saying they were unprepared. They said it had all come as a big surprise to them, which was quite unlikely," the diplomat said.

Although the CPP may not have anticipated the exact date of the fighting, he said, its military victory was inevitable once the fighting began.

The diplomat's home country ultimately adopted the position that it should try to work with the government that remained to restore the previous state of affairs so that there could be a reasonable election process in 1998 in which Prince Ranariddh and others could participate, the diplomat said.

"The sad thing [was that the fighting reflected] the breakdown of the system set up by the UN, the effective end of the coalition government and the failure of Funcinpec to take at least some control of the reins of government between 1993 and 1997," the diplomat said.

Funcinpec's defeat "brought about a modicum of stability, perhaps at the expense of the development of democracy," the diplomat added. "But I suppose that's always a trade-off, especially in a country with little history of democratic institutions."

THE CAMBODIA DAILY

**CROSSWORD** Edited By Will Shortz

**ACROSS**

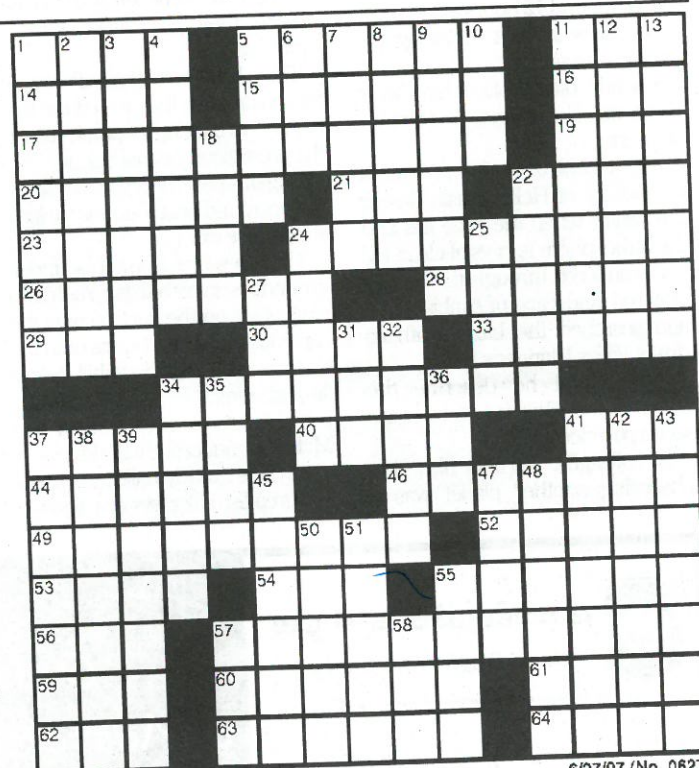
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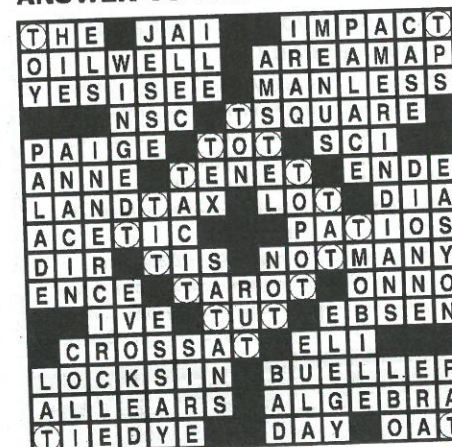
Puzzle by Barbara Olson

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THE NEW YORK TIMES

**ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE**



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