

NOMINATION OF AMBASSADOR KENNETH M. QUINN
FOR THE DISTINGUISHED HONOR AWARD

Ambassador Kenneth M. Quinn is nominated for the Distinguished Honor Award for his crucial role in restoring peace and democratic government in Cambodia and the personal courage he repeatedly displayed in protecting the lives of opposition politicians during extended periods of violence and intimidation.

In July 1997 the results of the most successful UN peacekeeping operation in history were shattered when violent civil war returned to the streets of Phnom Penh with tank battles around the Embassy and over 50 people killed as forces loyal to Hun Sen ousted Prince Ranariddh. Ambassador Quinn distinguished himself during this fighting by his efforts to halt the conflict and extend protection to persons at extreme risk.

As the fighting commenced, The Ambassador and his family narrowly escaped serious injury or death when a rocket struck their home. During the gun battle that ensued around their residence, the Ambassador, alone and on foot, crossed dangerous streets to reach the Minister of Interior and help broker a ceasefire. When fighting re-started, in response to desperate pleas for help, the Ambassador drove to the battle zone, first liberating a group of American missionaries and then driving among tanks and advancing troops in search of opposition party officials. Senator Orrin Hatch thanked him profusely and the security chief of the Mormon church traveled to Phnom Penh to tell the Ambassador they "considered him a hero for what he did that day."

In the immediate aftermath of the fighting, fear pervaded the city. Most senior opposition leaders and 50,000 refugees fled the country. The Ambassador established a safehaven for over 700 persons, convoyed endangered politicians to the airport and promised many terrified remaining politicians and NGO leaders they could always come to him for protection.

Ambassador Quinn then embarked on a strategy to restore a pluralist political system. Five days after the fighting ended, he convinced Hun Sen to issue a public assurance to all NGOs and human rights groups that they could remain and operate in the country. The next step was to arrange for opposition political leaders to come back. The Ambassador obtained security guarantees so that some were able to return, but despite months of diplomatic effort, former Prime Minister Prince Ranariddh seemed to be permanently excluded. And without Prince Ranariddh, no meaningful election could take place. The U.S. effort to restore democracy thus hung in the balance.

At that point, Ambassador Quinn was given carte blanche to try to achieve what seemed to be the impossible. Using instincts

honed over a career, the Ambassador delivered to Hun Sen in a special indirect channel, a stark message he crafted which emphasized Cambodia's uncertain future if Prince Ranariddh could not come back. It had a powerful impact. Two days later, Hun Sen suddenly reversed months of obstinacy and approved amnesty for the Prince. The Ambassador's message had succeeded brilliantly.

Prince Ranariddh's return was the breakthrough that permitted the country to move toward the July 26 National Assembly election, but the prospects for a credible vote seemed dim given the pattern of violence that still pervaded the countryside. To counter this. The Ambassador next pressed a series of steps to deter this intimidation, including special UN political monitors; roving human rights observers; and over 20,000 U.S.-funded Cambodian NGO representatives. (Included was a struggling organization headed by a group of highly motivated Cambodian women whose funding was preserved by Ambassador Quinn's intervention.) This massive presence greatly diminished political violence and permitted an election day evaluated as open and credible by virtually all observers.

Ambassador Quinn's election reporting during this period was spectacular. He catalogued voter election intimidation efforts by visits to remote hamlets, and on election day floated his land cruiser across the Mekong on a makeshift ferry to assess the voting in remote Hun Sen-controlled areas. He also accurately predicted that the opposition's combined total vote would exceed Hun Sen's party, but the opposition's lack of unity would mean Hun Sen would win the most seats.

Controversy swirled about this election result which led to violent protests and opposition demonstrations in the capital. On eight days in a row, the chancery was surrounded and violence erupted with shots fired outside the walls and over the top of the Embassy compound, seriously wounding a number of people. Again, as violence spread, the Ambassador acted decisively to protect endangered political figures. He exposed himself to large crowds to ensure one wounded demonstrator received medical assistance. And his forceful condemnation helped halt the mob violence in which several Vietnamese were stoned to death and 34,000 others fled the city.

On August 20, while leading a late night sit-in protest at the Ministry of Interior, opposition leader Sam Rainsy had a hand grenade thrown near him, killing one person. In the ensuing chaos, Rainsy was seized by police. Fearing he would be executed, Rainsy's wife frantically phoned the Ambassador shortly before midnight desperate for help. The Ambassador raced to the home of the Minister of Interior, woke him up and stayed with him for the next two hours, convincing the Minister to admit UN monitors to the Ministry compound and eventually to free Rainsy. The next day Rainsy and his wife both wrote to the

Ambassador thanking him profusely for his crucial intervention which as Mrs. Rainsy said, "saved my husband's life."

Two weeks later, Kem Sokha, the leading opposition human rights activist, in hiding from the police and fearful of being harmed or killed, appealed to the Ambassador for protection. The Ambassador arranged for a safehouse for Sokha and later directed his clandestine movement to the chancery where he remained in hiding for the next two months. Kem Sokha is alive and free today thanks to Ambassador Quinn's dedicated efforts.

As protests continued, the government also threatened violence against foreign journalists. Ambassador Quinn met with more than a dozen American reporters to assure them of his personal protection. He then confronted Hun Sen over threats against these American citizens. Within 45 minutes he had complete assurances of their safety and ability to keep publishing.

Finally, when efforts to end the violence collapsed, the Ambassador elicited from King Sihanouk a last-minute commitment to delay his departure to China and to convene a political summit. The Ambassador next convinced Hun Sen to attend and then provided personal security assurances to Prince Ranariddh so he could attend. Six days later, thanks to Ambassador Quinn's last-ditch initiative, an agreement was reached to form a new coalition government with genuine power sharing, thus permitting an end to violence and the return of over 50,000 refugees. At last Cambodia was at peace again.

It can be also now be revealed that Ambassador Quinn was at the forefront of U.S. efforts to locate and assist in the apprehension of senior Khmer Rouge leaders. The Ambassador worked closely with NSC staff to pressure Hun Sen to try to capture these individuals alive and, at one point, to deploy to Cambodia on an extremely close-hold basis U.S. Marshals and Special Forces liaison personnel to assist in this operation. On March 6, 1999, this consistent U.S. pressure paid off when senior Khmer Rouge Commander Ta Mok, aka "the butcher," one of the worst genocidal murderers in human history, was apprehended, effectively bringing to an end the Khmer Rouge era. Ambassador Quinn's role in this effort was particularly fitting since 25 years earlier, he had submitted the first report ever written anywhere revealing the radical murderous policies of the Khmer Rouge.

Eighteen months after the fighting that shattered the Paris Agreement, Secretary Albright sent a personal message to the Ambassador praising him for his significant accomplishment in protecting human rights, eradicating the Khmer Rouge and playing an absolutely essential role in the restoration of peace and elective government in Cambodia. As such Ambassador Kenneth M. Quinn is truly deserving of receiving the Distinguished Honor Award.