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UNTAC deploys and displays success

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On the eve of UNTAC's arrival in Cambodia on 15 March 1992, the Khmer Rouge adopted a contradictory position: On the one hand they called for UNTAC's quick deployment and promised to cooperate with the mission once it had arrived, but they had constantly and deliberately obstructed UNAMIC's efforts in making preparations and violated the cease-fire. UNTAC was divided into two phases. Phase one, which started after the signing of the Paris Agreement, was to see a complete cease-fire and the total withdrawal of foreign military forces along with their equipment, with ongoing verification of their non-return. Phase Two would set in motion the disarmament and demobilisation of 70 per cent of the Cambodian factions' armies, with the residual 30 per cent remaining in cantonments under UN control to be either demobilised later, or incorporated into a new national army. UNTAC would also have to foster a neutral political environment and organise and hold elections. During the negotiations of the Paris Agreements, much focus had been on disarmament, and a large part of the peace accords was devoted this part of the mission. It was considered to be the key to every other aspect of the operation and an absolutely vital precondition for the organisation of elections.¹ Eventually, three months later, as Phase Two started, the Khmer Rouge boycotted the disarmament and demobilisation process, plunging the entire operation into a crisis. This chapter explores the reasons why UNTAC failed to achieve its first objective.

Most scholars have pointed at the slow arrival of UNTAC's military units and civilian teams in Cambodia as well as inadequate preparation as the main causes for UNTAC's inability to succeed in disarming the Cambodian factions.² It has been argued that the late deployment of UNTAC proved "extremely damaging" for the operation. Michael Mersiades has pointed out that it effected Khmer Rouge perceptions of UNTAC's legitimacy.³ According to Lise Howard, the delays forced the operation into "a state of organisational dysfunction."⁴ Sorpong Peou and David Roberts have argued that the Khmer Rouge demonstrated a degree of cooperation and seemed prepared to participate in the disarmament, and demobilisation process, but refused to comply because UNTAC failed to address their concerns about security.⁵ This chapter will show that scholars have made the same misinterpretation as the UN leadership at the time by taking the Khmer Rouge leadership's statements about their commitment to the peace process at face value, although their statements continued to be in complete contradiction to their actions. It will be demonstrated, first, that rather than ignoring the Khmer Rouge's security concerns, the UN leadership ignored the Khmer Rouge's strategy of stonewalling UNTAC's efforts while

1 S/23613, Report of the Secretary-General on Cambodia, 19 February 1992.

2 Wang, *Managing Arms in Peace Processes*, 21, 43, 85; Peou, *Conflict Neutralization*, 14, 192; Chopra et al., *Report on the Cambodian peace process*, 18; Doyle, *UNTAC's Civil Mandate*, 83; Findlay, *Cambodia*, 113, 35; Schear, "Riding the Tiger," 154, 175; Roberts, *Political Transition in Cambodia*, 64.

3 Mersiades, "Peacekeeping and legitimacy," 210.

4 Morjé Howard, *UN Peacekeeping in Civil Wars*, 147.

5 Peou, "Implementing Cambodia's Peace Agreement," 512, 523; Roberts, *Political Transition in Cambodia*, 102.

continuously raising their price for cooperation. Second, we will see that though the slow arrival of peacekeepers was certainly harmful for UNTAC's authority, it was above all the great reluctance with which they were deployed in March 1992 that deprived UNTAC of early momentum and authority. Third, a major reason for Phase Two to flounder was the fact that the civilian UN leadership was more focussed on the ultimate objective of organising elections, sticking to the predetermined time schedule, than on the disarmament and demobilisation.

A contested implementation plan

With regard to the disarmament and demobilisation of the Cambodian factions, the Paris Peace Agreements stipulated that the factions' soldiers were first expected to report to specifically designated regroupment zones; every faction had its own set in the parts of the country they controlled, where peacekeepers would be waiting for them. From there they would be escorted to nearby cantonment sites, large camps of battalion size (some 800 men) operated by UNTAC's military. The faction's soldiers would then hand in their weapons and ammunition to be stored in the custody of UNTAC. Once the cantonment would be completed, UNTAC infantry battalions would patrol the countryside and verify if all soldiers and their weapons had been committed to the cantonments. All in all, it was an ambitious and complicated process which relied on the full cooperation of all the factions. But these general outlines of the Paris Agreement had yet to be translated into a more specific implementation plan.⁶

Awaiting his official appointment as UNTAC force commander, Sanderson was temporarily named "Military Advisor to the Secretary-General on Cambodia."⁷ Between 17 November and 7 December 1991, General Sanderson and General Dibuama together led a UN military survey mission to Cambodia, which was mandated to prepare the military part of the implementation plan.⁸ As a result of this survey mission, which mostly operated from Bangkok and spent only nine days in Cambodia, a first draft of the implementation plan was produced by the UN Secretariat. Sanderson, who had not been given an official position in New York and continued to operate from Australia, had his doubts about the plan.⁹ It foresaw to deploy a force of twelve battalions with a total of 15,900 troops.¹⁰ This was much more than the 6,000 personnel a UN fact-finding mission in 1989, under the leadership of the Norwegian lieutenant general Martin Vadset, had concluded would be necessary, and Secretary-General Pérez de Cuéllar had in mind.¹¹ UNTAC's future force commander was especially concerned that the fragile infrastructure in Cambodia could not handle such a large force and that it would be too expensive. He therefore hoped that the Cambodian

6 Agreement on a Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict, Paris, 23 October 1991, Annex II, Article III.

7 Resolution 718 (1991) Decisions, Dag Hammarskjöld Digital Library, United Nations, New York; Interview by Hugh Smith with John M. Sanderson, 10 July 1998, Canberra Australia, Yale-UN Oral History Project, Dag Hammarskjöld Digital Library, United Nations, New York.

8 UN Security Council Resolution 718 (1991).

9 Letter Sanderson to Dibuama, 6 December 1991, Sanderson papers, Australian Defence Force Academy Library (ADFA), box 2, file 7.

10 "Report of the United Nations Military Survey Mission to Cambodia 17 November–16 December 1991, United Nations New York, 24 December 1991," NIMH-099, file 13; Letter Sanderson to Dibuama, 6 December 1991.

11 Military officers from Australia, Britain, Canada, France, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Norway, and Poland participated in this mission. See: Haas, "The Paris conference on Cambodia, 1989," 45; Television interview with Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, 17 November 1991, URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NDdFbMcMkS0>.

factions might be willing to agree to “a less precise and rigid approach to the disengagement and demobilization,” which would also considerably lower the costs of the operation.¹² Realising that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations was overstretched and lacked the experience to plan such a large and complicated mission as UNTAC, Sanderson decided to travel to New York uninvited.¹³ But when he arrived at UN headquarters on 15 January, nobody could receive him because he had no official invitation. Sanderson was shocked to discover that at the Department of Peacekeeping Operations there was no special operation room for Cambodia and a limited understanding of translating the Paris Agreement into operational military terms. This was illustrated by Dibumama’s intention to deploy UNTAC between June and September 1992, which was in the middle of the wet season, when Cambodia’s badly-maintained roads would become impassable because of the mud, making a deployment a logistical nightmare.¹⁴ Sanderson had to wait until 5 February 1992 to become officially involved in the planning process, which was two days after the Secretariat had finished a definitive version of the implementation plan.¹⁵

Loridon, who was wasn’t involved in the planning process for UNTAC either, also disagreed with the ideas that dominated in New York about the strategy for disarmament and demobilisation. The French general did not believe it was necessary to have as many as 15,900 peacekeepers deployed in Cambodia, and felt that the mission of disarming and demobilising the Cambodian factions could be achieved in a much more efficient, cheaper and flexible way. On 24 January, he sent his official recommendations to the UN Secretariat in which he proposed to start immediately with the progressive deployment of a total force of 5,000 peacekeepers. Loridon’s idea was to have all these units deployed before 15 May and organise them in fifty mobile groups of 100 blue helmets.¹⁶ These mobile groups would drive around the countryside and disarm the Cambodian factions’ units on the spot, completing the disarmament by 15 July. Once the demobilisation completed, the mobile groups would patrol vigorously and set up camp in the villages, live among the Cambodians to win their confidence and gather intelligence about remaining arms caches. In the case of a cease-fire violation report, one or two mobile groups would rush to the location to calm the situation and investigate.¹⁷ Loridon’s plan for deploying small mobile groups of blue helmets among the Cambodian population was partly inspired on classic counterinsurgency doctrine.¹⁸ It resembled the strategy that had been applied by General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny during the First Indochina War in the 1950s, but it deviated completely from the traditional United Nations operating procedure in which sectors were being allotted to

12 Letter Sanderson to Dibumama, 6 December 1991, Sanderson papers, ADEA Library, S-2-7. Australian government officials also expected that the UN Secretariat would eventually scale down the proposal to cut costs as much as possible. See: Berry, *Cambodia – From Red to Blue*, 215.

13 John Sanderson, *Command at the operational level*, unpublished paper given at the Australian Command and Staff College Queensland, 26 June 2000.

14 Horner and Connor, *The Good International Citizen*, 144; Chopra et al., *Report on the Cambodian Peace Process*, 18.

15 Lt. Col. Russel Stuart, “MMWG update on preparation for UNTAC,” 3 February 1992, “Deployment of military component UNTAC,” UNA, S-0994-0002-0006; Horner and Connor, *The Good International Citizen*, 144. It was only on 19 February that the Secretary-General submitted the definitive implementation plan for UNTAC to the Security Council.

16 Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh, 27 January 1992, “Activités militaires des Nations Unies au Cambodge,” ADN, 10 POI/1 1310.

17 Briefing by Brigadier General Michel Loridon to French officers in Phnom Penh, May 1992, ECPAD Ivry-sur-Seine, 92.9.014 - K7-23.

18 Karsten Friis, “Peacekeeping and Counter-insurgency – Two of a Kind?,” *International Peacekeeping* 17, no. 1 (2010): 52.

different national infantry battalions.¹⁹ But Loridon was largely unfamiliar with the UN's modus operandi and proposed a plan that he believed was best adapted to the situation on the ground in Cambodia. The other problem was that the Paris Peace Agreements stipulated that the Cambodian faction's soldiers were to disarm and demobilise by reporting to regroupment areas before being interned into cantonments of battalion size or larger. But Loridon did not believe that forcing the Cambodian soldiers to live in barbed-wire camps and separate them from their families for an extended period would be a workable method to achieve the disarmament of the factions.²⁰ He argued that his alternative plan also fitted perfectly within the of Paris Agreements.²¹ But Dibuama and Goulding did not adopt Loridon's proposals.²²

Despite the input from both Sanderson and Loridon, the definitive implementation plan for UNTAC did not include their recommendations.²³ On 19 February, Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali presented UNTAC's implementation plan that respected Dibuama's original draft. UNTAC would consist of an infantry element of 10,200 soldiers, subdivided in twelve enlarged infantry battalions of 850 blue helmets each.²⁴ In consultation with the Cambodian factions, the number of cantonments had been scaled down from 317 to fifty-two camps, which meant that the number of cantoned soldiers per camp would now range between 1,600 and 7,000 men.²⁵ The number of camps had been reduced to the absolute minimum in order to reduce costs.²⁶ Whereas the Cambodian factions had agreed in Paris to a demobilisation of 70 per cent of their forces, the Secretary-General urged the factions again to agree to a demobilisation of all their forces, as this would enable UNTAC to close the cantonment areas and reduce the number of peacekeepers as quickly as possible, which would further reduce costs.²⁷ But this ambition seemed unrealistic as Hun Sen's State of Cambodia was unwilling to demobilise its entire army as long as

19 Fredrik Logevall, *Embers of War: The Fall of an Empire and the Making of America's Vietnam* (New York: Random House, 2012), 266.

20 Briefing by Brigadier General Michel Loridon to French officers in Phnom Penh; Telephone conversation between Marrack Goulding and General Michel Loridon," 7 February.

21 The Paris agreements could also be read in such a way that they did not. Paris Agreements, Annex II, Article VII Cessation of outside military assistance to all Cambodian Parties: "Immediately after the second phase of the cease-fire begins, UNTAC will take the following practical measures: c) Maintain mobile teams at strategic locations within Cambodia to patrol and investigate allegations of supply of arms to any of the Parties." And Paris Agreements, Annex II, VIII, Caches of weapons and military supplies, 2: "On the basis of information received, the military component shall, after the date referred to in paragraph 1, deploy verification teams to investigate each report and destroy each cache found." However, the Paris Agreements also determined that UNTAC would "supervise the regrouping and relocating of all forces to specifically designated cantonment areas [. . .] and initiate the process of arms control and reduction." See: Section C "military functions" of the UNTAC mandate, 20. UNA, S-0797-0011-0006.

22 When Loridon wanted to elaborate on his recommendations, Goulding and Dibuama said that his cable had never been received in New York. See: "Telephone conversation between Marrack Goulding and General Michel Loridon," 7 February.

23 Lt. Col. Russel Stuart, "MMWG update on preparation for UNTAC," 3 February 1992, "Deployment of military component UNTAC," UNA, S-0994-0002-0006. It was only on 19 February that the Secretary-General submitted the definitive implementation plan for UNTAC to the Security Council.

24 UNTAC's military component would have a total strength of 15,900 men and women and would also include 485 military observers, 2,230 military engineers, an air support group of 326, a signals unit of 582, a medical unit of 541, a logistic battalion of 872, and a naval element of 376 to operate six sea patrols boats and nine river patrol boats. S/23613, Report of the Secretary-General on Cambodia, 19 February 1992.

25 Internal memorandum Sanderson to Akashi, 24 March 1992, "Russian non-paper on expenditure cuts of the UN operation in Cambodia," UNA, S-1854-0003-0001.

26 S/23613, Report of the Secretary-General on Cambodia, 19 February 1992.

27 S/23613; UN Security Council Resolution 745, 28 February 1992; Paris Peace Agreement, Annex 2, Article V-1. UNA, S-0797-0011-0006.

the Khmer Rouge were able to hide soldiers and arms out of UNTAC's sight.²⁸ Logically, Khmer Rouge commander-in-chief, Son Sen, favoured a demobilisation of 100 per cent because it would strongly weaken the power of Hun Sen's regime.²⁹

When the Secretary-General presented his implementation plan for UNTAC to the Security Council on 28 February, he started with a disclaimer. He admitted to the Council that the plan "may appear ambitious, and its cost rather worrying," but argued that it merely translated into operational terms the ambitious and unprecedented mandate conceived by the authors of the Paris Agreements. Nothing was definitive, he asserted, except for the timetable of the operation, in which the final objective was the organisation of elections in late April or early May 1993. This date was "a major political imperative," and Boutros-Ghali assured the Security Council that everything would be done to hold that timetable. Somewhat paradoxically, the Secretary-General also underlined that it would be "necessary to show some measure of flexibility in the conduct of this operation."³⁰ Frankly recognising that the information in his implementation plan was not necessarily complete and precise enough – given the continuing development of the situation in Cambodia – Boutros-Ghali made it clear in his report that it contained recommendations that may "need to be re-examined in the light of experience, once UNTAC is in place."³¹ He promised to the Council that he would propose necessary adjustments, as well as to visit Cambodia in April in order to examine personally how the whole operation was progressing in the field.³² Shining in absence was a budget for UNTAC. The Secretary-General did not spell out in detail how much the entire UNTAC operation would cost and only provided the rough projection of \$1.9 billion to cover the entire mission's eighteen months. This money, however, had not been reserved, and the General Assembly had only approved \$200 million as an advance appropriation.³³

The Security Council members were not entirely satisfied with the Secretariat's implementation plan. The scale and estimated costs for the operation were a true shock. The Americans, who knew they would have to pay the largest share of the bill, made it clear that UNTAC risked becoming far too expensive.³⁴ The other P5 members were equally sceptical, but not only for financial reasons. As peacekeeping operations were multiplying, member states were facing difficulties in providing peacekeepers on time. Realising that a rejection of the plan was virtually impossible as it would only lead to further delays, it was unanimously adopted by the Security Council. The P5 and other Council members instead emphasised the importance of making UNTAC cost-effective and gladly endorsed Boutros-Ghali's remarks about the need for constant re-evaluation and revision of the UNTAC plan in light of the real situation in Cambodia. The United States permanent representative, Thomas Pickering, stated: "We wholeheartedly welcome the Secretary-General's intention continually to review and refine UNTAC's operation in the light of actual experience and new information, with a view to maximum effectiveness and

28 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 8 April 1992, "Your UNTAC-493," UNA, S-0794-0046-0004.

29 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 1 April 1992, "Third situation report," UNA, S-0794-0046-0004; Brief for the Secretary-General on the military situation in Cambodia, 16 April 1992, UNA, S-0794-0046-0004.

30 Provisional verbatim record of the 3057th meeting, held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 28 February 1992 (S/PV.3057.), 7.

31 S/23613, Report of the Secretary-General on Cambodia, 19 February 1992.

32 S/PV.3057., 7.

33 Ratner, *The New UN Peacekeeping*, 164.

34 Joel Brinkley, *Cambodia's Curse: The Modern History of a Troubled Land* (New York: Public Affairs, 2012), 70.

the most efficient use of resources.”³⁵ In order to make UNTAC cost-efficient, Security Council members underlined that the timetable of the operation, and the target date for the elections, should be scrupulously respected.³⁶ Everyone realised that speed was of the essence and that UNTAC would have to be fully deployed before the wet season arrived in May. Any delay in the implementation plan was likely to lead to difficulties and increasing costs. But the call for respect of the timetable was somewhat at odds with the call for maximum flexibility.

In his implementation plan, the Secretary-General also laid down four essential conditions that would have to be met to enable UNTAC to discharge its responsibilities effectively and impartially. First, UNTAC would need the full support of the Security Council; second, it needed to be assured of full cooperation, at all times, of all Cambodian factions; third, the military component would need to enjoy full freedom of movement; fourth, the necessary financial resources needed to be provided by member states in full and in a timely manner.³⁷ With the Khmer Rouge dragging their feet and the uncertainty about the finances of the operation, the Secretary-General omitted to mention that only one of these conditions seemed to have been met at the time of publishing his report, which was the unanimous support of the Security Council.

UNTAC's hesitant deployment

The situation in Cambodia was disconcerting. UNAMIC had not succeeded in maintaining the cease-fire: fighting was still ongoing in Kompong Thom where the NADK continued to attempt to push to the south and cut off the CPAF's access to the northern provinces. The Khmer Rouge troops were at least ten kilometres (six miles) from Kompong Thom, surrounding all but the southern side of the town as they were unable to cut the road to Phnom Penh.³⁸ The civilian population suffered badly from the fighting in Kompong Thom: 15,000 Cambodians, mostly poor rice farmers, were forced to leave their fields and villages.³⁹ The Khmer Rouge's cooperation with the UN had eroded significantly in the six weeks preceding UNTAC's deployment. On 7 March, Prince Sihanouk publicly accused the Khmer Rouge of deliberately stalling the peace process. "All the problems are created by them. If there were no Khmer Rouge there would be no problems. You won't even need UNTAC," he stated.⁴⁰ Richard Solomon, the US assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, witnessed a widespread concern about the lack of cooperation by the Khmer Rouge when he visited Cambodia between 9 and 11 March, only a few days before UNTAC's arrival. "Across the board, they just keep making excuses not to cooperate," Solomon stated to journalists.⁴¹ In New York, however, one seemed to remain unaware of the erosion of the Khmer Rouge's cooperation.

When UNAMIC transitioned into UNTAC, the UN operation in Cambodia was now officially placed under the leadership of the special representative Yasushi Akashi, who succeeded

35 S/PV.3057, 44.

36 S/PV.3057, 18.

37 S/23613.

38 Jean-Claude Chapon, "Khmer Rouge refuses to end fighting, head of U.N. mission due," *AFP*, 14 March 1992.

39 Mark Dodd, "U.N. peace team due in embattled Cambodia region," *Reuters*, 2 April 1992.

40 Kiernan, "The Cambodian crisis," 21.

41 Mark Dodd, "Cash, Khmer Rouge trouble U.N. effort, US says," *Reuters*, 11 March 1992; Nate Thayer, "Solomon Says Khmer Rouge Obstruct Peace Process," *The Associated Press*, 10 March 1992.

Ataul Karim as the highest UN official in Cambodia. Lt. Gen. John Sanderson took over the military command from Brig. Gen. Michel Loridon, who became UNTAC's deputy force commander. From the moment that Loridon passed over the UN military command in Cambodia to Sanderson it became clear that the two generals held very different ideas about how the peacekeeping operation ought to be conducted. As a consequence, the working relation between the force commander and his deputy was tense from the start.⁴² It was a clear clash of personalities. In character and experience, the two generals were each other's opposites. Sanderson was a calm, reflective and soft-spoken political general, a methodical planner with diplomatic skills. Trained as an army engineer, he had been deployed to East Malaysia during the Malayan Emergency in 1966 and to South Vietnam in 1971 where he was engaged in mine-clearance, the reconstruction of infrastructure and civic action operations.⁴³ Later in his career, Sanderson became director of plans of the Australian Army and worked as a coordinator between the departments of Defence and Foreign Affairs for the development of Australia's military strategic policy. It was in this last capacity that Sanderson became involved in the planning for Australia's contribution to a future peacekeeping operation in Cambodia.⁴⁴ This provided Sanderson with a clear understanding of the context in which he operated and how his actions on the operational level could have great implications on the political level. The head of the UN's Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Marrack Goulding, remembered Sanderson as "rather conventional," "very cautious," but also "a safe pair of hands."⁴⁵ Loridon, on the other hand, acquired a reputation for being vigorous, dynamic, practical and forceful.⁴⁶ The French general also explicitly distanced himself from politics. To the Cambodian generals he said: "we are officers and we will have accomplished our mission if the cease-fire is respected. Let the politicians discuss."⁴⁷ He was a veteran of the Algerian War and later served in the French Foreign Legion. He had been the commander of French forces in the Central African Republic and of the French army's elite 11th Parachute Brigade. These experiences made him familiar with quick deployments and improvising in rapidly changing circumstances.⁴⁸

On 11 March 1992, the first units of UNTAC's military component, an Indonesian battalion of the 503rd Para Raider Infantry, arrived in Phnom Penh. Loridon was eager to deploy the Indonesian paratroopers immediately to Kompong Thom, interpose them between the belligerents to ease the situation, reassure the population and make a clear demonstration of UNTAC's authority.⁴⁹ He told journalists that UNTAC was able to deploy very quickly and that

42 Author's interview with Michel Loridon; Horner and Connor, *The Good International Citizen*, 145.

43 CV Lieutenant General John Sanderson, AMBZ, BZ-00391; Interview by Hugh Smith with Lieutenant General John M. Sanderson, 10 July 1998, Canberra, Australia, Yale-UN Oral History Project, Dag Hammarskjöld Library, United Nations, New York.

44 John M. Sanderson, *Command at the operational level*.

45 Interview by James S. Sutterlin with Marrack Goulding.

46 Richard Solomon was impressed by the "dynamic" and "vigorous" way by which Loridon had led the UNAMIC mission. See: Cable French Ambassador Washington, DC, 24 February 1992, "Consultations Franco-Américaines sur l'Asie: Cambodge," ADN, 10 POI/1 1310; Klintworth, "Cambodia 1992: Hopes Fading," 115.

47 Record of Mixed Military Working Group Emergency Meeting, 13 March 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006.

48 CV General Michel Loridon, Archives Diplomatiques Nantes, NY 10 POI/1 1310; Author's interview with Michel Loridon. For a good analysis of Loridon's 11th French parachute brigade operating in a peacekeeping environment, see: Chiara Ruffa, *Military cultures in peace and stability operations Afghanistan and Lebanon* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 60.

49 Cable Loridon to Goulding, 15 March 1992, "Situation au Cambodge," UNA, S-0995-0001-0004; Briefing by Brigadier General Michel Loridon to French officers in Phnom Penh.

he had instructed the Indonesian troops in Phnom Penh to be on standby to move to Kompong Thom, adding that this decision was, of course, one to be made by his superior, Sanderson.⁵⁰ The Khmer Rouge appeared to follow-up on their promise that as soon as UNTAC had arrived, UN forces would be allowed to deploy into their zones. On the day of UNTAC's arrival, the Khmer Rouge commander-in-chief, Son Sen, announced that he was willing to talk about a cease-fire in Kompong Thom if UNTAC would immediately deploy a battalion to the disputed province.⁵¹ Sensing a movement in the Khmer Rouge position he had not witnessed during his UNAMIC command, Loridon immediately drafted a plan for the deployment of two Indonesian companies to Kompong Thom, which he presented to Sanderson the moment the force commander landed in Phnom Penh on 15 March.⁵² But Sanderson did not follow Loridon's advice and preferred to make his own evaluation of the situation and his own plan. "I need more information before I make that decision," he stated to journalists at the airport.⁵³

Interviews conducted by Steven Heder with Khmer Rouge defectors and by David Roberts with the Khmer Rouge leadership both suggest that Khmer Rouge military had received orders from their superiors to be cooperative with UNTAC in March and April. Heder refers to "a brief honeymoon of hospitality" in which Khmer Rouge troops were instructed to welcome the peacekeepers in their zones.⁵⁴ Indeed, the Khmer Rouge leadership demonstrated very cooperative behaviour the moment UNTAC arrived in Cambodia. On 16 March, during a meeting of the Supreme National Council, the commander-in-chief of the Khmer Rouge army, Son Sen, made a solemn declaration in which he warmly welcomed Akashi and Sanderson to Cambodia and said that he strongly hoped that all UNTAC military and civilian personnel would soon be fully deployed around the country. "In this spirit, we salute with a profound satisfaction the arrival of the Indonesian and Malaysian battalion," he stated.⁵⁵ Although the Khmer Rouge had obstructed UNAMIC's efforts to prepare for UNTAC's arrival, Son Sen hypocritically paid "a vibrant tribute" to Karim and Loridon who, he alleged, had succeeded in their mandate despite the modest resources at their disposal.⁵⁶ A day later, when Sanderson and Akashi met privately with Son Sen, the Khmer Rouge army leader again urged them to deploy UNTAC troops immediately to Kompong Thom, and promised complete Khmer Rouge cooperation in this effort.⁵⁷ On the same day, the ambassadors of the P5 in Phnom Penh also strongly advised Akashi and Sanderson to establish a UN military presence in Kompong Thom as well as in the southern province of

50 Nate Thayer, "Khmer Rouge Rebels Refuse to Halt Fighting On Eve Of U.N. Mission," *The Associated Press*, 14 March 1992; "Khmer Rouge shuns cease-fire demands," *Canberra Times*, 15 March 1992.

51 Cable Loridon to Goulding, 15 March 1992, "Situation au Cambodge," UNA, S-0995-0001-0004; "Khmer Rouge call for end to fighting at Kompong Thom," *AFP*, 15 March 1992.

52 Cable Loridon to Goulding, 15 March 1992, "Situation au Cambodge," UNA, S-0995-0001-0004; Briefing by Brigadier General Michel Loridon to French officers in Phnom Penh.

53 "Khmer Rouge call for end to fighting at Kompong Thom," *AFP*, 15 March 1992.

54 Roberts, *Political Transition in Cambodia*, 94, 100, 96; Stephen Heder, "The Resumption of Armed Struggle by the Party of Democratic Kampuchea: Evidence from National Army of Democratic Kampuchea 'Self-Demobilizers'," in *Propaganda, Politics, and Violence in Cambodia: Democratic Transition under United Nations Peace-keeping*, eds. Stephen Heder and Judy Ledgerwood (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), 104; Jianwei Wang, *Managing Arms in Peace Processes: Cambodia* (Geneva: United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, 1996), 59.

55 Déclaration de S.E. M. Son Sen Membre du Conseil National Suprême à la Réunion du CNS à Phnom Penh, le 16 Mars 1992, UNA, S-1085-0021-0007.

56 Ibid.

57 Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 19 March 1992, "UNTAC Sitrep 15 March to 18 March," UNA, S-1829-0316-0002.

Kampot, in order to prevent further cease-fire violations in these areas and make it clear from the outset that UNTAC would not tolerate any “no-go areas.”⁵⁸ But Sanderson refused, explaining that he wanted to avoid “entrapment” and emphasising the necessity to organise reliable supply lines first.⁵⁹ Sanderson felt that he didn’t have sufficient logistical and medical support, nor were there enough officers available who could concentrate on making detailed plans.⁶⁰ Only two out of eleven infantry battalions had arrived in Cambodia, and these were still dependent on support units from UNAMIC. The medical contingent from Germany counted only fifteen personnel, and the French aviation assets were reaching the limits of their capacities. UNTAC did not yet have logistic support units, which meant that the battalions were dependent on their own sixty days of supplies.⁶¹ With such a fragile force, Sanderson preferred not to send his troops into the area before the fighting had stopped, cease-fire lines were drawn, and a detailed plan for their supervision was agreed upon. His starting point was that the Cambodian factions needed to agree to a local cease-fire first, before he deployed his troops to the province. “I don’t want U.N. troops stumbling blind around the countryside [. . .] If I had put U.N. troops in there this week, they would have been put right in the middle of a counter-offensive,” the force commander told reporters.⁶² He ordered the Indonesian battalion to remain on standby in Phnom Penh until the fighting in Kompong Thom had stopped.⁶³

Emphasising the importance of making detailed plans, Sanderson preferred to convene the Mixed Military Working Group in Phnom Penh first in order to work out a plan together with the factions and then deploy peacekeepers “in a properly constructed way.”⁶⁴ “You are all military officers and you know that you should make a plan before you commit your troops to an operation,” Sanderson said to the Cambodian generals during the meeting on 27 March in Phnom Penh. “Before I put UN soldiers in villages in the Kompong Thom area I must know what arrangements we have agreed there; who we are going to meet, what roads we are going to use, who is going to guarantee the opening of those roads.”⁶⁵ But agreement around a concrete plan could not be found because Khmer Rouge general Nuon Bunno refused to reveal the exact locations of his troops and minefields. He nonetheless agreed to the principle of a cease-fire and assured Sanderson that any UNTAC forces that moved into Kompong Thom province would not have to worry about their safety.⁶⁶ Meanwhile, Son Sen repeated his public calls for UNTAC to separate the fighting factions immediately: “If the referee stays only in Phnom Penh, we cannot stop the fighting,” Son Sen stated to the press, adding that “we will only be able to stop the fighting once UNTAC is on

58 “Expanded Perm Five statement welcoming UN Special Representative Yasushi Akashi, 15 March 1992,” UNA, S-0794-0046-0004.

59 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 17 March 1992, “Situation report,” UNA, S-0794-0046-0004.

60 Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 19 March 1992, “UNTAC Sitrep 15 March to 18 March,” UNA, S-1829-0316-0002.

61 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 21 April 1992, “UNTAC Deployment – Military and Police Component,” UNA, S-1854-0003-0003.

62 Sheri Prasso, “Generals refuse to halt fighting in central Cambodia,” *AFP*, 27 March 1992.

63 Message Sanderson to Lt Col Erwin Sudjono, 22 March 1992, “Directive on the employment of the Indonesian UNTAC battalion,” UNA, S-1854-0003-0001.

64 Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 19 March 1992, “UNTAC Sitrep 15 March to 18 March,” UNA, S-1829-0316-0002.

65 Minutes of the 11th meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group, 27 March 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006.

66 Minutes of the 11th meeting of the MMWG, 27 March 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006; Fax Bartu to Sanderson, 23 March 1992, “Record of Level II Meeting of MMWG on 21 March and Record of meeting between NADK and the Mixed Military Working Group – 22 March 1992,” UNA, S-0794-0022-0003.

the spot.”⁶⁷ Son Sen’s appeal for UNTAC’s interposition surely reflected an opportunistic move to use the blue helmets to protect their conquered territory against counterattacks by the CPAE, but UNTAC missed an opportunity to respond to this Khmer Rouge request for an immediate demonstration of its strength.

Notwithstanding logistical problems, Sanderson’s cautious reflexes during the first two weeks of his command seem, above all, to have been informed by political considerations. On 1 April, the Australian parliament was scheduled to vote about the government’s resolution to contribute a contingent of 500 army communication specialists to UNTAC. But the ambitious policy of the Australian Labor Party with regard to the Cambodian peace process was not uncontroversial. Already from early 1989, when the Labor government began discussing options for a contribution to a possible peacekeeping operation in Cambodia, a political debate erupted around the nature of such a mission and the dangers to which Australian personnel would be exposed.⁶⁸ In August 1989, Foreign Minister Gareth Evans publicly promised that in the case that Australian troops were to be deployed to Cambodia, it would be to observe a negotiated peace, not to settle a war.⁶⁹ Evans also reminded the “less-than-happy” and “destructive” role Australia had played two decades earlier in Indochina through its participation in the Vietnam War. “This time round,” he stated, “we want any contribution we might make to be wholly peaceful and constructive,” and emphasised that Australia would not send troops into a “shooting war.”⁷⁰ Evans criticised the foreign policy of Australia’s conservative governments in the past which, from a left-Labor viewpoint, had been too much focussed on maintaining the “imperial link” with Britain and close ties with the United States, leading to Australia’s active and much deplored involvement in the Vietnam War.⁷¹ Evans was determined to start a new chapter in Australia’s relations with Asia and implement the Labor Party’s foreign policy doctrine which was predicated on working out Australia’s regional identity by playing an “active partnership role” in Asia.⁷² Taking the lead in a future peacekeeping operation in Cambodia thus had a strategic and symbolic significance for the Labor government. However, it was clear from the start that it had to be avoided at all costs that Australia would be held responsible for an escalation of violence in Indochina. Such a scenario would be a nightmare for the Labor government, as it would not only go against the party’s traditional foreign policy principles and make itself vulnerable to the opposition, but it would also endanger the objective of establishing close partnerships with key Asian countries such as China and Japan and developing Australia’s new Asian identity.

In Australian political tradition, the government was expected to seek bipartisan support in the policy areas of foreign affairs and defence. It would be unthinkable that the largest deployment of Australian troops overseas since the Vietnam War, and especially to Indochina, would occur without bipartisan support. However, the shadow foreign minister, Senator Robert Hill of the

67 Nate Thayer, “U.N. Fails to Obtain Cambodian Cease-fire,” *Associated Press*, 27 March 1992.

68 Horner and Connor, *The Good International Citizen*, 82.

69 “No shooting war for us in Cambodia, Evans says,” *The Canberra Times*, 25 August 1989.

70 Ibid.

71 Andrea Benvenuti and David Martin Jones, “Myth and Misrepresentation in Australian Foreign Policy: Menzies and Engagement with Asia,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 13, no. 4 (2011): 58.

72 Evans, *Incorrigible Optimist*, 152; Evans, *Australia’s Asian Future*; Meg Gurry, “Identifying Australia’s ‘Region’: From Evatt to Evans,” *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 49, no. 1 (May 1995): 28. Also see: James Cotton and John Ravenhill, eds., *Seeking Asian Engagement: Australia in World Affairs 1991–1995* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1997).

Liberal Party, was very critical of Australia's involvement in Cambodia, which had resulted in some fierce confrontations between him and Evans in the Senate on this issue.⁷³ Under heavy pressure from the opposition, Evans promised that the peacekeeping mission in Cambodia would be a low-threat operation. In late October 1991, with the ink on the paper of the Paris Agreements hardly dry, Evans succeeded to persuade Prime Minister Hun Sen of the Phnom Penh government to visit Australia first before returning to Cambodia.⁷⁴ At a joint press conference with Evans in Canberra, Hun Sen reassured the Australian public that its peacekeepers "would not get bogged down in any military quagmire." Evans quickly endorsed Hun Sen's statements, and added that the most acute dangers that Australian troops would experience would come from the tropical environment and the many landmines in the Cambodian countryside. The Australian foreign minister also countered the idea that the Khmer Rouge was still strong enough to endanger the peace plan.⁷⁵

The debate about the safety of Australian troops nonetheless continued, and it was far from certain that the Australian contribution to UNTAC would receive bipartisan support in parliament.⁷⁶ As reports about the continuous fighting in Kompong Thom were echoed in the Australian press, Senator Hill expressed his concerns that UN soldiers would get involved in separating the Cambodian factions, which in his view, would exceed their peacekeeping role.⁷⁷ He threatened to withhold the opposition's support for the Australian contribution to the operation if the government would not "come clean" about the dangers posed to Australian peacekeepers in Cambodia and provide guarantees that they would only receive tasks involving minimum risks.⁷⁸ In reaction, Evans guaranteed that UN troops would not get involved in a "separation exercise" and assured that they were "not going to be thrown into a hot-war, shooting-war situation," as this was "not their role."⁷⁹

Before the Australian contribution was put to the vote in parliament on 1 April, Prime Minister Paul Keating had made a statement that aimed to reassure the critical opposition and obtain bipartisan support for the Australian contribution to UNTAC. He especially underlined the peacekeeping character of the operation by stating: "UNTAC most definitely will not have a role enforcing or imposing the peace if hostilities break out," because that would be "a task that would go beyond the UN mandate."⁸⁰ Keating declared that the government had carefully assessed all the risks and vowed to take "every prudent precaution to protect our troops."⁸¹ Finally, he made it clear that this meant that Australia could not sustain its presence in case the situation

73 See for example the debate in the Australian Senate on 6 December 1990 during which Senator Evans was the first Australian parliamentarian to use the f-word during a debate when Senator Hill expressed his concerns about a report in *Jane's Defence Weekly* about the alleged delivery of Chinese tanks to the Khmer Rouge. See: Senate Official Hansard No. 142, 1990, Thursday, 6 December 1990.

74 Michael Byrnes, "Hun Sen heads for Australia after peace accord," *Financial Review*, 28 October 1991.

75 Greg Austin, "Australian troops for Cambodia told they won't have to fight," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 October 1991.

76 "Opposition fears Cambodia 'too dangerous' for Aussie troops," *AFP*, 27 March 1992.

77 David Lague, "UN peacekeeping efforts at a standstill in Cambodia," *The Australian Financial Review*, 31 March 1992.

78 Tony Parkinson, "Killing fields give no peace of mind," *The Australian*, 1 April 1992; Mark Metherell, "Libs Threaten To Oppose Peace Force," *The Age*, 28 March 1992; Jack Taylor, "Australia questions the sending of troops to Cambodia," *AFP*, 31 March 1992; Horner and Connor, *The Good International Citizen*, 133.

79 Mark Metherell, "Cambodia Force Will Keep Out Of Fire, Says Evans," *The Age*, 31 March 1992.

80 Emphasis in original document. "Statement by the Prime Minister, the Hon P.J. Keating MP Cambodia Peacekeeping 1 April 1992." See: Cable Netherlands Embassy in Canberra to The Hague, 8 April 1992, AMBZ, DPV 00168.

81 Ibid.

escalated: "if we conclude that there is no longer a peace to keep in Cambodia, the Australian and other UN forces will have to be withdrawn."⁸² Keating's speech seemed to have the desired effect, as the Liberal-National opposition eventually voted in favour of the Australian contribution to UNTAC, but expressed ongoing concerns about recent violations of the cease-fire and the dangers these posed for Australian defence personnel, the precise role of the UN force, and especially the character of the proposed demobilisation.⁸³ Keating's promise that the Australian contingent would be withdrawn if there would be no more peace to keep in Cambodia quickly reached Phnom Penh where Hun Sen commented to Australian journalists: "If we already had peace we would have invited you to come here as tourists, not a peace-keeping force."⁸⁴

It was clear that any casualty, caused by either a landmine or an accident, would certainly put the Australian government in a very difficult position. This domestic political context cannot be ignored in understanding Sanderson's prudence. "We are in Cambodia as peacekeepers, not peace enforcers," he told reporters on 29 March, adding that he would "not put U.N. forces in the middle of a confused environment and no cease-fire where the roads are mined."⁸⁵ Sanderson's decision to delay the deployment to Kompong Thom until a local cease-fire agreement had been reached was publicly supported by Gareth Evans, who stated to the press that UN troops were in Cambodia to monitor a settlement, not to separate the warring factions.⁸⁶ Interposing themselves between belligerents was nonetheless universally considered to be a classic peacekeeping task, which blue helmets had been executing since UNEF in 1956.

At this point, Akashi also believed that the risks to UN personnel should be kept as low as possible. The day after his arrival in Cambodia, the special representative argued in favour of employing demobilised Cambodian soldiers to demine the country instead of using UN personnel to do this dangerous work. Besides the argument that it would be cheaper, Akashi confided to Goulding that "loss of life and limb among volunteers from troop-contributing countries will have a very chilling effect on their willingness to participate in peacekeeping operations, and risks to them must be kept to an absolute minimum."⁸⁷ Akashi was keenly aware that Tokyo was just as sensitive to casualties as was Canberra. Besides paying a large part of UNTAC's bill, the Japanese government was eager to contribute peacekeepers to UNTAC, which would be the first overseas deployment of the Japanese army since the Second World War. In the emerging post-Cold War world, Tokyo was actively seeking a more prominent role on the international stage. A permanent seat in the UN Security Council was no secret ambition, and sending peacekeepers to Cambodia provided an excellent opportunity to make a first visible contribution to international peace and

82 Ibid.

83 Frost, *The Peace Process in Cambodia*, 44.

84 "Hun Sen hits Aussie peacekeeping fears," *Herald Sun*, 4 April 1992, 17; Jennar, *Croniques Cambodgiennes*, 217.

85 Nate Thayer, "Phnom Penh Launches Offensive as Cease-fire Efforts Stall," *The Associated Press*, 29 March 1992.

86 David Lague, "UN peacekeeping efforts at a standstill in Cambodia," *The Australian Financial Review*, 31 March 1992.

87 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 17 March 1992, "Situation report," UNA, S-0794-0046-0004. Also cited in: Shawcross, *Deliver Us from Evil*, 39.

security that would enhance its stature as an international power worthy a seat at the table.⁸⁸ The only obstacle in the way of realising these ambitions was the Japanese constitution that did not allow for sending the Japanese Self Defence Force (SDF) overseas. In order to modify the constitution, the Japanese government tried to get a bill adopted, the so-called Peace Keeping Operations (PKO) bill, that would allow Tokyo to contribute troops to UN peacekeeping operations, and in the first place to UNTAC. But when the Japanese government was officially asked for a contribution by the United Nations, six months of fierce political debate in the Japanese parliament about this sensitive issue had been inconclusive. As long as the PKO bill in Japan had not been adopted, news from Cambodia about casualties would certainly create an unfavourable climate for making it through parliament, which would be a major defeat for the government.

Things finally started to move with regard to the situation in Kompong Thom in the last days of March. A plan was made in the Mixed Military Working Group in Phnom Penh to hold cease-fire talks in the provincial capital itself. On 30 March, an UNTAC helicopter carrying Loridon picked-up two generals of the Khmer Rouge's 616th division from the jungle and brought them to the provincial capital for a meeting with military representatives from the other factions.⁸⁹ The meeting marked the first time Khmer Rouge generals were present in the SOC-controlled city of Kompong Thom since their removal from power in 1979. Initially, progress was hard to accomplish. A breakthrough only came after the Belgian major Motmans, leader of the UN liaison officers in Kompong Thom, took the initiative to travel to the frontline and succeeded in persuading local officers from both the NADK and the CPAF to accept a cease-fire. This forced the generals from both factions to agree to stop fighting for one week, carry off their wounded soldiers and demine the roads.⁹⁰ To celebrate this momentous occasion, Loridon offered the Cambodian generals a beer and together they toasted to the peace in Cambodia.⁹¹ Although the local cease-fire agreement was only temporary, it was a small but important step forward in the peace process because a framework for discussion in the volatile province was now finally in place. It also created the preconditions Sanderson had set for the deployment of his peacekeepers.⁹² In New York, Goulding, who was clearly preoccupied with the appearance of UNTAC's success, expressed satisfaction that the event had led to more positive reports about UNTAC in the international media.⁹³

88 Canberra strongly supported the Japanese permanent membership of the Security Council and encouraged Tokyo to demonstrate its political leadership in the Asia-Pacific region by contributing peacekeepers to UNTAC. Australia thus had an interest not to see Japan turn away from its contribution in Cambodia. See: Katsumi Ishizuka, "Japan's policy towards UN peacekeeping Operations," *International Peacekeeping* 12, no. 1 (2005): 68–71; Robert Delfs, "Looking for a role," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 18 June 1992, 41; Cable Netherlands Ambassador Tokyo to The Hague, 3 December 1991, AMBZ, 00168; Tom Ormonde, "Let Japan Join UN Force, Says Evans," *The Age*, 10 April 1992.

89 Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 1 April 1992, "Kampong Thom ceasefire negotiations," UNA, S-0794-0046-0004; Sheri Prasso, "Khmer Rouge battle as generals negotiate peace," *AFP*, 31 March 1992; Mark Dodd, "Cambodia field commanders talk truce at front," *Reuters*, 31 March 1992.

90 Colette Braeckman, "La drôle de paix de Kompong Thom," *Le Soir*, 14 April 1992; Letter by Lieutenant General Phung Siphon (SOC) to Sanderson and Loridon, 31 March 1992, "Proposal for the ceasefire on the spot in some areas of Kampong Thom Province," UNA, S-1854-0003-0001; Author's interview with Fabien Motmans and Eric Debontridder.

91 "Le retour à la paix Cambodge: timide progrès sur le terrain," *Le Figaro*, 1 April 1992; Author's interview with Michel Loridon; Author's interview with Fabien Motmans and Eric Debontridder.

92 Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 1 April 1992, "Kampong Thom ceasefire negotiations," UNA, S-0794-0046-0004; Cable Akashi to Goulding, 1 April 1992, "Third situation report," UNA, S-0794-0046-0004; Report on the meeting of SNC on 1 April 1992, UNA, S-1854-0003-0001.

93 Cable Goulding to Akashi, 6 April 1992, "Third Situation Report," UNA, S-1829-0314-0004.



Brigadier General Michel Loridon (right) toasts to the local cease-fire in Kompong Thom with NADK General Nuon Bunno (left) and CPAF General Phoeung Siphan (middle) on 30 March 1992. Photo credit: "Le retour à la paix Cambodge: timide progrès sur le terrain," Le Figaro, 1 April 1992/ Reuters.

Again Loridon did not hesitate to publicly pressure his superior to proceed with the rapid deployment of UN troops to the area: "I will tell General Sanderson we must show the U.N. flag to give confidence to the population," he told journalists.⁹⁴ The next day, Sanderson ordered one company of Indonesian peacekeepers to deploy to Kompong Thom. A convoy of seventeen trucks with 193 Indonesian soldiers was enthusiastically welcomed by the local population who turned out in thousands to greet them.⁹⁵ But instead of immediately interposing themselves between the factions in the countryside, the peacekeepers remained inside the provincial town. Sanderson explained that the Indonesian troops would only be deployed to the villages once agreement on the separation of forces had been reached and confirmation was given that all roads were demined. Béatrice Pouligny's field research in Cambodia gives an idea of how such actions were perceived by the local population. Pouligny recorded a testimony of a Cambodian district chief from Battambang, who witnessed a similar situation: "The UNTAC people never went further than here [the district capital]; they did not go into the district itself. [...] There was a company here, but they stayed in the centre of the district, they did not move. UNTAC was afraid of the Khmer Rouge. They were afraid of those who had weapons. [...] When they agreed to move, it was long after everything had calmed down. [...] I used to say to the village chiefs and peasant delegations who came to see me: You must not expect anything from these people; they won't

94 Mark Dodd, "U.N. peace team due in embattled Cambodia region," *Reuters*, 2 April 1992.

95 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 1 April 1992, "Third situation report," UNA, S-0794-0046-0004; Cable Akashi to Goulding, 8 April 1992, "Your UNTAC-493," UNA, S-0794-0046-0004; Angus MacSwan, Khmer Rouge thwart U.N. in Northern Cambodia," *Reuters*, 26 April 1992.

do anything to protect you.”⁹⁶ The Cambodian factions, including the Khmer Rouge, were also surprised and continued to assert that a cease-fire could only come into effect once peacekeepers were deployed between their armies.⁹⁷

Concessions in reaction to violations

After two weeks of UNTAC's presence in Cambodia, the awe of the UN operation was rapidly vanishing. This was most clearly reflected in the increasingly uncooperative behaviour of the Khmer Rouge. The reason for the decreasing cooperation from this party was not that UNTAC was unable to fulfil the Khmer Rouge's demand to verify the alleged presence of Vietnamese forces, as has been suggested by some scholars.⁹⁸ On the contrary, Akashi and Sanderson went very far in trying to satisfy the Khmer Rouge by making demonstrations of UNTAC's neutrality and goodwill. The problem was that the Khmer Rouge were clearly unimpressed by UNTAC's authority and used the very fragile cease-fire in Kompong Thom to set conditions and demand more concessions. Before allowing blue helmets entry to their zones, the Khmer Rouge now demanded that UNTAC first verified the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia. They persisted in their claim that the Vietnamese army was continuously making incursions into Cambodia, but they were never able to provide any proof or exact locations. The Khmer Rouge cleverly used the Paris Agreements that did not give a precise definition of “foreign forces” to make the preposterous claim that the term also applied to what they referred to as “Vietnamese forces in disguise.” This virtually meant any ethnic Vietnamese in Cambodia, including the large number of Vietnamese immigrants who had recently come to Cambodia for economic opportunities in the wake of UNTAC's arrival, reinforcing the Khmer Rouge argument that their country was being occupied by Vietnam. The Khmer Rouge probably knew that this would strike a responsive chord with the non-communist resistance factions and ordinary Cambodians. KPNLF-leader Son Sann repeatedly claimed in May 1992 that over one million Vietnamese had entered Cambodia illegally in an attempt to colonise Cambodia and prop up the Hun Sen government in the elections.⁹⁹

The primary Khmer Rouge demand was that UNTAC establish twelve checkpoints at the Vietnamese-Cambodian border and three at the frontier with Laos to verify that no shipment of arms or Vietnamese forces were being brought into Cambodia.¹⁰⁰ The Paris Agreements required UNTAC to deploy these border checkpoints with military observers only after Phase Two of the cease-fire had begun.¹⁰¹ Sanderson nonetheless decided to establish the checkpoints ahead of schedule, hoping that this gesture of goodwill would make the Khmer Rouge more cooperative. The force commander also attempted to build a personal relationship with Son Sen, which he

96 Pouligny, *Ils nous avaient promis la paix*, 149.

97 Sheri Prasso, “U.N. deploys peacekeeping troops despite fighting,” *AFP*, 3 April 1992; Jennar, *Chroniques Cambodgiennes 1990–1994*, 299; Braeckman, “La drôle de paix de Kompong Thom”; Cable Akashi to Goulding, 7 April 1992, “Fourth Situation Report,” UNA, S-0794-0046-0004.

98 Peou, *Conflict Neutralization*, 200.

99 Klintworth, “Cambodia 1992: Hopes Fading,” 124.

100 Letter Son Sen to Akashi, 17 March 1992, “vérification du retrait de toutes les catégories des forces étrangères et de leur non-retour,” UNA, S-0794-0046-0004; Minutes of the 11th meeting of the MMWG, 27 March 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006.

101 Paris Agreements, Annex II, Article VII Cessation of outside military assistance to all Cambodian Parties.

did by sending him letters and through several face-to-face meetings with the Khmer Rouge commander-in-chief.¹⁰² But despite these efforts and concessions, the Khmer Rouge maintained their evasive stance. On 9 April, Akashi warned the Khmer Rouge that he would be forced to make an official report to the UN Security Council about their insufficient cooperation, but he decided to wait until after the visit of the UN Secretary-General to Cambodia.¹⁰³

As he had promised the Security Council, Boutros-Ghali visited Cambodia between 18 and 20 April and stayed in the Khmerin Palace as Prince Sihanouk's special guest. It was the first opportunity for Boutros-Ghali to acquaint himself with the situation in Cambodia, which struck him as relatively peaceful. He was given a warm welcome by thousands of children standing alongside the road waving small UN flags and noted to this surprise that Phnom Penh showed few signs of war time devastation.¹⁰⁴ The Secretary-General was also reassured by his talks with Khieu Samphan and Son Sen who, in their presentation, resembled in nothing to what one might expect from leaders of a guerrilla army. Instead of Maoist attire they wore Western suits with ties and spoke exquisitely polite and sophisticated French. Khieu Samphan, like Boutros-Ghali, had spent his student years in Paris and held a PhD from the Sorbonne. The Khmer Rouge leaders expressed their full adherence to the Paris Agreements and promised that, in a few days, UNTAC peacekeepers would be allowed to enter the zones under their control. At the end of his visit, Boutros-Ghali said that he was now more optimistic than before his arrival and reiterated that the United Nations would stick firmly to the target of holding elections in May 1993.¹⁰⁵ Four days after the Secretary-General's visit, Khieu Samphan made an encouraging but not spectacular gesture by announcing that UN teams would be allowed to inspect five locations located in the Khmer Rouge zone. On 27 April, a first UNTAC team made a reconnaissance trip to the isolated area of Anlong Veng, where General Ta Mok held headquarters. Several other survey missions were planned.¹⁰⁶ But the reconnaissance parties were quickly disappointed as they were only allowed to participate in guided visits to specific locations under very strict controls. This was not the unhindered and unconditional freedom of movement UNTAC required. It seemed to be yet another sop, and Sanderson and Akashi made it clear that they were not totally satisfied.¹⁰⁷

Meanwhile, the fragile cease-fire in Kompong Thom province was unravelling. The local Mixed Military Working Group had been ineffective because plans to demine the roads in a joint effort were constantly called off at the very last moment by the Khmer Rouge representatives who took an unconstructive attitude and regularly refused to show up at the meetings.¹⁰⁸ From 19 April

102 Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 17 April 1992, "French and Indonesian contingents," UNA, S-1854-0003-0002; Horner and Connor, *The Good International Citizen*, 165; Minutes of the 14th meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group, 18 April 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006.

103 Tan Lian Choo, "UN mission chief warns Khmer Rouge about access," *The Straits Times*, 10 April 1992.

104 Boutros-Ghali, *Unvanquished*, 32.

105 Sheri Prasso, "Boutros-Ghali inspects northwest Cambodia's refugee centers," *AFP*, 19 April 1992.

106 Letter Sanderson to Son Sen, 30 March 1992, UNA, S-1854-0003-0001; Horner and Connor, *The Good International Citizen*, 165–66; "UN team completes first visit to Khmer Rouge site," *The Strait Times*, 27 April 1992.

107 Minutes of the Mixed Military Working Group, 2 May 1992, UNA, S-1854-0003-0002; Sheri Prasso, "U.N. inspects Khmer Rouge zones," *AFP*, 26 April 1992; Angus MacSwan, "Khmer Rouge to allow U.N. peacekeepers into zones," *Reuters*, 21 April 1992; Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 27 April 1992, "problèmes militaires au Cambodge," ADN, RP NY ONU 10 POI/1 1312.

108 Letter Sanderson to Son Sen, 1 May 1992, "UNTAC checkpoints and the declaration of the Phase Two Cease-fire," UNA, S-1854-0003-0002; Goulding, *Peacemonger*, 258; "Report on reconnaissance of Route 12 held on 14.06.92.," NIMH, UNTAC 099, file 45.

onwards, the Khmer Rouge continued to launch sporadic attacks against districts held by the CPAF and lay new mine fields to defend their own positions. The company of Indonesian peacekeepers was still in the provincial capital, and only deployed to the countryside on 24 April.¹⁰⁹ Sanderson announced his intention to create a permanent presence of UN soldiers in the villages, but stressed at the same time that he would withdraw the Indonesians if armed clashes would break out again.¹¹⁰ In the following days, the Khmer Rouge withdrew their liaison officers from Kompong Thom and regrouped their forces around the town. Sanderson wrote a letter to Son Sen urging him to send the liaison officers back, give UNTAC full freedom of movement, and to finally start marking their minefields.¹¹¹ But promises of forthcoming cooperation remained vague and were increasingly conditional.¹¹² On 4 May, the Khmer Rouge launched a battalion-strength offensive in the north-eastern part of Kompong Thom province to take control of two vital supply routes. The small Indonesian company could not deter the Khmer Rouge from conquering several villages and establishing a strategic communication link with the southern province of Kompong Cham.¹¹³ It was clear that the operation had been carefully planned and coordinated, supported by artillery. The Khmer Rouge simultaneously gained ground from their former allies Khmer People's National Liberation Armed Forces (KPNLAF) and *Armée Nationale pour Khmer Indépendant* (ANKI) in the north-western part of the country. The Khmer Rouge radio also started to broadcast messages accusing UNTAC of not respecting the Paris Agreements.¹¹⁴ On 6 May, French ambassador Coste commented in his cable to Paris: "After six weeks of mutual observation, UNTAC is beginning to have the same experience with the Khmer Rouge as did UNAMIC."¹¹⁵ UNTAC had failed to make a strong impression in the first weeks of its deployment which tempted the Khmer Rouge to test their manoeuvre space.

Tensions among the sponsors of peace

Diplomatic competition between Australia, France and Indonesia was tangible in the early phases of the Cambodian peace process. The prospect of peace in Cambodia and the opening of Southeast Asia resulted in a sort of a scramble for Cambodia, in which these three middle-sized powers defended their strategic interests. The resulting political tensions between these three major contributors to the peace process severely compromised UNTAC's effectiveness and its dealing with the Khmer Rouge, especially in the early phase of the operation.

When in mid-April Sanderson decided to deploy a second Indonesian company to Kompong Thom, he was confronted with a problem: the senior Indonesian officer, Colonel Ferry

109 Angus MacSwan, "Khmer Rouge thwart U.N. in Northern Cambodia," *Reuters*, 26 April 1992; Jennar, *Chroniques Cambodgiennes*, 299.

110 Angus MacSwan, "Khmer Rouge to allow U.N. Peacekeepers into zones," *Reuters*, 21 April 1992.

111 Letter Sanderson to Son Sen, 1 May 1992, UNA, S-1854-0003-0002.

112 Minutes of the Mixed Military Working Group, 2 May 1992, UNA, S-1854-0003-0002.

113 Interview by Jerold E. Brown with Major George Steuber, 25 September 1992, Combat Studies Institute Report no. 15, US Army Command and General Staff College, Kansas; Minutes of the 16th meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group, 2 May 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006; Murray Hiebert, "Draining the swamp: Peace process grinds slowly forward," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 11 June 1992, 24; Jennar, *Chroniques Cambodgiennes*, 218, 299.

114 Peter Goodman, "UN deterrent or ploy in hands of rival militias?," *The Globe and Mail*, 4 May 1992.

115 Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 6 May 1992, "la situation militaire et les Khmers Rouges," ADN, 10 POI/1 1308.

Tinggogoy, refused to move the remainder of the Para Raiders out of Phnom Penh. Tinggogoy proclaimed that he had lost faith in Sanderson's command and suggested that the Indonesian battalion might have to be withdrawn completely from Cambodia. The Indonesian officer had never been on speaking terms with Loridon during UNAMIC and now refused to obey any orders from Sanderson, following instead the instructions from the Indonesian ambassador in Phnom Penh by the letter. Sanderson cabled to Goulding that Tinggogoy was acting "more in the way of defence attaché than a United Nations officer" and that this behaviour of the Indonesian colonel put him in an "untenable position."¹¹⁶ It was only after Akashi's mediation that the Indonesian authorities agreed to send the three remaining Indonesian companies to Kompong Thom, provided that a second battalion, which Indonesia promised to dispatch to Cambodia, would be retained in Phnom Penh.¹¹⁷

The Indonesian protestations seem to have been caused by tensions between the two co-chairmen of the Paris Peace Conference: Jakarta and Paris. Sanderson had originally planned to keep the Indonesian battalion in the Phnom Penh area and allot the sector of Kompong Thom province to the battalion from Tunisia, but these troops had not arrived yet.¹¹⁸ Now the Indonesians were ordered to deploy from the safe capital to the province where most of the fighting took place. This contrasted with the French, who had successfully blocked Sanderson's plan to deploy their battalion to the north-eastern provinces of Cambodia. In Sanderson's analysis, the French paratroopers were the only soldiers sufficiently trained and equipped to deploy to this large sector with challenging terrain. But Paris feared that its contingent would be sent away to a remote and unpopulated part of the country where it would be invisible to the Cambodian population. Instead, France preferred to set up headquarters in a more populous area such as Phnom Penh, Battambang or Sihanoukville.¹¹⁹ This preference, which was interpreted by some observers as a search for political prestige and the protection of business interests in their former colony, was explained by the French themselves as an opportunity to better exploit what they considered to be their trump card in the Cambodian peace operation: the use of the French language. France also argued that for "for historical reasons" it could not deploy its contingent at the border with Vietnam, which could potentially jeopardise its improving relations with this country.¹²⁰ Because of the size of the French contribution and its prominent position in the peace process, Goulding

116 Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 23 April 1992, "Difficulties with Indonesian component," UNA, S-1854-0003-0001; Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 28 April 1992, UNA, S-1854-0003-0002; Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 13 August 1992, "Indonesian concerns on UNTAC employment," UNA, S-1829-0313-0002. In an effort to assure a strong link with any future government in Cambodia, Indonesia wished to maintain good relations with all Cambodian factions, including the Khmer Rouge, see: Shawcross, *Deliver Us from Evil*, 61.

117 Cable Goulding to Sanderson, 23 April 1992, "Indonesian Contingent," UNA, S-0997-0006-0003; Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 28 April 1992, "UNTAC/FC/027," UNA, S-1854-0003-0002; Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 2 May 1992, "Preparations for the phase two cease-fire," UNA, S-1854-0003-0002; Interview by James Sutterlin with Yasushi Akashi Session II; Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 13 August 1992, "Indonesian concerns on UNTAC employment," UNA, S-1829-0313-0002.

118 Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 17 April 1992, "French and Indonesian contingents," UNA, S-1854-0003-0001.

119 Cable Paris to French mission New York, 14 April 1992, "Composante militaire de l'APRONUC," ADN, 10 POI/1 1310; Cable Paris to Phnom Penh and New York, 9 April 1992, "Composante militaire de l'APRONUC," ADN, 10 POI/1 1310; Cable French PR UN New York to Paris, 13 April 1992, "Composante militaire de l'APRONUC," ADN, 10 POI/1 1310; Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 10 April 1992, "French contingent," UNA, S-1854-0016-0008.

120 Cable Paris to Phnom Penh and New York, 9 April 1992, "Composante militaire de l'APRONUC," ADN, 10 POI/1 1310.

was under a lot of pressure to satisfy the French demands.¹²¹ Sanderson wanted to avoid any more difficulties with France and eventually agreed to allow the French battalion to deploy to “Sector 6” in the southern provinces and set up headquarters in Sihanoukville. “Sector 4” in the north east was allotted to a battalion from Uruguay.¹²² Goulding believed that the fact that France had gotten the sector of its choice was the cause for the Indonesian resistance to deploy its battalion to Kompong Thom. On 23 April he wrote to Sanderson: “we took [the] decision to change [the] planned deployment of [the] French battalion for non-UNTAC reasons and in full knowledge that this was contrary to an important principle and [that it] might have damaging repercussions. Our fears have been justified.”¹²³

France’s refusal to deploy to the sector of Sanderson’s choice further aggravated the suspicion among Anglo-Saxon officers that France followed its own agenda in Cambodia aimed at regaining a foothold in their former colony.¹²⁴ One of the objectives of the French presence in Cambodia was indeed to revive the cultural and economic ties with countries in Indochina by promoting French-language programmes and stimulate French business-opportunities.¹²⁵ On 22 November 1991, the French foreign minister Roland Dumas was the first Western minister to travel to Cambodia since the signing of the Paris agreements. He was accompanied by a group of forty representatives of French companies and banks. A priority for France was to set up a renewed bilateral cooperation in rubber cultivation by reviving the *Institut de Recherches sur le Caoutchouc au Cambodge*.¹²⁶ France also invested millions of francs in the construction of electricity and water supplies in Cambodia.¹²⁷ This caused some friction with the Australians who had their own geostrategic and economic agenda in Southeast Asia. Australian historian John Connor explains that the main reason for the Australian government to contribute a contingent of communication specialists to UNTAC was to assist the government-owned Overseas Communication Corporation to take this “unique market opportunity” to obtain the exclusive rights of international telecommunications with Cambodia.¹²⁸ Moreover, Canberra had systematically prepared its contribution to UNTAC and succeeded in placing its officers at key staff positions. With forty-seven officers at UNTAC headquarters, Australia was much better represented than France with only fourteen officers, despite the fact that France’s overall contribution to the operation was much larger than Australia’s: 1,400 military personnel against 500.¹²⁹ Somewhat frustrated by the

121 Cable Goulding to Akashi/Sanderson, 9 April 1992, “UNTAC-519 French contingent,” UNA, S-1854-0016-0008.

122 Sanderson to Goulding, 10 April 1992, “French contingent,” UNA, S-1854-0016-0008. France nonetheless accepted to send half of its battalion to Sector 4: “L’Intervention française au Cambodge aspects militaires (novembre 1991–décembre 1993), commandement de la doctrine et de l’entraînement, édition du 18/03/1997, Ministère de la Défense, 20.

123 Cable Goulding to Sanderson, 23 April 1992, “Indonesian Contingent,” UNA, S-0997-0006-0003.

124 Author’s interview with Willem A. Huijssoon, 3 December 2013, The Netherlands.

125 Projet d’instructions de M. Philippe Coste Ambassadeur de France au Cambodge, 7 November 1991, ADN, 521 POI/293; Nate Thayer, “The Grand Illusion; Efforts to revive French language appear doomed,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 25 February 1993, 12; Teo, “The New French Socialist Foreign Policy and Indochina,” 221–30; James Burnet, “The French Connection,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 11 February 1993.

126 Projet d’instructions de M. Philippe Coste, ADN, 521 POI/293.

127 “La visite de M. Roland Dumas a Phnom-Penh: le premier pas vers la rentrée de la France sur la scène Indochinoise,” *Le Monde*, 24 November 1991.

128 OTCI succeeded in obtaining a contract worth of 35 million Australian dollars. Horner and Connor, *The Good International Citizen*, 85, A-11; Coulon, *Soldiers of Diplomacy*, 157; Author’s interview with Robert Rideau, 10 May 2019, France.

129 Coulon, *Soldiers of Diplomacy*, 157; Letter General Rideau to Admiral Lanxade, 15 July 1993, ADN, 521PO/2-31; L’Intervention française au Cambodge aspects militaires, 46.

dominant Australian position at UNTAC HQ, France put much effort in protecting the French language within the UN operation which – at least in theory – enjoyed an equal status with English.¹³⁰ This further reinforced tensions with Anglo-Saxon colleagues, who regularly excluded French officers from staff meetings.¹³¹ Even Deputy Force Commander Loridon was not allowed to attend the daily staff meetings, which would have been logical for a second-in-command.¹³² In early April 1992, when a conference for the contingent commanders was organised in New York, Sanderson delegated Lieutenant Colonel Stuart, the second most senior Australian officer in Cambodia, as his representative.¹³³ Loridon, frustrated to be forced to play second fiddle, felt that he was deliberately ostracised, but Sanderson found that Loridon and other senior French officers excluded themselves with a non-collaborative attitude and sulking about not being in control.¹³⁴

The overall atmosphere of competition between France and Australia in Cambodia added to the tense working relation between Sanderson and Loridon, but neither Paris nor Canberra wanted that these frictions would stand in the way of improving their bilateral relation, after two decades of tensions around nuclear tests in the South Pacific.¹³⁵ “It would be a pity,” Jean-David Levitte, the head of the Asia department at the *Quai d’Orsay*, wrote in a cable, “if misunderstandings between the two most senior officials of UNTAC’s military component contradict the acts and intentions of our two governments.”¹³⁶ Levitte felt that it was up to Akashi to solve the problems between the two generals.¹³⁷ The French chief of the defence staff, Admiral Jacques Lanxade, instructed Loridon to improve his relation with Sanderson because France had no interest in a renewed animosity with Australia.¹³⁸

“The main problem is not here in Cambodia, it’s in New York”

The slow process of approving the budget for what was then the most expensive operation in the history of the United Nations was a major concern for the understaffed UN Secretariat in New York, which was simply overwhelmed by the mushrooming of UN operations in 1992. UNTAC found itself in competition for resources with other peacekeeping missions, especially UNPROFOR in the former Yugoslavia.¹³⁹ Therefore, the first priority of the UN civilian leadership

130 Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 3 April 1992, “La France et l’APRONUC,” ADN, 10 POI/1 1310.

131 Author’s interview with Willem A. Huijssoon; Author’s interview with Philippe Coste; Author’s interview with Michel Loridon; Author’s interview with Robert Rideau. General Robert Rideau, who succeeded Loridon as deputy force commander at the end of July 1992, was also regularly excluded from senior staff meetings. Internal memorandum Rideau to Sanderson, 16 December 1992, “Relations hiérarchiques au sein de l’état-major de la composante militaire de l’APRONUC,” Private Archives Robert Rideau; Cable French Embassy Phnom Penh to Paris, 28 June 1993, “Reunion des cinq plus,” ADN, 521 POI/2/155.

132 Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 3 April 1992, “La France et l’APRONUC,” ADN, 10 POI/1 1310.

133 Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 6 April 1992, “Composante militaire de l’APRONUC,” ADN, 10 POI/1 1310.

134 Author’s correspondence with John Sanderson, 26 February 2020.

135 Ivan Barko, “L’Australie face à la politique française dans le Pacifique de 1981 à 1988,” in *François Mitterrand et les territoires français du Pacifique (1981–1988)*, ed. Jean-Marc Regnault (Paris: Les Indes Savantes, 2003), 507–17.

136 Cable French Embassy Canberra to Paris, 7 April 1992, “Cambodge – Coopération Franco-Australienne,” ADN, 10 POI/1 1310.

137 Ibid.

138 Author’s interview with Michel Loridon; Roberts, *Political Transition in Cambodia*, 72.

139 Schear, “Riding the Tiger,” 152. Morjé Howard, *UN Peacekeeping in Civil Wars*, 147; Heining, *Peacekeeping in Transition*, 69.

was to secure the money for UNTAC. The second preoccupation was to avoid additional costs and keep the operation on its tight time schedule to keep a certain grip on the finances. The actual situation on the ground in Cambodia, and the factions' commitment to the peace process, or lack thereof, was not considered to be a cause for major concern. After all, the Khmer Rouge had solemnly declared their attachment to the Paris Peace Agreement and promised to cooperate. "The main problem is not here in Cambodia," the Secretary-General told the press at the end of his visit to Phnom Penh in early April, "It's in New York: how to find the money. I need a lot."¹⁴⁰

In the first months after his arrival in Cambodia, Akashi did not seem focussed on the situation in Cambodia. He was distracted by politics in New York and national capitals where he spent a large part of his time securing UNTAC's budget. Before arriving in Phnom Penh on 15 March, Akashi flew from New York to Tokyo for a five-day visit to Japan's cabinet offices and parliamentary committee rooms where he urged Japanese politicians to stay committed to pay one-third of the costs for what he sold as "the biggest test case of the UN's ability to deal with regional conflicts in the post-Cold War era."¹⁴¹ In early May, Akashi travelled to Washington, DC for talks with members of the US Congress to rally their support for paying another one-third of UNTAC's budget.¹⁴² The Bush administration had already paid a \$60 million share of the \$200 million needed for the start-up costs of UNTAC, but the Americans owed the UN a total contribution of more than ten times that figure.¹⁴³ Now Akashi essentially urged Washington to put its money where its mouth was.¹⁴⁴

After Washington, Akashi continued to New York to prepare the UN Secretariat's official budget proposal of \$764 million to enable him to run UNTAC for the next six months.¹⁴⁵ In New York, he underlined the importance to speed up the deployment of UN troops in Cambodia in order to meet the deadline of holding elections in April or early May 1993.¹⁴⁶ When asked by journalists at UN headquarters about the renewed fighting in Kompong Thom province, Akashi downplayed these events and replied reassuringly that "the peace has been restored in that area of Cambodia." It was nothing more than "occasional fighting," he said, which would stop automatically once the rain season had arrived and UNTAC would start disarming and demobilising the factions' armies.¹⁴⁷ Like the Secretary-General had done before, Akashi stated that UNTAC's "main problems are not in Cambodia but here in New York over money and equipment."¹⁴⁸ In order to secure both cash and supplies, Akashi remained outwardly optimistic. Any suggestion that the operation in Cambodia was already derailing in its starting phase could make member states think twice about investing tax payers' money in an uncertain adventure. Before returning to Phnom Penh, Akashi continued directly to Tokyo to pressure the Japanese

140 Nick Cumming-Bruce, "Boutros seeks financial aid for Cambodia's fragile peace," *The Guardian*, 21 April 1992; "Khmer Rouge Among Cambodian Factions Signing Human Rights Conventions," *The Associated Press*, 20 April 1992.

141 "UNTAC chief sees timely Khmer elections," *Bangkok Post*, 14 March 1992; James Walsh, "Great Blue Hope: The U.N. begins its most ambitious task. Unfortunately, it may also be an impossible one," *Time*, 23 March 1992, 26.

142 Report on the visit of Mr. Yasushi Akashi to Washington, DC, 6 May 1992, UNA, S-1085-0021-0007.

143 Paul Lewis, "Showdown is set on Cambodia Arms," *The New York Times*, 9 May 1992.

144 Author's interview with James A. Schear, 5 December 2018, Washington, DC, United States.

145 Ratner, *The New UN peacekeeping*, 164.

146 "U.N. peacekeeper deployment must be sped up to fulfil Cambodia goals: Akashi," *AFP*, 5 May 1992.

147 World Chronicle 473: Yasushi Akashi, UNTAC, 8 May 1992, URL: <https://www.unmultimedia.org/avlibrary/asset/2113/2113010/>.

148 Paul Lewis, "Showdown is set on Cambodia Arms," *The New York Times*, 9 May 1992.

government again for paying its share to UNTAC as quickly as possible.¹⁴⁹

Stick to the plan

Getting all the UN military and civilian personnel and their equipment to Cambodia on time was a complicated logistic operation. It took until July before all UNTAC's infantry battalions had deployed, and the reason for this slow arrival was related to the fact that member states only received an official request to contribute troops to UNTAC two weeks before the starting date of the operation. Some member states had anticipated a participation in the Cambodian peacekeeping operation, but others had to organise this at the last moment. As one could expect with so many different troop contributors, there were unforeseeable circumstances which caused further delays. Venezuela cancelled its infantry battalion because of a coup d'état in Caracas, Uruguay was requested to take its place, but its troops needed another five weeks to arrive in Cambodia.¹⁵⁰ UNTAC was in a race against time to get all the UN forces in Cambodia deployed by June in order to start with Phase Two of the operation before the seasonal rains began. To keep this schedule, UNTAC's forces needed to be deployed by the end of May at the latest.¹⁵¹ It quickly turned out that this time schedule was overly optimistic. The force commander estimated that he needed at least nine battalions in order to proceed with Phase Two, but he knew that he could only count on six of the ten infantry battalions by that time. While the Indonesian battalion reluctantly deployed to Kompong Thom, the battalion from Malaysia was occupied with assisting the repatriation of Cambodian refugees from Thailand.¹⁵²

Sorpong Peou has argued that the P5, responsible for 55 per cent of UNTAC's budget, failed to provide adequate financial support to allow UNTAC to deploy quickly and play a more active role. For Peou, the P5 were the ones responsible for UNTAC's failure to establish its authority.¹⁵³ Though the lack of financial means indeed hampered a quick deployment into Cambodia, it must be argued that the P5 actually had serious doubts about the Secretariat's implementation plan and the costs it entailed. The ambassadors of the P5 in Phnom Penh and New York frequently met about Cambodia, often joined by the ambassadors of five other countries that had a special interest in the Cambodian peace process. This group of the P5 plus Indonesia, Japan, Australia, Thailand and Germany was called the "core group" or "the expanded permanent five" (EP5). The French, who spoke of the "5 + 5," invited Germany to join, which was considered somewhat misplaced by other capitals given Berlin's limited involvement in Cambodia. It would have been more logical if the Vietnamese ambassador had joined the meetings, but this was apparently still too sensitive for Beijing and Washington. In Phnom Penh, the ambassadors of the core group frequently met with Akashi for an informal exchange of views. In New York, the EP5 formed a working group of experts with the aim to support the UN Secretariat in running UNTAC and enhance its effectiveness. After a thorough review of UNTAC's operational plan, the group grew concerned about the

149 "Japan asked again to fund one-third of U.N.'s Cambodia cost," *AFP*, 11 May 1992.

150 *L'Intervention française au Cambodge aspects militaires*, 22.

151 Press conference of Yasushi Akashi, 19 March 1992, UNA, S-0795-0046-0004.

152 Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 17 April 1992, "French and Indonesian contingents," UNA, S-1854-0003-0002; Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 21 April 1992, "UNTAC deployment – military and police component," UNA, S-1854-0080-0006; The military situation in Cambodia brief for the Secretary-General, 16 April 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006.

153 Peou, *Conflict Neutralization*, 236, 246.

feasibility to deploy the full military component of twelve infantry battalions by 1 June. Key problems that were identified were Cambodia's war-torn infrastructure, the inevitable onset of the rainy season, and the fact that the necessary logistical support was not yet in place to facilitate the deployment of military units and civilian elements around Cambodia. Two weeks after UNTAC's arrival in Cambodia, the French permanent representative to the United Nations in New York, Jean-Bernard Mérimée, wrote a letter to Akashi and Goulding, in the name of the core group, to urge the two UN officials in charge of UNTAC to maintain maximum flexibility with regard to UNTAC's scale and time schedule. Mérimée emphasised that the operational plan required continuous review and adjustment in the light of on-the-ground realities. The EP5 expert group proposed to deploy fewer military forces to Cambodia, which would enhance UNTAC's ability to respect its timetable and reduce cost. Two concrete suggestions were made to help attain this objective: reducing the period of cantonment of demobilised soldiers and pressing the Cambodian parties to agree to a demobilisation of 100 per cent of their troops.¹⁵⁴ The core group nonetheless emphasised that it could best be determined in the field what adjustments were necessary. They therefore encouraged Akashi and Sanderson to come with specific proposals for necessary revisions of the implementation plan and urged Goulding to endorse these in New York. The core group also promised that their governments would do their part in helping to make the Cambodian factions understand that adjustments to the original plan were necessary in the light of the realities on the ground.¹⁵⁵

Despite the core group's call for flexibility, Goulding and Akashi clung to the original plan frenetically, and focussed more on finding the budget to carry it out than on rethinking the plan according to the prevailing circumstances on the ground in Cambodia. Akashi saw limited possibilities to divert from the plan as it stood. First, he argued that trying to persuade the SOC to agree to full demobilisation would be a non-starter, as it would leave the Khmer Rouge militarily unopposed. Second, he deemed it undesirable to reduce the cantonment period for the reason that it would make it more difficult to conduct the disarmament and demobilisation process in a thorough and systematic manner.¹⁵⁶ In this light, Akashi did not favour a reduction in the number of UN troops because he felt that UNTAC would simply have to deliver on its commitment to have its forces in place on time and begin with the disarmament and demobilisation as planned. A failure to do so, he felt, could result in a serious loss of UNTAC's credibility and of confidence in the peace process as a whole. He therefore pressured New York to speed up the deployment of the military component and emphasised that in order to conduct the election in April 1993, UNTAC would have to start with Phase Two on 1 June. This timetable could not be tampered with, or the operation would face the serious consequences of the wet season: "The importance of achieving complete UNTAC deployment by 01 June cannot be overemphasised," Akashi cabled to Goulding.¹⁵⁷ If disarmament could not be completed according to schedule, elections would have to be postponed until November 1993, after the rainy season of that year, which implied

154 The second measure was probably pushed by the United States.

155 Letter Jean-Bernard Mérimée, French permanent representative to the UN New York to Goulding, 31 March 1992, UNA, S-0795-0008-0001.

156 Letter Akashi to Jean-Bernard Mérimée, 13 April 1992.

157 Cable Akashi and Sanderson to Goulding, 21 April 1992, "UNTAC deployment – Military and Police component," UNA, S-1854-0003-0002; Cable Akashi to Goulding, "Advanced Requirement for Additional Battalions," 23 March 1992, UNA, S-0794-0046-0004.

that UNTAC would have to stay in Cambodia until 1994. One could only imagine the explosion of costs this would entail. As scholars Macalister Brown and Joseph Zasloff put it: "The election dates drove UNTAC's efforts."¹⁵⁸

The Paris Peace Agreement stipulated that it was the responsibility of UNTAC's force commander to determine the exact time and date on which Phase Two of the operation would begin, and that this date would be set at least four weeks in advance.¹⁵⁹ The two main conditions for proceeding with Phase Two were the full – or at least sufficient – deployment of UNTAC's military component in all the faction's zones and the preparedness of the Cambodian parties to fully cooperate with this process.¹⁶⁰ The Cambodian soldiers could only be demobilised once UNTAC was confident that all the listed forces and weapons had been cantoned. Accurate information about the factions' units and their locations, weapons and equipment was therefore essential. Since UNAMIC, all factions had been delivering most of the necessary information to the UN, but the Khmer Rouge was failing to respect this commitment. However, even if the Khmer Rouge decided to cooperate, military planners at UNTAC HQ were not confident that the disarmament and demobilisation could actually be undertaken according to the time schedule. UNTAC's forces would first need to deploy into the Khmer Rouge zones, set up their own camps and construct cantonment sites to receive the Khmer Rouge forces. Moreover, it was felt that UNTAC lacked the resources and manpower so set up a thorough programme for the reintegration of the factions' soldiers into Cambodian society. There were even fears that the release of the demobilised Cambodian soldiers was likely to result into further disintegration of the security situation in Cambodia, especially because half of UNTAC's military forces were scheduled to withdraw by the end of 1992.¹⁶¹

For all these reasons, Sanderson did not yet feel confident to announce the starting date for Phase Two, which he was normally expected to do on 1 May if disarmament was to begin on 1 June. On 27 April, the force commander warned the ambassadors of the P5 in Phnom Penh that he could not rule out a postponement of the cantonment and disarmament until October, after the rainy season, understanding very well that such a decision would mean that the factions remained fully armed for at least another three months and probably delay the elections. But as long as insufficient UN forces were deployed around Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge refused to give them access to their zones, postponing the disarmament and demobilisation process might be the only logical thing to do.¹⁶² Sanderson's reluctance to announce a definitive starting date for Phase Two was met with strong resistance from New York. The Secretary-General was committed to announce Phase Two on time and excluded the possibility of postponing the disarmament and demobilisation until after the rainy season. Akashi, who was visiting New York, co-drafted a cable with Goulding in which they made it clear to the force commander that it was "politically

158 Brown and Zasloff, *Cambodia Confounds the Peacemakers*, 93.

159 See: Paris Peace Agreement, Annex 2, Article I-1. UNA, S-0797-0011-0006.

160 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 22 April 1992, "Sixth Situation Report," UNA, S-1829-0313-0006.

161 Brocades Zaalberg, *Soldiers and Civil Power*, 93.

162 Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 27 April 1992, "problèmes militaires au Cambodge," ADN, NY 10 POI/1 1312; Hiebert, "Draining the swamp Peace process grinds slowly forward," 24; "U.N. vows to start disarming Cambodian factions in June," *AFP*, 8 May 1992.

imperative” that the starting date was kept as close to 1 June as possible.¹⁶³ The reality on the ground, however, remained that the preparations for Phase Two were far from adequate. Under strict controls and conditions, the Khmer Rouge had allowed UNTAC to visit ten locations for cantonment sites situated in their zones, but there were still six more that needed to be inspected.¹⁶⁴ During the Mixed Military Working Group of 2 May, Sanderson reemphasised that he needed guarantees for freedom of movement and accurate figures on the faction’s troops and weapons.¹⁶⁵ The force commander made it clear that if the Khmer Rouge would be unable to deliver these figures before 6 May, he would publicly announce that they were not ready for Phase Two.¹⁶⁶ After the meeting, Sanderson shared his concerns in a conversation with a journalist in Phnom Penh: “If they’re not ready to do all these things, they’re not ready,” he told to the reporter and added that UNTAC’s lack of sufficient resources was the other part of the problem: “now I have only 4,000 people in the country . . . (and) we need close to 16,000 men to do Phase II of the ceasefire.” Although Sanderson did not make these remarks in an official interview, the Bangkok-based newspaper *The Nation* headlined the next day that UNTAC was forced to delay its time schedule.¹⁶⁷ The civilian UN leadership was not amused. As Akashi was in New York, his deputy, Behrooz Sadry, brought Sanderson back in line. After a long conversation with the force commander, Sadry reported to Goulding: “It is now clear to him that Phase II must be announced on, or close to schedule.” The deputy special representative also immediately implemented stricter rules with regard to UNTAC personnel’s freedom to talk to journalists, with the aim to prevent further “off-the-cuff comments regarding sensitive and important issues.”¹⁶⁸ The Khmer Rouge failed to provide the required information on 6 May, forcing Sanderson to push the deadline to 20 May and announce in the SNC that if the Khmer Rouge’s cooperation would not be forthcoming, it would be impossible to conduct Phase Two correctly, which would jeopardise the entire peace process.¹⁶⁹ This statement caused some concern among ambassadors of the P5 who questioned Akashi whether it was not too early to move on into the Phase Two. But Akashi made it clear that UNTAC needed to respect its time schedule and that a postponement of the cantonment and disarmament until after the rainy season was not an option.¹⁷⁰

Whereas the Paris Agreements determined that an effective cease-fire and freedom of movement were preconditions for moving into Phase Two, the Khmer Rouge publicly stated that announcing Phase Two was the best way to solve the fighting in Kompong Thom and all other problems.¹⁷¹ The Mixed Military Working Group on 9 May was the moment of truth.

163 Cable Goulding/Akashi (New York) to Sanderson (Phnom Penh), 30 April 1992, “Start of Phase II,” UNA, S-1829-0314-0004; Cable French PR New York to Paris, 30 April 1992, “entretien des cinq avec M. Akashi,” ADN, 10 POI/1 1308.

164 Minutes of the Mixed Military Working Group, 2 May 1992, UNA, S-1854-0003-0002; Cable Captain van Sprang to The Hague (BDZ/OPS), 10 May 1992, “Sitrep 007,” NIMH, UNTAC 099, file 67.

165 Minutes of the 16th meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group, 2 May 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006. Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 2 May 1992, “Preparations for the phase two cease-fire,” UNA, S-1854-0003-0002.

166 Minutes of the 16th meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group, 2 May 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006; Minutes of the 14th meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group, 18 April 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006; Cable Goulding and Akashi to Sanderson, 30 April 1992, “Start of Phase II,” UNA, S-1829-0314-0004.

167 Sheri Prasso, “UNTAC forced to delay its work schedule,” *The Nation*, 2 May 1992.

168 Cable Sadry to Goulding, 2 May 1992, UNA, S-0794-0047-0001.

169 “Address to the SNC – 7 May by Lt. Gen. J. M. Sanderson,” UNA, S-1854-0003-0002; Letter Sanderson to Son Sen, “UNTAC/FC/CYP003,” 18 May 1992, UNA, S-1854-0003-0001.

170 Cable Sadry to Goulding, 9 May 1992, “Eighth situation Report,” UNA, S-1829-0313-0006.

171 Andrew Sherry, “U.N. gearing up to disarm Cambodian factions,” *AFP*, 7 May 1992.

As Sanderson was under great pressure from his civilian superiors to announce the starting date of 13 June of Phase Two, he asked the factions to endorse a prepared statement which he would read to the press after the meeting, to avoid endless discussion. It announced that the factions had given the force commander the assurances that they would prevent further cease-fire violations, mark their minefields, and provide UNTAC immediately with full freedom of movement, including unconditional access to all faction areas and with detailed information about their military personnel, equipment and weapons. All factions endorsed the statement, but Khmer Rouge general Nuon Bunno only indicated that he had “no comment to add” and left the talking to Tep Khunnal, a shrewd political officer who made vague promises to agree to Sanderson’s demands as soon as UNTAC had finished the establishment of all its checkpoints at the border with Vietnam.¹⁷² Seven out of the ten checkpoints had been deployed and UNTAC was working hard to establish the three remaining ones as resources and logistics allowed for it.¹⁷³ After a difficult three-hour meeting in which the Khmer Rouge did not make any explicit assurances, Sanderson nonetheless decided to proceed with the announcement of Phase Two to the reporters who were waiting outside the meeting room.¹⁷⁴ Despite his personal doubts about the Khmer Rouge’s sincerity and readiness to disarm and demobilise, the force commander made the single most important decision of his command under strong pressure from the UN civilian leadership.¹⁷⁵

Difficult Dutch deployment: the reality behind apparent Khmer Rouge cooperation

The Khmer Rouge’s stance in the first months of UNTAC has been characterised by James Schear as “cautious cooperation.”¹⁷⁶ But a more accurate description would be “apparent cooperation,” as the Khmer Rouge continued to apply their strategy of gaining time by promising and not delivering while setting the bar for their actual cooperation higher and higher. On 22 May, the

172 Minutes of the 17th meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group, 9 May 1992, UNA, S-0794-0022-0003.

173 One of the problems was that not all of the 485 UNMOs’ military observers – who were to occupy the checkpoints – had arrived in Cambodia. Cable Sanderson to Goulding, 21 April 1992, “Military Observers – UNTAC,” UNA, S-1854-0003-0001; Interoffice message, Sanderson to Sadry, 26 March, “Issues of immediate concern to the military component of UNTAC,” UNA, S-1854-0003-0001; Minutes of the 17th meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group, 9 May 1992, UNA, S-0794-0022-0003.

174 Sanderson later claimed in an article that the Khmer Rouge did give him what he needed: “Finally, I decided to go with about seven and a half of the twelve battalions and, on 9 May, at a very tense meeting of the MMWG, I declared as D-Day for the commencement of the Phase Two ceasefire, the containment [sic], disarmament and demobilization process. The reason why the MMWG was so tense was because I sought assurance from the factions on the steps they would take before and on the due date. I had to have those assurances before I announced the date to the press who were waiting outside the conference room with pencils and tape recorders poised. The Khmer Rouge were reluctant to give those assurances without things happening that they were not in the Paris Agreement – but in the end they did give them.” See: Lieutenant General John M. Sanderson, “Peacekeeping operations in Cambodia,” *The RUSI Journal*, (December 1994): 25; Cable Goulding to Akashi, 14 May 1992, “Commencement of Phase II,” UNA, S-1829-0314-0004.

175 See the difference between Goulding’s draft version of the Secretary-General’s report to the UN Security Council stating: “My Special Representative has recommended that Phase II of the cease-fire must proceed as scheduled on 13 June. I have accepted this recommendation,” and the final version of the report, written by the Secretary-General himself, which included the phrasing: “After careful consideration, I have concluded that Phase II of the cease-fire must proceed as scheduled on 13 June.” See: Cable Goulding to De Soto, 11 June 1992, “SecGen’s report on Cambodia,” UNA, New York, S-1829-0314-0004; Special report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia, 12 June 1992, S/24090, UN digital library. When Sanderson was asked later whose decision it was to move into Phase II, Sanderson indicated that “it certainly was a very high-level decision.” See: Interview by Hugh Smith with John Sanderson.

176 Schear, “Beyond Traditional Peacekeeping: The Case of Cambodia,” 253.

Khmer Rouge again failed to comply with the deadline to deliver the required information, and UNTAC still didn't have full freedom of movement.¹⁷⁷ They continued to raise their stakes by demanding that all the border checkpoints with Vietnam should be manned by platoons of armed UNTAC peacekeepers as well as representatives of the four Cambodian factions.¹⁷⁸ They promised that all problems would be resolved once UNTAC met these demands.¹⁷⁹ "If you satisfy our request," Khmer Rouge general Nuon Bunno told Sanderson, "then I will do my best to cooperate with you in every way."¹⁸⁰ But many concessions and demonstration of goodwill had already been made by UNTAC. Besides establishing border checkpoints as the Khmer Rouge had requested, Sanderson had deployed no less than 100 teams of military observers in eastern Cambodia who were constantly on the lookout for Vietnamese forces, that were simply not there since Vietnam had completed the withdrawal of all its troops in 1989. He also created special helicopter-borne investigation teams that could respond immediately to indications of Vietnamese troops or any other complaints regarding violations of the peace agreements.¹⁸¹ The force commander repeatedly requested the Khmer Rouge to provide specific information about Vietnamese troops in order to conduct a joint investigation, but the Khmer Rouge leaders were never able to substantiate their claims.¹⁸²

The starting date of 13 June for Phase Two meant that by then all UN battalions had to be deployed with the regroupment areas and cantonment sites completed and ready to receive the disarmed factions' soldiers. The dominant idea was that once all UNTAC units had arrived in Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge would lift their restrictions and cooperate. "Our ability to make the Khmer Rouge and the other factions cooperate with our plan depends on getting a strong, credible force in there of some 15,000 soldiers," Akashi stated to reporters in New York.¹⁸³ The question how the blue helmets were to gain access to the Khmer Rouge zones remained unanswered, and it was left entirely to the individual battalions to find their way in.

UNTAC's military units arrived unprepared for a forceful deployment in Cambodia, not so much materially, but especially mentally, as UNTAC headquarters had not given any specific instructions about what to do in case of non-cooperation by the Khmer Rouge. The force

177 Note to the file Meeting Akashi with Khieu Samphan, 20 May 1992, UNA, S-1829-0313-0006; "Areas of concern with NADK 20 May 1992," UNA, S-1829-0313-0006; Cable Akashi to Goulding, 22 May 1992, "Readiness of parties for Phase II," UNA, S-1829-0313-0006. The SOC was also late in providing all the required information, but Sanderson was satisfied with their efforts.

178 Note to the file Meeting Akashi with Khieu Samphan, 20 May 1992, UNA, S-1829-0313-0006.

179 Minutes of the 18th meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group, 23 May 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006. By 26 May, nine out of the ten border checkpoints along the Cambodian-Vietnamese border had been set up. Because the last checkpoint's location was difficult to mount for logistical reasons, Sanderson accepted to place another UNTAC checkpoint at the juncture of RN 4 and RN 18, as a compensation. Minutes of the 19th meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group, 26 May 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006.

180 Minutes of the 18th meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group, 23 May 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006.

181 Minutes of the 19th meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group, 26 May 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006. Minutes of the 18th meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group, 23 May 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006; Minutes of the Mixed Military Working Group Level One in Kompong Thom, 17 June 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006; UNTAC Press Release 29 May 1992, "Mr. Akashi visits border checkpoints, factions headquarters, UNTAC establishes mobile investigation teams," UNA, S-1829-0313-0006-0002; Cable Akashi to Goulding, 29 May 1992, "Situation in Cambodia," UNA, S-0794-0047-0001.

182 Minutes of the 18th meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group, 23 May 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006; François Luizet, "Cambodge: la paix en panne les Khmers rouges bloquent l'ONU," *Le Figaro*, 11 June 1992.

183 Paul Lewis, "Showdown is set on Cambodia Arms," *The New York Times*, 9 May 1992.

commander had selected the battalion of the well-equipped and well-trained Royal Netherlands Marine Corps (*Korps Mariniers*) to deploy into the extreme western part of the country, labelled as Sector 1, and set up headquarters in the Khmer Rouge-controlled town of Pailin.¹⁸⁴ It was clearly the most risky deployment of all UNTAC units as it was uncertain whether the marines would actually be “welcome” in their sector. A Dutch advance party based in Phnom Penh had not been allowed to freely survey all locations for their battalion and they noticed that Khmer Rouge troops were actively building additional checkpoints around the area they controlled.¹⁸⁵ At UNTAC headquarters, the prevalent idea was to deploy the battalions as quickly and as impressively as possible into the sectors.¹⁸⁶ The French battalion deployed in one single move into its sector and staged an impressive military parade in the town of Sihanoukville. The local Cambodian population had streamed in massively to witness the spectacular entry of the French peacekeepers, which included speeches, music performances and a spectacular jump demonstration by a paratrooper with a tricolour parachute.¹⁸⁷ Contrary to the Dutch marines, the French paratroopers had an easy sector which allowed them to arrive via Cambodia’s harbour town of Sihanoukville, where they could immediately set up their headquarters and spread out over a territory which was largely controlled by the State of Cambodia. The sober Dutch marines felt that such a “Charge of the Light Brigade”-style deployment was unsuited for their sector, which was logistically much more challenging.¹⁸⁸ The Dutch battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Herman Dukers, opted for a careful approach, as detailed information about his sector, such as the position of minefields, was not available.¹⁸⁹ He wrote to UNTAC headquarters that he did not intend to send his men “into the unknown” and dispatched reconnaissance parties first, which could prepare the camps before deploying the main body of the battalion.¹⁹⁰

The Dutch battalion decided to deploy into Cambodia via Thailand, because the infrastructure from the Cambodian side was insufficient, which made the marines dependent on the cooperation of the Thai military authorities.¹⁹¹ Although Sanderson had visited Bangkok a few days before the Dutch deployment to discuss Thai assistance to UNTAC, the Thai government had not made any arrangements and a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) with UNTAC did not exist.¹⁹² One of the consequences was that the Dutch advance party was not allowed to set up camp near the Cambodian border and was therefore forced to stay in a hotel in the beach-town Pattaya.¹⁹³ The timing of the arrival in Thailand was very unfortunate because it was between 17

184 Cable Netherlands Ambassador Bangkok to The Hague, 13 May 1992, “Kambodja/UNTAC,” AMBZ, 990.

185 Cable Captain Van Sprang to The Hague (BDZ/OPS), 10 May 1992, “Sitrep 007,” NIMH, UNTAC 099, file 67.

186 Cable Major Wilmsen to The Hague (BDZ/OPS), 27 April 1992, “Sitrep 004,” NIMH, UNTAC 099, file 67.

187 “Les paras sautent sur Sihanoukville,” *L’Humanité*, 3 June 1992; “Cambodge: Parade tricolore avant le marathon de la paix,” *Le Quotidien de Paris*, 3 June 1992; Frédéric Pons, *Les Casques bleus français: 50 ans au service de la paix dans le monde* (Rennes: E-ditions Italiques, 1995) 27; “APRONUC défilé du Bataillon Français,” Video 92.9.14_15 ECPAD.

188 Cable Major Wilmsen to The Hague (BDZ/OPS), 27 April 1992, “Sitrep 004,” NIMH, UNTAC 099, file 67.

189 Cable Captain van Sprang to The Hague (BDZ/OPS), “Sitrep 007,” 10 May 1992; Author’s interview with Fabien Motmans and Eric Debontridder.

190 Message Dukers to UNTAC HQ, 23 May 1992, “Deployment NL Bat into Sector 1,” Semi Statistisch Informatiebeheer Ministerie van Defensie (SIB), MARNSTAF-UNTAC Cambodja, box 1226, folder 7; Bais, *Het mijneveld van een vredesmacht*, 34.

191 Herman Dukers, “Peace-keeping in Cambodja: Nederlandse mariniers in UNTAC,” *Mars in Cathedra* 94 (July 1993): 2848; Cable Captain van Sprang to The Hague (BDZ/OPS), 10 May 1992, “Sitrep 007.”

192 “UNTAC mission to Thailand 11–13 May 1992,” UNA, S-1854-0003-0002.

193 Cable Dukers to The Hague (BDZ/OPS), 26 May 1992, “Achtergrondinformatie participatie Nederland aan UNTAC,” SIB, MARNSTAF UNTAC Cambodja, box 1226, folder 7.

and 20 May that the government of General Suchinda Kraprayoon quelled the biggest and most violent protests the country had seen in decades, an event that resulted in the deaths of at least forty people and would later become known as “Black May.”¹⁹⁴

The Dutch battalion had not received clear guidance from UNTAC headquarters. No document listing UNTAC’s rules of engagement had been communicated, nor was there any information about the condition of the roads in their sector and whether they were cleared of mines.¹⁹⁵ After his arrival in Bangkok, battalion commander Dukers immediately continued to Phnom Penh to meet with Sanderson. But the force commander was unavailable, and without any specific orders other than to deploy as quickly as possible, Dukers returned to his men in Thailand.¹⁹⁶ When the Dutch reconnaissance party arrived at the Thai-Cambodian border they succeeded, after long negotiations with the Khmer Rouge border guards, to proceed with a small part of their convoy to Pailin in order to inspect the site of the future battalion headquarters. However, when they returned the next day, the marines were stopped by the Khmer Rouge who told them that passing into their zone was from now on completely forbidden.¹⁹⁷ The Thai military were not eager to help the Dutch since the deployment of UNTAC into the Khmer Rouge zone would interfere with their lucrative business in hardwood logging and gem mining with which the Khmer Rouge earned an estimated eight million dollars per month.¹⁹⁸ When Dutch officers discovered that their Thai liaison officer maintained close relations with the Khmer Rouge border guards and exploited a gem mine in Cambodia himself, they reported to The Hague that it was clear they had ended up in a “snake pit.”¹⁹⁹

In Phnom Penh, the force commander confronted Nuon Bunno with his soldiers’ refusal to provide the Dutch battalion access to their zone, but the Khmer Rouge general evasively replied that they did not know that the Dutch wanted to deploy into their zone and that there was some sort of mistake.²⁰⁰ But the fact of the matter was that the Khmer Rouge knew exactly when and where to expect the Dutch battalion because all Cambodian factions had been briefed in detail about the deployment schedule of all UNTAC battalions.²⁰¹ Every day, the marines continued to drive back and forth between Pattaya and the border and made continued attempts to negotiate their way into Cambodia, without any success.²⁰² The only remaining option seemed to deploy by using force, but the Dutch battalion commander decided not to do so because these were not his orders from Phnom Penh. His mission was to deploy into Cambodia with the cooperation of the Cambodian factions, and he had received no instructions what to do in case the Khmer Rouge

194 Philip Shenon, “Military Crackdown in Thailand Blunts Protest Against Army Rule,” *The New York Times*, 20 May 1992; William Branigin, “Thailand Releases 3,000 Protesters; Death Toll Uncertain, as Many Are Missing and Presumed Dead,” *The Washington Post*, 22 May 1992.

195 Cable Ministry of Foreign Affairs The Hague to New York, 19 May 1992, “dpv-769/92,” NIMH, UNTAC-099, file 80.

196 Schoonoord, *Mariniers in Cambodja 1992–1993*, 92.

197 Message Dukers to UNTAC HQ Phnom Penh, 23 May 1992, “Deployment NL Bat into Sector 1,” SIB, MARNSTAF UNTAC Cambodja, box 1226, folder 7; Author’s Interview with Herman Dukers; “Rode Khmer werkt tegen bij stationering mariniers: Commandant krijgt geen toegang tot gebied,” *Reformatorisch Dagblad*, 27 May 1992.

198 Cable Captain van Sprang to The Hague (BDZ/OPS), 30 April 1992, “Sitrep 005,” NIMH, UNTAC 099, file 67; Cable Netherlands Ambassador Bangkok to The Hague, 13 May 1992, “Kambodja/UNTAC,” AMBZ, 990.

199 Cable Dukers, 26 May 1992, “Achtergrondinformatie participatie Nederland aan UNTAC.”

200 Minutes of the 18th meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group, 23 May 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006.

201 Minutes of the Mixed Military Working Group, 2 May 1992, UNA, S-1854-0003-0002.

202 Karolien Bais, “VN-vredesmacht legt het af tegen de regels van de jungle,” *Leidsch Dagblad*, 1 June 1992.



*Dutch marines at the Thai-Cambodian border, trying to establish communications with UNTAC HQ in Phnom Penh.
Photo credit: H. F. Dukers / NIMH*

would not let them pass.²⁰³ The Dutch felt there were too many risks involved in forcing their way into Cambodia as they did not know what to expect deeper into the jungle.²⁰⁴ While continuing their attempts to persuade the Khmer Rouge border guards, they decided that their own safety came first and that it was the responsibility of the UNTAC leadership in Phnom Penh to find a solution to the stalemate.²⁰⁵ Dutch officers stationed at UNTAC headquarters felt a strong lack of understanding for the difficult conditions in which their battalion was expected to deploy.²⁰⁶ Sanderson was nonetheless aware of the problems the Dutch peacekeepers experienced, and wrote another letter to NADK-commander Son Sen with the request to make an unequivocal statement to guarantee the access of UNTAC to Khmer Rouge areas.²⁰⁷

The fact that the Dutch battalion was unable to deploy into their sector while the Khmer Rouge leadership demanded more concessions, perfectly illustrates the Khmer Rouge's strategy of delaying the peace process by claiming a different reading of the Paris Agreement. The problems the Dutch were encountering with the Khmer Rouge also made Sanderson lose confidence in

203 Dukers, "Peace-keeping in Cambodia," 2849; Author's interview with Herman Dukers; Scholars have commented that the Dutch battalion had only anticipated "a best-case scenario" with the Khmer Rouge. See: Chopra et al., *Report on the Cambodian Peace Process*, 20–21.

204 Author's interview with Herman Dukers.

205 Message Dukers to UNTAC HQ Phnom Penh, 23 May 1992, "Deployment NL Bat into Sector 1," SIB, MARNSTAF UNTAC Cambodia, box 1226, folder 7.

206 Cable Captain Wallage to The Hague (DBZ/OPS), 2 June 1992, "Sitrep nr 001," NIMH, UNTAC 099, file 67.

207 Letter Sanderson to Son Sen, "UNTAC/FC/CYP003," 18 May 1992, UNA, S-1854-0003-0001.

the Khmer Rouge's readiness to participate in the disarmament and demobilisation process. In a memorandum to Akashi he concluded that it was clear that the Khmer Rouge had been "too busy taking advantage of the cease-fire and establishing themselves in the countryside to prepare for the regroupment and cantonment. They are not ready and may be having difficulty delivering their troops to the process."²⁰⁸ On 26 May, Akashi presented twelve points that would have to be met by the Khmer Rouge within a week, of which the most important were: the full and unrestricted freedom of movement to UNTAC, to refrain from further cease-fire violations, and to cooperate fully with UNTAC in the reconnaissance of the remaining cantonment sites. Akashi threatened that if his demands would not be met satisfactorily before 5 June, he would inform the UN Security Council.²⁰⁹ But the special representative's warning did not impress the Khmer Rouge who refused to make any gestures and continued to present their own interpretation of the Paris Agreements.²¹⁰ The ambassadors of the P5 agreed that this situation could not continue and therefore believed that the Security Council should be brought into play by the Secretary-General.²¹¹ However, Boutros-Ghali, who was focussed on the historic UN "Earth Summit" in Rio de Janeiro, did not believe this to be necessary and requested Akashi to continue to seek the compliance of the Khmer Rouge through "quiet diplomacy."²¹²

The Bamboo pole incident: a symbolic moment

As had been the case with the wounding of the Australian officer during UNAMIC, an incident serious enough to be picked up by the international media was necessary to create some realisation in New York about the difficulties UNTAC was encountering with the Khmer Rouge. On 30 May, Sanderson and Akashi travelled to north-west Cambodia for a tour along the headquarters of the three resistance factions. At the camps of the two smaller factions, in Phum Ku (FUNCINPEC) and in Banteay Meanrith (KPNLF), Sanderson and Akashi were warmly welcomed and released doves of peace in solemn ceremonies of disarmament. They subsequently travelled to Pailin by helicopter with the aim to inspect the situation and the future cantonment sites earmarked for the Khmer Rouge.²¹³ Although their visit had been announced in advance, there were no Khmer Rouge officials in Pailin to meet them. After Akashi was briefed by the local UNMO team in Pailin about the fact that the Dutch were still stuck at the border and that the Khmer Rouge had strengthened their checkpoints, the special representative decided to attempt to drive to the Thai border to meet with the Dutch battalion. The convoy of UN vehicles did not come far. Less than a kilometre outside the town of Pailin, they were halted by a checkpoint manned by two

208 Message Sanderson to Akashi, 25 May 1992, "preparation of NADK for Phase 2 of the cease-fire," UNA, S-0794-0020-0001.

209 Statement by Akashi at the SNC meeting of 26 May 1992, UNA, S-0794-0020-0001; Cable Akashi to Goulding, 26 May 1992, "Meeting of the Supreme National Council," UNA, S-1829-0313-0006.

210 Minutes of the 19th meeting of the Mixed Military Working Group, 26 May 1992, UNA, S-1854-0080-0006.

211 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 29 May 1992, "Situation in Cambodia," UNA, S-0794-0047-0001; Cable Akashi to Goulding, 27 May 1992, "Situation in Cambodia," UNA, S-0794-0047-0001; Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 23 May 1992, "vers l'épreuve de vérité avec les Khmers Rouges," ADN, 10POI/1 1308.

212 Cable Goulding to Akashi, 28 May 1992, "UNTAC Phase II, readiness of parties and meeting of SNC," UNA, S-1829-0314-0004; Cable Goulding to Akashi, 1 June 1992, "UNTAC-1110 Khmer Rouge," UNA, S-1829-0314-0003.

213 UNTAC Press Release 29 May 1992, "Mr. Akashi visits border checkpoints, factions headquarters, UNTAC establishes mobile investigation teams," UNA, S-1829-0313-0006-0002.

Khmer Rouge guards who blocked the road with a bamboo pole. For thirty minutes, Akashi tried to persuade the young Khmer Rouge soldiers to lift the bamboo pole and let them through, but without any success.²¹⁴ Eventually, the highest ranking civilian and military UN officials in the country decided to obey the Khmer Rouge and turn around, while Thai trucks filled with logs, gems and other goods passed the checkpoint without any problems in both directions. A group of twenty-four journalists present in the UN convoy witnessed this painful moment which was soon referred to as “the bamboo pole incident.”²¹⁵ The event was symbolic for the risk-aversiveness of the UN leadership and clearly set the wrong example for the entire peacekeeping force.

Sanderson did not believe it to be a good idea to defy the Khmer Rouge at the bamboo pole. “To attempt to push through the barrier with our unarmed party might have made a good story for the press but it would have achieved nothing except to place you and the rest of the party at risk,” he wrote to Akashi several months after the incident in a memorandum which was clearly meant for the record. Moreover, the force commander did not believe that such a bold action would have drawn the Khmer Rouge any closer to the peace process. “On the contrary,” he argued, “it may have wrecked the Paris Agreements completely, denying us any further opportunities for maintaining a dialogue with the PDK.”²¹⁶ One year after the incident, the force commander explained in an interview with American scholar Steven Ratner that he believed that ignoring the roadblock would have caused the Khmer Rouge to stop them further down the road with heavier weapons and mines, leading to bloodshed which would have sabotaged diplomatic efforts to gain Khmer Rouge compliance.²¹⁷ Concerns about an escalation of events and the larger political consequences, particularly in Canberra, were clearly on top of Sanderson’s mind. He later remembered: “Many of our troop-contributing countries were sending their soldiers on their first-ever UN missions [. . .] Some hadn’t even arrived yet. How many of them would have signed on if the mission had been advertised as ‘Come to Cambodia to make war with the Khmer Rouge!’”²¹⁸

Sanderson recalled Akashi’s intentions in Pailin as to “test the freedom of movement” and believed that the Khmer Rouge’s demonstration of denying them this “fulfilled the objective of the visit.”²¹⁹ Akashi later claimed that he wanted to demonstrate to the journalists “the utter arrogance of the Khmer Rouge and their non-cooperation” and that the course of events unfolded exactly as he intended to.²²⁰ But it seems unlikely that Akashi decided to voluntarily humiliate himself, and the United Nations, in front of the cameras. Back in Phnom Penh, Akashi protested to Khieu Samphan that the incident in Pailin was “unacceptable, deeply disquieting, and totally unsatisfactory.” But the Khmer Rouge president stoically stated that he could only comply with

214 The special representative of the Secretary-General was told that he was only allowed to circulate inside Pailin, but not to move out of the town.

215 Fax Lt Col. Malik to UNTAC HQ, 30 May 1992, “Visit of Mr Akashi and Lt Gen Sanderson,” UNA, S-1854-0060-0004; Sue Downie, “U.N. chief turned back by Khmer Rouge,” *United Press International*, 30 May 1992; “Faisant obstacle à la mission de l’ONU Les Khmers rouges multiplient les violations de l’accord de paix,” *Le Monde*, 2 June 1992; O’Meara, “Keeping the peace a Cambodian diary,” 36; Internal message Sanderson to Akashi, 12 March 1993, “The Bamboo Pole incident,” UNA, S-0796-0056-0002; Shawcross, *Deliver Us from Evil*, 42; Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, 1 June 1992, “Montée de la tension avec les Khmers Rouges,” AND, 10 POI/1 1309.

216 Internal memorandum Sanderson to Akashi, 12 March 1993, “The Bamboo Pole incident,” UNA, S-0796-0056-0002.

217 Ratner, *The New UN Peacekeeping*, 170.

218 Samantha Power, *Chasing the flame: One Man’s Fight to Save the World* (New York: Penguin, 2008), 108.

219 Internal memorandum Sanderson to Akashi, 12 March 1993.

220 Interview by James Sutterlin with Yasushi Akashi, Session I; Horner and Connor, *The Good International Citizen*, 167.

Phase Two as soon as UNTAC had, first, ensured that all Vietnamese forces had left the country, and second, endowed the Supreme National Council with governmental functions so that it could replace the State of Cambodia. But Akashi made it clear that there were no sine qua non conditions and no priorities set forth in the Paris Agreements.²²¹ The special representative reported to the Security Council and informed the ambassadors of the P5 about what had happened in Pailin.²²² Among the ambassadors, there was a general feeling of consternation about Akashi's actions.²²³ The US ambassador and the French ambassador believed that Akashi and Sanderson had made the wrong judgement call by not forcing their way in.²²⁴ UN headquarters in New York was also displeased, but instead of pushing through, Goulding felt that Akashi should have avoided the guaranteed humiliation in Pailin by simply not going there.²²⁵ "There was no way in which the Khmer Rouge was going to be intimidated by the television cameras to lift the bamboo pole," Goulding later said in an interview with Professor James Sutterlin.²²⁶

Pushing through the bamboo pole would probably have changed the entire dynamic of the operation in one way or the other. It was a question of judgement how much risks were involved in calling the Khmer Rouge's bluff. Prince Sihanouk believed that it was unlikely that the Khmer Rouge would fire at UN troops as that would equal "a declaration of war to the United Nations" the prince told the Portuguese ambassador Castello-Branco in Phnom Penh who presented his letters of credence the day after the bamboo pole incident. If the Khmer Rouge would be bold enough to fire on the peacekeepers entering their zone, the Prince said, the only way for the UN "to defend its honour and authority" would be to launch an operation similar to Operation Desert Storm. If UN member states contributing troops to UNTAC were not willing to get involved in such an enforcement operation, the only solution according to the prince, was to ask Hanoi to send the Vietnamese army back to Cambodia to "fight under the UN banner" against the Khmer Rouge.²²⁷ Sihanouk sharply analysed the dilemma for UNTAC and more generally for UN peacekeeping operations operating in semi-permissive environments. Perhaps the Khmer Rouge would indeed not dare to shoot at UN peacekeepers entering their zone, but if they would, the situation could escalate very quickly, and the United Nations would find itself in a totally new situation for which the existing peacekeeping force was ill-prepared.

Despite the fact that the bamboo pole incident made it blatantly clear that the Khmer Rouge's promises of forthcoming cooperation were an illusion, a tendency remained among the UN civilian leadership to ignore this reality and what it meant for UNTAC's ability to fulfil its mission. The Dutch battalion commander regretted that Sanderson and Akashi had not been able to reach him and were sent back to Phnom Penh by the Khmer Rouge as two "schoolboys," but it suited him well that the whole world could now see that he and his men were not to blame for

221 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 4 June 1992, "Meeting Mr. Khieu Samphan," UNA, S-1829-0313-0005.

222 Jean-Claude Chapon, "UNTAC chief stopped from entering Khmer Rouge zone," *AFP*, 30 May 1992.

223 Cable French Ambassador Phnom Penh to Paris, "Montée de la tension avec les Khmers Rouges," 1 June 1992, ADN, 10 POI/1 1309; Author's interview with Philippe Coste.

224 Interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy with Ambassador Charles H. Twining, 26 May 2004, The Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training; Author's interview with Philippe Coste.

225 Interview by James Sutterlin with Marrack Goulding.

226 Ibid.

227 Report by the Portuguese Ambassador Castello-Branco of his conversation with Prince Sihanouk on 31 May 1992. See: Cable Netherlands Embassy Bangkok to The Hague, 2 June 1992, "Kambodja/UNTAC: Vredesoperatie voor wezenlijk deel in Thaise handen," AMBZ, 990.

their inability to deploy into the Khmer Rouge zone.²²⁸

Whereas Sanderson later explained his decision not to escalate the situation at the bamboo pole by pointing out that the troop-contributing countries might be deterred to send their troops to Cambodia, the fact that the Khmer Rouge had dared to refuse UNTAC's highest officials access to their zone had exactly the effect the force commander feared. The Dutch government was alerted by UNTAC's humiliation in Pailin and decided to suspend the departure of the next shift of 200 marines to Thailand. The prospect of having an entire battalion sit idle in a hotel in Pattaya – a place known for its sex tourism – was considered far from ideal.²²⁹ It was decided to put the remaining marines on a 48-hours' notice to move until safe access to the area of operation in Cambodia was guaranteed.²³⁰

Instead of publicly denouncing the Khmer Rouge for their non-cooperation with UNTAC and violation of the Paris Agreements, the UN leadership turned the Dutch into the scapegoat to blame for disrupting the deployment schedule and causing further delays. Goulding angrily accused the Dutch of giving the Khmer Rouge a "free ride" and made it clear that the UN would keep this incident in mind when asking The Netherlands to contribute troops to future UN operations.²³¹ Akashi agreed with Goulding's firm stand vis-à-vis the Dutch unilateral decision. "We certainly cannot afford to lose any positive momentum of deployment of infantry battalions," he cabled to New York.²³² The Secretary-General sent a letter to the Dutch minister of foreign affairs, Hans van den Broek, in which he pointed out that he was determined to press ahead and make it clear to the Khmer Rouge "that it is they who will suffer if they try to frustrate the process." The decision by the Dutch government, he wrote, would convey the opposite impression and could be interpreted as a signal of weakness. The Secretary-General firmly added that the build-up of UN troops in and around Cambodia should signal to the Khmer Rouge "how much they will pay if they defy the international community's will."²³³ The Dutch government felt that the reaction from New York was exaggerated and that it was not up to their battalion to solve the issue with the Khmer Rouge, but to the UNTAC leadership in Phnom Penh.²³⁴ The Hague came up with a compromise solution: for every hundred marines that succeeded to enter Cambodia, another hundred would immediately be dispatched to Thailand.²³⁵ It was also decided to deploy the Dutch peacekeepers to locations outside Khmer Rouge-controlled territory and have them set up headquarters in the town of Sisophon, capital of Banteay Meanchey Province, instead of

228 Dukers, "Peace-keeping in Cambodja," 2849; Bais, *Het mijnenveld van een vredesmacht*, 34.

229 Note by the director of policy to Relus ter Beek, 26 May, "vertrek mariniersbataljon voor Untac," SIB, TCBU-Secretaris-Generaal Cambodja Vredesmissies, box 12.

230 Letter by Lieutenant General Van Breemen to Ter Beek, 5 June 1992, SIB, TCBU, box 12; Cable The Hague to New York, 1 June 1992, "UNTAC/Nederlandse deelname," AMBZ, 00167; Schoonoord, *Mariniers in Cambodja 1992–1993*, 97.

231 Cable Netherlands PR New York to The Hague, 2 June 1992, "UNTAC/Nederlandse deelname," AMBZ, 00167; Cable Goulding to Akashi, 1 June 1992, "Deployment of Netherlands battalion," UNA, S-1829-0314-0003.

232 Akashi to Goulding, 6 June 1992, "Deployment of Dutch battalion," UNA, S-1829-0313-0005.

233 Letter Boutros-Ghali to Van den Broek, 3 June 1992, SIB, TCBU, box 12; Cable Netherlands PR New York to The Hague, 4 June, "UNTAC/Nederlandse deelname," AMBZ, 00167.

234 Cable Van den Broek to Netherlands PR UN in New York, 3 June 1992, AMBZ, 990; Bais, *Het mijnenveld van een vredesmacht*, 66.

235 Cable Goulding to Sanderson, 5 June 1992, "Deployment of Dutch battalion," UNA, S-1854-0003-0002; Author's interview with Herman Dukers; Letter by Lieutenant General Van Breemen to Ter Beek Minister of Defence, 5 June 1992, SIB, TCBU, box 12.

Pailin.²³⁶ When the Khmer Rouge was looking the other way, a Dutch company even succeeded to deploy to Sok San, a KPNLF-enclave located in the middle of Khmer Rouge territory south of Pailin.²³⁷

The very resolute tone of the Secretary-General in the correspondence to the Dutch foreign minister contrasted sharply with the very polite letter he sent, on the same day, to Khieu Samphan in which he said to be “somewhat surprised” by the Khmer Rouge’s refusal to allow UNTAC troops into their zones and their unpreparedness for the disarmament phase, and gently asked for his cooperation.²³⁸ But Khieu Samphan used his personal correspondence with the Secretary-General to create a smoke screen and isolate an increasingly uncompromising Akashi. In his reply to the Secretary-General, again written in exquisitely polite French, Khieu Samphan solemnly declared his profound attachment to the Paris Agreements and promised to continue to cooperate with UNTAC and Akashi if his two “key conditions” were met.²³⁹ But Akashi’s attempts to reason with Khieu Samphan were going nowhere, and the special representative started to lose his patience.

Soldier or diplomat and the issue of risk

The French sociologist and philosopher of history Raymond Aron considered the soldier and the diplomat as the two most important and mutually complementary actors in the realm of international relations.²⁴⁰ A UN peacekeeper, however, is expected to combine both functions in one job. The decision to lay emphasis on either diplomatic or military measures in fulfilling peacekeeping missions revolves around many considerations. The issue of risk, which has been identified by historian Ben Schoenmaker as the central dilemma in post-Cold War peace operations, was certainly a key element at play in Cambodia.²⁴¹ Soldiers accept risk as part of their profession, and diplomats generally try to avoid it in achieving their goals. UNTAC’s force commander Sanderson clearly defined his role more as a diplomat than as a soldier. His political antenna and diplomatic skills gave him a strong sense of what the political consequences might be in case of an escalation of the situation. Loridon, however, believed that a military dynamic was required to keep the peace, emphasising the symbolic importance of a demonstration of authority and determination to succeed in the mission’s objectives, but not taking into account that some countries might not be willing to pay the price for escalation.

Nonetheless, the force commander and his deputy did share at least one perception: they were both sceptical about the feasibility of the disarmament and demobilisation of the Cambodian

236 Cable Captain Wallage to The Hague (DBZ/OPS), 2 June 1992, “Sitrep nr 001,” NIMH, UNTAC 099, file 67.

237 “Samenvatting gebeurtenissen Sok San locatie,” SIB, MARNSTAF-UNTAC, box 1236, file 43; Cable Goulding to Akashi for Sanderson, 5 June 1992, UNA, S-1854-0016-0007; Author’s correspondence with Herman Dukers, 5 December 2019.

238 “Je me permets donc de faire appel à votre compréhension et à votre coopération, dans l’espoir que toutes les parties s’engageront, lors de la prochaine réunion du CNS, à prendre les mesures nécessaires pour permettre l’APRONUC de mettre en œuvre, à compter du 13 juin, la deuxième phase du cessez-le-feu et l’ensemble des autres fonctions à caractère militaire qui lui ont été confiées.” Quoted from letter Boutros Boutros-Ghali to Khieu Samphan, 3 June 1992 (see: Cable Goulding to Akashi, 3 June 1992, “Khmer Rouge”) UNA, S-0794-0043-0001.

239 “The effective verification of the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia and the transformation of the SNC into the unique source of authority in Cambodia.” Letter Khieu Samphan to Boutros-Ghali, 5 June 1992, UNA, S-1829-0313-0005.

240 Raymond Aron, *Paix et guerre entre les nations* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1962, 1984 edition) 17–18, 770.

241 Schoenmaker, *Vredesoperaties en de terugkeer van de oorlog*, 5.

factions. Sanderson had carefully expressed his doubts about the feasibility of pursuing Phase Two while the cooperation from the Khmer Rouge was not forthcoming, but Loridon was less hesitant to openly express his increasing scepticism about the UN's ability to succeed in its mission in Cambodia. On 27 May, he told a journalist: "I haven't been very optimistic for the last fortnight since the Khmer Rouge are creating serious problems by refusing our requests."²⁴² Privately, the deputy force commander expressed his concerns more explicitly. When the first officers of the French battalion arrived in Cambodia, Loridon told them in a briefing about the situation in Cambodia that he was of the opinion that the operation was heading towards "great difficulties" because he did not see how the Cambodian factions' armies could be disarmed as long as UNTAC was denied access to the Khmer Rouge zones. He added that he had never believed in the feasibility of the plan for disarmament and demobilisation, which in his view was too inflexible and necessitated far too many UN forces. He recognised that chances were slim that the Khmer Rouge soldiers would open their zones on 13 June and report voluntarily to the UN regroupment zones to be disarmed and demobilised, which would have the foreseeable consequence that the other factions would refuse to be disarmed as well.

Loridon had taken an early interest in the Khmer Rouge's strategy and understood their objective to thwart UNTAC's efforts as much as possible, while accusing the mission of not respecting the peace accords and trying to obtain as many concessions as possible to serve their objective of regaining power. His analysis was based on his own experience in dealing with the Khmer Rouge during his command of UNAMIC, but also strongly influenced by reading the manuscript of an extensive research by the then 33-year-old French Cambodia scholar Christophe Peschoux, who analysed the strategic thinking of the Khmer Rouge leadership. Peschoux concluded that the "new" Khmer Rouge were actually "old wine in new bottles" and that Pol Pot's objective was to reconquer 35 per cent of the Cambodian villages, in order to dominate a large part of the countryside before the elections were held in May 1993.²⁴³ Pol Pot's plan reflected the classic model of Maoist insurgency which prescribed the slow expansion throughout the countryside, the creation of liberated areas, link them up into liberated zones and increase the popular support for the insurgency.²⁴⁴ Since the Khmer Rouge only controlled 20 per cent of the Cambodian villages, Loridon believed that the Khmer Rouge would continue to obstruct the peace process. He therefore argued that the only way for UNTAC to counter the Khmer Rouge's strategy was to call the Khmer Rouge's bluff, exert the UN's right to freedom of movement, demonstrate authority, and deploy UN forces into the Khmer Rouge zone, preferably in the presence of the UNTAC leadership, and see if the Khmer Rouge soldiers would dare to shoot at them. He strongly believed that they would not.²⁴⁵

It was a matter of time before Loridon, who was certainly not of the stereotypical *grande muette*-type, went public with his views. The bamboo pole incident seemed to have been the trigger. On 30 May, the French general sat down with a group of French journalists in Sihanoukville

242 Jean-Claude Chapon, "Khmer Rouge undermining Cambodian peace plan: U.N. general," *AFP*, 27 May 1992.

243 The book was eventually published a little later, in August 1992: Christophe Peschoux, *Les « nouveaux » Khmers rouges enquête (1979–1990): reconstruction du mouvement et reconquête des villages* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 1992), 11, 201.

244 Paul B. Rich and Isabelle Duyvesteyn, "The study of insurgency and counterinsurgency," in *The Routledge Handbook of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency*, eds. Paul B. Rich and Isabelle Duyvesteyn (New York: Routledge, 2014), 5–6.

245 Briefing by Brigadier General Michel Loridon to French officers in Phnom Penh; "Cambodge: Pol Pot menace la paix," *Le Quotidien de Paris*, 1 June 1992; Author's interview with Michel Loridon.

and openly spoke his mind about why UNTAC was about to derail. “The fact that I speak out today,” he told the reporters, “is not for self-promotion. It’s not for my career that I am here. My career ends in two years [. . .] I want peace in Cambodia, but I do not agree with the plan of the United Nations, so I say it.”²⁴⁶ Loridon did not mince his words in explaining his conviction that the plan for Phase Two was too rigid, insufficiently adapted to the local circumstances, and too vulnerable to the slightest contingency. The Khmer Rouge, Loridon argued, were taking full advantage of this. He added that he regretted that New York had refused to take into consideration his alternative “more flexible” plan.²⁴⁷ The journalists wrote with sympathy about the French general whom they believed was sincerely passionate about his mission, but frustrated that an opportunity to make peace in Cambodia was missed and that his opinion had not been heard. The articles appearing in French newspapers about Loridon’s *cri de cœur* were a cause of concern for the French government.²⁴⁸ Speaking frankly to the press was already a taboo for a French general, but by openly questioning the UN strategy in Cambodia and indirectly criticising his superiors, Loridon had clearly exceeded his authority in the eyes of the French defence minister Pierre Joxe, who immediately decided to call the outspoken general back to France.²⁴⁹ Loridon’s dismissal did not cause much surprise or debate in France where, traditionally, politicians have a low tolerance for senior military officers who publicly comment on political-strategic issues.

Loridon was nonetheless proven right when Khmer Rouge general Nuon Bunno officially announced, on 9 June, in a letter to Sanderson that he was not in the position to allow UNTAC forces to deploy in the areas under its control to disarm and demobilise the Khmer Rouge forces. It was now officially clear that the start of Phase Two on 13 June would be “a non-event,” as Prince Sihanouk put it.²⁵⁰ Akashi condemned the Khmer Rouge declaration as “completely unacceptable” and “a clear breach of the Paris Agreements.”²⁵¹ But in actuality, the Khmer Rouge statement was merely a confirmation of the policy Pol Pot’s men had been following for months.

It has generally been assumed that the Khmer Rouge ceased to cooperate in June 1992 out of protest against UNTAC’s inability to satisfy their demand of controlling the SOC’s administrative power.²⁵² It is true that UNTAC’s civil administration component had not yet initiated supervision and control over the five major departments of the SOC government in early June, as they were originally scheduled to do. The recruitment of qualified civil administrators had started late and was progressing slowly as the UN did not have a reservoir of specialised personnel.

246 Dominique Artus, “Colère française au Cambodge,” *Le Journal du Dimanche*, 31 May 1992.

247 Frederic Pons, “Le syndrome du buffle,” *Valeurs Actuelles*, 22 June 1992; Francois Luizet, “Cambodge: la paix en panne, les Khmers rouges bloquent l’ONU,” *Le Figaro*, 11 June 1992.

248 Also see: Patrice de Beer, “Le scepticisme tempéré du général Loridon,” *Le Monde*, 2 June 1992; “Inquiétude au Cambodge,” *L’Humanité*, 1 June 1992.

249 Cable French PR New York to Paris, 2 July 1992, “APRONUC Remplacement du général Loridon,” ADN, 10POI/1 1309; Author’s interview with Michel Loridon.

250 Luizet, “Cambodge: la paix en panne.”

251 “Statement by Mr. Akashi, Readiness of the parties for Phase II,” Supreme National Council, 10 June 1992, UNA, S-1829-0313-0005.

252 David Roberts, “More honoured in the breach: Consent and impartiality in the Cambodian peacekeeping operation,” *International Peacekeeping* 4, no. 1 (1997): 5; Findlay, *Cambodia*, 36; Whalan, *How Peace Operations Work*, 94; Michael Mersiades, “Peacekeeping and legitimacy: lessons from Cambodia and Somalia,” *International Peacekeeping* 12, no. 2 (2005): 210.

This meant that the civil administration could only begin exercising control a month later.²⁵³ Some scholars have suggested that early UNTAC control over the SOC might have persuaded the Khmer Rouge to give UNTAC peacekeepers entry to their zones.²⁵⁴ But the Khmer Rouge did not explicitly put forward the absence of UNTAC's control over the Phnom Penh government as a reason for their refusal to cooperate. The precondition for their compliance with Phase Two was the implementation of what the Khmer Rouge interpreted and presented as the two "key provisions" of the Paris Agreements. The first point was to ensure that all Vietnamese forces had left Cambodia.²⁵⁵ In the first three months, the Khmer Rouge focussed their complaints entirely on the alleged presence of Vietnamese forces and UNTAC's inability to find these troops. In line with these "concerns," they conditioned their cooperation with Phase Two on the establishment of checkpoints along the border with Vietnam.²⁵⁶ As we have seen, UNTAC made strenuous efforts to complete the positioning of these checkpoints, but the Khmer Rouge continued to adjust the prerequisites for their cooperation, up to the point of dictating the composition and operation of these checkpoints.²⁵⁷

The second precondition was to strengthen the power of the Supreme National Council and endow it with governmental functions. Khieu Samphan maintained that the existence of Hun Sen's government was in violation with the Paris Agreements, and basically demanded to replace the State of Cambodia with the Supreme National Council.²⁵⁸ But this claim had no basis because the SNC had never been intended to act as a *de facto* transitional government but rather as a symbolic authority that conveyed power for supervising and controlling Cambodia's public administration to UNTAC. The Paris Agreements stipulated that UNTAC's administrative control should be exercised through the existing administrative structures of each of the four Cambodian parties, and not abolish them altogether.²⁵⁹ Khieu Samphan was clearly applying the strategy outlined by Pol Pot of using the Paris Agreements as a weapon to justify their own obstructionism and demand more concessions.

Loridon believed that the point of no return had been reached after the Khmer Rouge officially refused to disarm and demobilise. The UN's house of cards in Cambodia had collapsed. A week before his departure from Cambodia, the deputy force commander stated in an interview with historian and veteran Indochina-journalist Nyan Chanda of the *Far Eastern Economic Review* that he was leaving Cambodia frustrated because of UNTAC's inability to implement its mandate. The French general openly accused his superiors of being "too busy being diplomatic while ignoring the Khmer Rouge strategy of buying time," and urged that UNTAC should push

253 On 1 July the civil administration component started to exercise control over the SOC ministries in Phnom Penh. UNTAC's twenty-one civil administration offices in the provinces were opened on 15 July. It would take until 27 September before the full staff of 600 internationals and 600 Cambodians got into action to oversee the SOC administration. Peou, *Conflict Neutralization*, 196; Schear, "Riding the Tiger," 155.

254 Ratner, *The New UN Peacekeeping*, 200; Schear, "Riding the Tiger," 173; Doyle, *UNTAC's civil mandate*, 35.

255 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 4 June 1992, "Meeting with Mr. Khieu Samphan," UNA, S-1829-0313-0005; Letter Khieu Samphan to Boutros-Ghali, 5 June 1992, UNA, S-1829-0313-0005.

256 Cable Sadry to Goulding, 12 May 1992, "Commencement of Phase II," UNA, S-0794-0020-0001.

257 Message Sanderson to Akashi, 25 May 1992, "Preparation of NADK for Phase 2 of the Cease-Fire", UNA, S-0794-0020-0001.

258 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 4 June 1992, "Meeting with Mr. Khieu Samphan," UNA, S-1829-0313-0005; Letter Khieu Samphan to Boutros-Ghali, 5 June 1992, UNA, S-1829-0313-0005.

259 Second Special report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia, S/24286, 14 July 1992, NIMH, UNTAC 099, box 82; Schear, "Riding the Tiger," 158.

the local Khmer Rouge commanders for compliance instead of “just sitting and waiting for the Khmer Rouge leaders to agree to disarm their troops.”²⁶⁰ During his command of UNAMIC, he argued, he had obtained results not by pandering to the Khmer Rouge but by being firm with them, adding that the UNTAC battalions were not being used to their potential. “I have done a lot more with 300 troops than is now being done with 14,000,” he stated. The French general went on to make the point that no peacekeeping operation could be risk-free, and that “courage and a willingness” were needed to push the Khmer Rouge into respecting the terms of the peace accords they had signed. In order to further illustrate this, he made a bold statement for which the interview would become best remembered: “It is possible at some point they will try to block the UN move by force. If it comes to that one may lose 200 men – and that could include myself – but the Khmer Rouge problem would be solved for good.”²⁶¹ This single quote was immediately copied in many news reports and caused much consternation, but Loridon later wrote in a letter to Nyan Chanda that he regretted some of his “provocative” remarks.²⁶² Nonetheless, the statement has led scholars to picture Loridon as a loose cannon who proposed to start a punishing counterinsurgency campaign, or at least a peace enforcement operation, against the Khmer Rouge. Sorpong Peou, for example, has argued that Loridon suggested “that 200 UN troops could be sacrificed in a swift war against the Khmer Rouge.”²⁶³ However, in the same interview, Loridon explained that he was absolutely convinced that the Khmer Rouge would not dare to shoot at UN troops. He was probably right in this assessment as interviews with Khmer Rouge defectors by Cambodia scholar Stephen Heder suggest that they had received orders not to shoot at UNTAC for fear of international condemnation.²⁶⁴

Contrary to conventional analysis, Loridon was not fired because of his remarks in the interview with Chanda, which was published on 23 July 1992, three weeks after it was publicly confirmed by the French government that Loridon would leave Cambodia by the end of the month to be succeeded by another French general, Robert Rideau.²⁶⁵ Loridon’s remarks nonetheless shocked the UN leadership. Akashi publicly said he was “startled.”²⁶⁶ Sergio Vieira de Mello, the chief of UNHCR in Cambodia, cautioned for the rest of his career against “crossing the Loridon-

260 Nyan Chanda, “UN divisions Signs of growing Franco-Australian rivalry within peacekeeping force,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 23 July 1992.

261 Chanda, “UN divisions,” 9.

262 Message from Phnom Penh by AFP, 29 July 1992, accessed via Dow Jones Factiva database; Author’s interview with Michel Loridon.

263 Peou, *Conflict Neutralization*, 229; also see: Berdal and Leifer, “Cambodia,” 42; Horner and Connor, *The Good International Citizen*, 119; Brown and Zasloff, *Cambodia Confronts the Peacemakers*, 284.

264 Heder, “The Resumption of Armed Struggle,” 94.

265 Steven Ratner has argued that Loridon was fired by Akashi. See: Ratner, *The New UN Peacekeeping*, 203. It has been argued by John Connor that Loridon’s comments published in the *Far Eastern Economic Review* on 23 July were “the final straw” and resulted in the French defence minister to call Loridon back to France. This is incorrect. Horner and Connor, *The Good International Citizen*, 149; Cable French PR New York to Paris, 2 July 1992, “APRONUC Remplacement du général Loridon,” ADN, 10POI/1 1309; Cable Goulding to Akashi/Sanderson, 8 July 1992, “DFC,” UNA, S-0795-0056-0002; “Le général français Robert Rideau au Cambodge,” *Le Monde*, 10 July 1992.

266 Philip Shenon, “Conversations Yasushi Akashi; A Japanese Envoy’s Impossible Job: Keeping the Peace in Cambodia,” *The New York Times*, 4 October 1992. In an interview in 1997, Akashi claimed to remember a meeting with Loridon during which he asked him how many casualties UNTAC would suffer if they decided to march into one of the Khmer Rouge-controlled areas. According to Akashi, Loridon replied by saying that UNTAC could lose three to four hundred men. “That would have been the end of UNTAC” Akashi told James Sutterlin. There is however no evidence to support Akashi’s claim, and according to Loridon, such a meeting had never taken place. See: interview by James Sutterlin with Yasushi Akashi, Session I.

line.”²⁶⁷ But others believed that Loridon was right and regretted to see him leave. Ironically, the Americans, who had been opposed to Loridon taking command in Cambodia, were impressed by the French general’s vigour and dynamism, and generally supportive of his views.²⁶⁸ Charles Twining, the US ambassador in Phnom Penh, maintained a good relation with Loridon and wrote in a last letter to him: “I have every expectation that, when the history books are written on the Cambodian peace process in the future, your name will be prominent among those who made a lasting contribution to the process.”²⁶⁹ Despite his decision to replace the outspoken general, Defence Minister Joxe nonetheless seemed to have agreed with Loridon’s point of view. According to Loridon, the minister told him during an official debriefing in Paris that the general had said everything what had to be said, but that it was impossible for the French government to agree with these statements in public.²⁷⁰

Loridon’s provocative public statement has been falsely interpreted as a concrete proposal for starting a counter insurgency operation against the Khmer Rouge. He rather aimed to make the fundamental point that risks would have to be accepted if one wanted to achieve the objective of the operation. In making this argument, Loridon reflected the general French philosophy about the conduct of peacekeeping operations. According to Professor of International Security Shaun Gregory, the French political vision on the conduct of peacekeeping operations demands “clarity about the purpose of the mission, acceptance of the potential for escalation, and flexibility for the political position to evolve in relation to events on the ground.”²⁷¹ This was well illustrated when Boutros-Ghali met with the French Chief of Defence, Admiral Lanxade, a week before Loridon’s departure from Cambodia. Surprisingly enough, neither Loridon’s dismissal nor the overall situation in Cambodia was discussed during the meeting that exclusively focussed on the situation in the former Yugoslavia, revealing that the priority for both the Secretary-General and the French military was with the Balkans and not in Indochina. Boutros-Ghali began the meeting by expressing his condolences to Lanxade for the death of two French officers who had been killed by a Serbian bomb in Croatia earlier that week. He underlined that the protection of UN forces was of great concern to him and that he considered it “inadmissible that soldiers of peace were getting killed.” After thanking the Secretary-General for his condolences, Admiral Lanxade made it immediately clear that “the President of the French Republic has chosen to accept the risks of the operation and to have them accepted by public opinion as well.”²⁷² Lanxade’s reply reveals how different the mentalities with regard to casualties and the dangers involved in a peacekeeping operation were at UN headquarters in New York and a permanent member of the UN Security Council, in this case France. In the 1990s, French society and public opinion generally supported

267 This statement was a variation from the term “crossing the Mogadishu line,” referring to the escalation of a peacekeeping operation into an enforcement operation. Power, *Chasing the flame*, 108–9. For Akashi’s reaction see: Shenon, “Yasushi Akashi; A Japanese Envoy’s Impossible Job.”

268 Cable French Ambassador Washington, DC to Paris, 24 February 1992, “Consultations Franco-Américaines sur l’Asie: Cambodge,” ADN, 10 POI/1 1310; Cable French Ambassador Washington, DC to Paris, 6 April 1992, ADN, 10 POI/1 1315.

269 Letter by Ambassador Charles H. Twining to General Michel Loridon, 13 July 1992, Private Archives Michel Loridon (PAML).

270 Author’s interview with Michel Loridon.

271 Shaun Gregory, “France and *missions de paix*,” *The RUSI Journal* 145, no. 4 (August 2000): 63.

272 Note de l’entretien du Secrétaire général avec le Chef d’état-major des armées de la République française, 22 July 1992. UNA, S-1082-0020-0008.



Brigadier General Michel Loridon talks to a group of French journalists at a beach café near Sihanoukville on 30 May 1992. Photo credit: © Michel Riehl /ECPAD/Défense.

France's participation in peacekeeping operations and concern about the safety of its military personnel was rarely an issue.²⁷³ According to political scientist Brigitte Stern, in France the possibility of casualties in peace operations is considered as "the price France is prepared to pay to retain its rank as a permanent member of the Security Council and a defender of the fundamental values of international society, respect for human rights, humanitarian law, democracy, and peace."²⁷⁴ This means that the parameter of domestic political support and the fear for casualties were not of primary concern to Loridon in his considerations.

Sanderson, on the other hand, operated in a context in which pressure to avoid escalation was high. Although the troops Canberra contributed to UNTAC were not the infantry units that would be in the first line to enter the Khmer Rouge zones, casualties among blue helmets of any nationality would have increased the political pressure by the opposition on the Australian government considerably. In May 1992, Shadow Foreign Minister Hill, unsatisfied with the information provided to him by the government, decided to travel to Cambodia to see for himself "what exactly is going on" and determine the dangers of the cease-fire breaches for Australian

273 Pia Christina Wood, "France," in *The Politics of Peacekeeping in the Post-Cold War Era*, eds. David S. Sorenson and Pia Christina Wood (London: Frank Cass, 2005), 75. Wood cites Defence Minister Joxe who has explained, "[I]n France, one can attest that public opinion tolerates and accepts the use of armed forces in causes that are just and can dignify sacrifices of human life."

274 Brigitte Stern, "Conclusion," in *United Nations peace-keeping operations: a guide to French policies*, eds. Brigitte Stern, Yves Daudet, Philippe Morillon and Marie-Claude Smouts (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 1998), 124–25. Also see: Shaun Gregory who argues that the French political vision on the conduct of peacekeeping operations demands "clarity about the purpose of the mission, acceptance of the potential for escalation, and flexibility for the political position to evolve in relation to events on the ground." Gregory, "France and *missions de paix*," 63.

troops.²⁷⁵ Two months later, Foreign Minister Gareth Evans publicly resisted suggestions that military action against the Khmer Rouge would be justified, and declared that UN troops would have to leave Cambodia if the Khmer Rouge made it impossible to carry out the terms of the peace settlement. Any use of military action, Evans stated, would require “a fundamental re-writing” of the Paris Peace Agreements. “It is not the sort of thing that can creep up on us within the terms of the present settlement,” he said.²⁷⁶ Political commentators in Australia believed that in the face of the March 1993 elections in Australia, the Keating government was unlikely to support any action that might expose Australian troops in Cambodia to danger.²⁷⁷

In Tokyo, the Japanese contribution to UNTAC and the risks of escalation in Cambodia also remained a sensitive topic. On 15 June 1992, after nine months of fierce parliamentary debates, the PKO bill was finally forced through parliament in a vote that was dramatically boycotted by deputies of the opposition, after they had unsuccessfully tried to dissolve the assembly by collectively submitting their resignation. The government was forced to accept many restrictive amendments prohibiting the Japanese peacekeepers to participate in activities that were considered too dangerous such as enforcing cease-fires, disarming combatants and removing mines.²⁷⁸ If the mounting tensions in Cambodia would lead to a serious escalation, Tokyo’s highly symbolic contribution would have to be cancelled because of constitutional constraints.²⁷⁹ However, the political situation in Tokyo did not seem to have been of direct influence on Akashi, who was a career UN official and not employed by the Japanese government. But Tokyo’s prominent position as the principal financier of UNTAC gave Sanderson and Akashi an additional reason to avoid risks.

The issue of risk forms a recurrent theme in the articles published by both Sanderson and Loridon in which they have reflected on their command in Cambodia and UN peacekeeping in general. Although the generals’ writings serve, to a large extent, as ex post facto justifications for their decisions in Cambodia, they also provide an amplification of their visions on the conduct of peacekeeping operations. It becomes clear that their principal point of difference was on whether the risk of escalation should be accepted or not. Sanderson warned in his articles of “the incalculable dynamic of force,” arguing that peacekeeping operations run the risk of “dabbling into war” if control is lost.²⁸⁰ Loridon, on the other hand, argued that the unwillingness to take risks paralyses a UN peacekeeping operation. Although acknowledging that military leaders always have the responsibility to protect the lives of their soldiers, the French general identified the concern with a “zero mortality rate” as the central factor that prevents peacekeepers from achieving their

275 “Aust troops in Cambodia facing danger: Hill,” *The Canberra Times*, 9 May 1992.

276 Susan Aitkin, “UN troops may have to abandon Cambodia: Evans,” *The Canberra Times*, 30 July 1992.

277 Malcolm Booker, “Cambodia a sticky wicket for Australia,” *The Canberra Times*, 28 July 1992.

278 Robert Delfs, “Do or die tactics Socialists resign in bid to block peacekeeping bill,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 25 June 1992, 17; John Gerard Ruggie, “Japan Had to Join in U.N. Peacekeeping Effort,” *The New York Times*, 18 June 1992.

279 Cable Goulding to Sadry, 17 June 1992, “Japan’s contribution to UNTAC,” UNA, S-0794-0043-0001.

280 John M. Sanderson, “The Incalculable Dynamic of Force,” in *UN Peacekeeping in Trouble: Lessons Learned from the Former Yugoslavia Peacekeeper’s Views on the Limits and Possibilities of the United Nations in a Civil War-like Conflict*, eds. Wolfgang Biermann and Martin Vadset (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 1998); John M. Sanderson, “Dabbling into War: The Dilemma of the Use of Force in United Nations Intervention,” in *Peacemaking and peacekeeping for the new century*, eds. Olara A. Atunnu and Michael W. Doyle (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998), 150.

objectives.²⁸¹ “If blue helmets do not inspire confidence, if they are hesitant, if their behaviour is questionable,” he argued, “the mission is doomed to fail.”²⁸² Loridon applauded the courage of his colleague, General Philippe Morillon, force commander of UNPROFOR between 1992 and 1993, who decided to travel to the besieged town of Srebrenica in March 1993 and declare it a safe area under the protection of the United Nations. He observed that Morillon had demonstrated a “willingness to act, to take responsibility, not to favour one party over the other, but to help a suffering population while risking his own life and those of his men.”²⁸³ Both French generals considered risk-taking an important military virtue, and have argued that peacekeepers should adopt a posture based on the idea “shoot at us, if you dare!”²⁸⁴ Loridon believed that “the stakes for the Cambodian people and for peace demanded such risk-taking.”²⁸⁵ But Sanderson made the point that such views are incompatible with peacekeeping and could potentially unleash an uncontrollable dynamic of violence.²⁸⁶ He described peacekeepers as “instruments of diplomacy,” who should always behave in a way that is consistent with their diplomatic objectives.²⁸⁷ Actions that included the use of force by peacekeepers in a Chapter VI peacekeeping mandate would have “a corrosive effect” on the UN’s moral authority.²⁸⁸ Loridon, on the other hand, argued that UNTAC lost its authority when it refrained from exercising its freedom of movement.²⁸⁹

The arguments of the two generals also reflect different interpretations of the guiding principles of peacekeeping. Sanderson emphasised the importance of absolute impartiality for peacekeepers in order to protect their credibility as honest brokers in a peace process, and avoid the risk of becoming another party to the conflict.²⁹⁰ Loridon, on the other hand, explicitly challenged the notion of impartiality, arguing that it should be replaced by the term “active neutrality,” meaning a neutral posture but with the possibility to be firm with the parties that do not respect their obligations.²⁹¹ With regard to the use of force, Sanderson pointed out that UNTAC had

281 Michel Loridon, *The U.N. intervention in Cambodia 1991/1993*, unpublished paper given at the RUSI-Swedish War College seminar 23 and 24 April 1996.

282 Michel Loridon, “La fermeté: un droit et un devoir pour l’ONU,” in *Les interventions extérieures de l’armée française*, ed. Pierre Pascallon (Bruylant: Brussels, 1997), 246.

283 Michel Loridon, “Le rôle des casques bleus,” *Le Casoar* 130 (July 1993): 87; Accompanied by a few blue helmets, General Morrillon travelled to besieged town of Srebrenica and told its citizens they were under the protection of the United Nations. New York was not amused with Morillon’s action but, with the media on the French general’s side, they were forced to create a safe haven for six areas of Bosnia, including Srebrenica. Morrillon was eventually called back to Paris out of fear that he would not be acceptable to the Bosnian Serbs anymore since his impartiality was now in jeopardy. See: Tony Barber, “Profile: General Philippe Morillon – Bosnia, I am with you: Tony Barber reports from Zvornik on the French general who is bringing hope to a besieged town,” *The Independent*, 21 March 1993.

284 Philippe Morillon, “The military aspects of field operations,” in *United Nations peace-keeping operations: a guide to French policies*, eds. Brigitte Stern, Yves Daudet, Philippe Morillon and Marie-Claude Smouts (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 1998), 98. Also see: Gregory, “France and *missions de paix*,” 59. Both generals did not hide their Catholicism as a drive to succeed in their “peace missions.” Loridon argued that peacekeepers have the duty not to hesitate to risk their lives for peace in another country and protect its population. He described this as a “Christian and human principle” and the *grandeur* of the soldier of peace. See: Philippe Morillon, *Croire et oser. Chronique de Sarajevo* (Paris: Grasset, 1993); Loridon, “La fermeté,” 248; Loridon, “The U.N. intervention in Cambodia”; Loridon, “Le rôle des casques bleus,” 87.

285 Loridon, “Le rôle des casques bleus,” 87; Author’s interview with Michel Loridon.

286 John M. Sanderson, “The UNTAC Military Component,” in *Past Imperfect, Future UNCertain: The United Nations at Fifty*, ed. Ramesh Thakur (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), 122.

287 Sanderson, “UNTAC: The Military Component View,” 130; John M. Sanderson, “Intervening for Peace.”

288 Sanderson, “Dabbling into War,” 149.

289 Loridon, “La fermeté,” 245.

290 Sanderson, “The Incalculable Dynamic of Force,” 206.

291 Loridon, “The U.N. intervention in Cambodia.” In 1995, French Chief of Defence Staff Admiral Lanxade equally referred to “active impartiality.” See: Gregory, “France and *missions de paix*,” 62.

no legitimate authority to use force against any party in Cambodia because this was contrary to the pacific nature of Chapter VI of the UN Charter.²⁹² But for Loridon, the use of force did not necessarily mean the use of *armed* force, but could also amount to a show of strength and forceful persuasion.²⁹³

The doctrines for peacekeeping operations that were later developed by Australia and France, both in 1994, can be seen as conceptualisations of the visions that were expressed by Sanderson and Loridon during and in the aftermath of the mission in Cambodia. The Australian doctrine defined peacekeeping as “a non-coercive instrument of diplomacy,”²⁹⁴ whereas the French developed the term *restauration de la paix* (peace restoration) to underpin the idea that there is a continuum between peacekeeping and peace enforcement.²⁹⁵ It seems likely that the origins of these national peacekeeping doctrines can be found in the Cambodian experience, although experiences of both countries in Somalia, and for France in the former Yugoslavia have left marks that were just as important, if not more important.²⁹⁶

A central point Sanderson made in his articles is that there is a strict dividing line between peacekeeping and peace enforcement. Although this was possibly his strong conviction, it also provided an elegant excuse that conceals other factors that were at play and that informed his policy decisions. Scholars of UNTAC have nonetheless portrayed Loridon as the man who wanted to sacrifice 200 blue helmets in a peace enforcement operation and argued that Sanderson

292 John M. Sanderson, “Peacekeeping or Peace Enforcement? Global Flux and the Dilemmas of UN Intervention,” in *The United Nations at Fifty: Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. Ramesh Thakur (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1996), 183.

293 Michel Loridon, “Cambodge, les raisons d’un échec,” in *Opérations des Nations unies, leçons de terrain: Cambodge, Somalie, Rwanda, ex-Yougoslavie*, eds. Jean Pierre Cor and Franck Debié (Paris: la fondation diffusion documentation française, 1995), 108; This distinction was also made by Sir Brian Urquhart, the man who led peacekeeping operations during the larger part of the Cold War. See: Erwin A. Schmidl, “Speak Softly and Carry a Big Stick: The Use of Force in Peace Operations, Past and Present,” in *Peacekeeping with muscle: the use of force in international conflict resolution*, eds. Alex Morrison, Douglas A. Fraser and James D. Kiras (Clementsport: Canadian Peacekeeping Press, 1997), 85. The Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) of UNTAC made such a distinction: “there are two types of force: unarmed force and armed force.” The document stated: “Unarmed Force: Unarmed force involves the use of all means, short of weapons, to discharge the duties entrusted to UNTAC. Examples are the use of vehicles and personnel to prevent passage of armed persons and vehicles, or the removal of unauthorized persons from an UNTAC installation. UNTAC personnel are authorized to use unarmed force. Armed Force: Armed force is the use of any weapons, military or non-military, including clubs, batons, rifle butts, bayonets and opening fire. Examples are the use of clubs and teargas to deny entry to a UN post by a violent assembly, or the use of aimed shots to resist an attack on a convoy. UNTAC personnel are authorized to use armed force against armed persons.” UNTAC Standard Operating Procedures, Section 4 Use of Force, NIMH, UNTAC 099, folder 22.

294 Trevor Findlay, *The Use of Force in Peace Operations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press-SIPRI, 2002), 406. This doctrine also echoed the visions by Gareth Evans in his book *Cooperating for Peace*. Gareth Evans, *Cooperating for peace: the global agenda for the 1990s and beyond* (St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1993). Sanderson also fully endorsed the Secretary-General’s *Supplement to an Agenda for Peace*, in which Boutros Boutros-Ghali stated that peacekeeping required the consent of the parties and could not be combined with the use of force: *Supplement to An Agenda for Peace: A/50/60*, 3 January 1995, paragraph 35 and 36; see: Sanderson, “Intervening for Peace” (1995).

295 The French developed the term *restauration de la paix* (peace restoration) to describe operations that were conducted in an ongoing conflict, and where force may be necessary to restore peace, using a mixture of persuasion and coercion, but not against a defined aggressor. The French argued that this category differs from *opérations d’imposition de la paix* (peace enforcement operations) which are always conducted under Chapter VII and against an identified aggressor. See: Thierry Tardy, “France,” in *Providing Peacekeepers: The Politics, Challenges and Future of United Nations Peacekeeping Contributions*, eds. Alex J. Bellamy and Paul D. Williams (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 120; Brigitte Stern, “Introduction,” in *United Nations Peace-keeping operations: a guide to French policies*, ed. Brigitte Stern (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 1998), 4–5; Thierry Tardy, “The reluctant peacekeeper: France and the Use of Force in Peace Operations,” *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 37, no. 5 (2014), 776.

296 For France see: Thierry Tardy, *La France et la gestion des conflits Yougoslaves (1991–1995): enjeux et leçons d’une opération de maintien de la paix de l’ONU* (Brussels: Bruylant, 1999), 330, 355–71.

was correct in knowing the limits of his peacekeeping mandate. By misrepresenting Loridon's views, the alternative courses of action he defended have been misunderstood. The theoretical and legalistic distinction between peacekeeping and peace enforcement therefore does not offer a suitable lens for a correct understanding of the different mindsets of the two generals and why they defended certain policies.

The UN's gamble of moving ahead

After the announcement by the Khmer Rouge that they would not disarm, UNTAC was officially in a crisis. As long as the Khmer Rouge would not cooperate, the State of Cambodia refused to disarm and demobilise 70 per cent of its troops. Prime Minister Hun Sen agreed to proceed with Phase Two, but without commencing the actual cantonment and disarmament process. Goulding and Akashi also agreed that UNTAC should proceed.²⁹⁷ A postponement, Akashi argued, would allow the Khmer Rouge to sabotage the entire peace process, while UNTAC had finally reached momentum. By the end of May, Cambodia witnessed a sudden surge of white vehicles and blue helmets. Practically all military units had arrived or were arriving and deploying throughout the country. Sanderson had deployed his units all around the Khmer Rouge areas in anticipation of a possible future Khmer Rouge decision to cooperate. "Since our contingents are arriving, our deployment plans all made and the process in full swing, apart from the absence of [the Khmer Rouge], there is really nothing else that we can practically do," Akashi cabled to Goulding.²⁹⁸ But as long as the Khmer Rouge showed no sign of cooperation, the mission to disarm the factions' forces was on hold. This meant that some 11,000 peacekeepers deployed around Cambodia were unable to do the job they had come to do.

The P5 wanted to resolve this situation as soon as possible. On 22 June, their foreign ministers were scheduled to travel to Tokyo for a conference on the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Cambodia. The gathering, aimed to pledge funds for the rebuilding of Cambodia, was hosted by Japan, co-presided by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and attended by all nineteen countries that had signed the Paris Peace Agreement plus fifteen other countries. France considered Tokyo a good occasion to organise a "mini Paris Peace Conference" in order to discuss how the clearly diverging interpretation the Khmer Rouge maintained of the peace agreements could be resolved. Although Khieu Samphan had announced that he was not planning to attend the Tokyo conference, it was hoped that he would agree to come after all for a fundamental discussion.²⁹⁹

Article 29 of the Paris Peace Agreements was the only whip that could be activated in the event of a violation of the accords. It was a vague procedure that authorised France and Indonesia to consult with the Cambodian factions "with a view to taking appropriate steps." But the co-chairmen were only allowed to do this upon request by the UN Secretary-General.³⁰⁰ Boutros-

297 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 4 June 1992, "Phase-II," UNA, S-1829-0313-0005.

298 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 6 June 1992, "5 June Meeting of the Supreme National Council," UNA, S-1829-0314-0003.

299 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 13 June 1992, "Paris Conference on Cambodia," UNA, S-0794-0047-0002.

300 This provision had resulted from the UN Secretariat's hesitation about giving the co-chairmen carte blanche to reconvene the Paris Conference after the agreements had been signed and responsibility for their implementation had been entrusted to the Security Council and through it to UNTAC.

Ghali, however, though contradictorily believing in a dialogue with Khieu Samphan, was not enthusiastic about the idea of reconvening the Paris Conference. In his view, the Paris Agreement, as it stood, was the only solid foundation for UNTAC, and any suggestion to modify or amend it should be vigorously resisted. He therefore asked Akashi to discourage the co-chairmen to pursue the idea.³⁰¹ Goulding later recalled that the option of putting the operation on hold and reconvene the Paris Conference was not given serious consideration in New York mainly for the reason that such a decision would inevitably cause further delays, higher costs, and was likely to lead to more negative publicity. The prevailing idea at UN Headquarters was that it was better to have a partly implemented agreement than no implementation at all. Goulding retrospectively admitted that things might have turned out differently if the UN had agreed to the reconvening of the Paris Conference: "it is interesting to think of what would have happened if we had gone down that road."³⁰² But rather than pausing the operation and face the challenge of a fundamental debate about the Paris Peace Agreement and a possible revision of the operational plan, the UN civilian leadership decided to move ahead in the hope that Khieu Samphan would keep his promises of cooperation and decide to join the disarmament process at some point. The Secretary-General already felt the pressure from the United States and other major countries to ensure that the UN operation would end as soon as the objective of the elections had been achieved.³⁰³ Boutros-Ghali therefore saw no time for a pause, a revision or a discussion. UNTAC needed to keep up with its time schedule.

Although the Paris Conference was not officially reconvened in Tokyo, the fact that all the signatories were present provided an occasion to discuss solutions for the way ahead. In Tokyo, the foreign ministers of the core group agreed to see what adaptations to the peace process could be made to persuade the Khmer Rouge to come back in. Eventually, Khieu Samphan did show up in Tokyo after all, and in the margins of the pledging conference, an extraordinary meeting of the SNC was convened. An informal "proposal for discussion" was circulated that sought to address the Khmer Rouge's concerns, especially by promoting a more active role of the SNC in the implementation of the peace process. Although the other three Cambodian factions accepted the paper's proposals and thus made another concession to the Khmer Rouge, Khieu Samphan asked "for more time" to study what came to be known as the "Tokyo non-paper."³⁰⁴

Meanwhile, access to the Khmer Rouge's territory was now explicitly forbidden. Signs appeared alongside the roads around the Khmer Rouge-controlled zone in western Cambodia with the text: "Unless [the] 23rd October 1991 Paris Peace Agreement is implemented correctly, unless the Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia is verified, unless the SNC is functioning as sole authority in Cambodia, there will be no deployment in the western area."³⁰⁵ The road sign was symbolic for the fact that the stalemate had become definitive. UNTAC had failed to get a foot in the door when it had the opportunity, early on, before the Khmer Rouge abandoned

301 Cable Goulding to Sadry, 17 June 1992, "Paris Conference on Cambodia," UNA, S-1829-0314-0003; also see: letter Boutros-Ghali to Akashi, 7 July 1992, "UNTAC 1708," UNA, S-1829-0314-0003.

302 Interview by James S. Sutterlin with Marrack Goulding.

303 Boutros-Ghali, *Unvanquished*, 33.

304 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 7 July 1992, "Notes on my meetings," UNA, S-0794-0047-0002; S/24286. The pledging conference in Tokyo was considered a great success. The participants pledged 880 million US dollars in aid, which exceeded by far the Secretary-General's target of 595 million.

305 Jacqueline Park, "On the borderline," *The Nation*, 27 November 1992.

their wait-and-see attitude and fell back into the pattern that had characterised the UNAMIC experience: applying the strategy of stonewalling UNTAC's efforts and continually raising demands. The civilian leadership, especially in the UN Secretariat, largely ignored this problem as they were entirely focussed on mounting this gigantic operation and safeguarding its budget, despite calls from the core group to handle the imperfect implementation plan flexibly and adapt it to on-the-ground realities. They boxed themselves in with declarations that the timetable of the operation should be respected and the elections could not be held any later than early May 1993. An uncooperative party did not fit into that plan. The goal of the UN leadership to respect the operational calendar had been accomplished, but in doing so, it essentially skipped the first crucial step in the mission. The choice to ignore the Khmer Rouge's violations of the Paris Agreement would have grave consequences for the peace process. Goulding would admit in his memoirs, albeit not explicitly for the Cambodian case, that a central lesson he drew from his time as head of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) was to never turn a blind eye to the parties that do not respect the agreements they signed: "every condoned violation creates a precedent; ground lost at the beginning cannot be recovered; start tough and continue tough. But I have to confess that there were occasions when I too paled at the prospect of an early confrontation with one of the parties and agreed that a violation should not be challenged until later."³⁰⁶

The disarmament and demobilisation process turned into a superficial exercise. By 16 June, not a single Khmer Rouge soldier had reported to the UN forces, whereas 4,324 CPAF, 450 KPNLAF and 100 ANKI troops were disarmed and transferred to the cantonment sites.³⁰⁷ The Paris Agreement determined that the regroupment and cantonment process should be completed four weeks after its commencement. But on 13 July, only 13,512 soldiers from the four Cambodian factions had been cantoned, barely 5 per cent of the 200,000 soldiers that were projected. Amongst the cantoned troops, 9,003 belonged to the CPAF, 3,187 to ANKI, 1,322 to KPNLAF and none to the NADK.³⁰⁸ Soldiers of the two smaller resistance factions loyally reported to UNTAC and disarmed enthusiastically. Their armies practically ceased to exist. Although most of the troops in the cantonments were from the CPAF, they were generally of poor quality and the weapons they handed were old, rusty and unserviceable: "more dangerous for the shooter than for the enemy," Prince Sihanouk said.³⁰⁹ The CPAF made sure it was not weakened, and actually increased its efficiency because of reorganising and ridding itself of poor-performing conscript soldiers it wasn't able to pay anyway.³¹⁰ On 17 June, Hun Sen's army launched its biggest offensive in months against the Khmer Rouge in the provinces of Kompong Thom and Preah Vihear to regain the ground lost. UNTAC did not intervene as it considered the attacks to fall within the State of Cambodia's right to self-defence. The "military balance on the battlefield" needed to be maintained, declared Akashi.³¹¹ Part of this effort was that UNTAC made a deal with the other factions that its soldiers could go on "agricultural leave" once they had registered and handed in their weapons. This allowed the soldiers to work their fields and re-join their families,

306 Goulding, *Peacemonger*, 336.

307 Klintworth, "Cambodia 1992: Hopes Fading," 116.

308 S/24286.

309 "... ceux qui sont plus dangereuse pour le tireur que pour les ennemis." See: Note de l'entretien du Secrétaire général avec Son Altesse Royale Samdech Norodom Sihanouk à Jakarta, le 31 août 1992 à 17:00 heures, UNA, S-1829-0314-0002.

310 Heininger, *Peacekeeping in Transition*, 71.

311 "Cambodge: offensive des troupes de Phnom Penh contre les Khmers rouges," *Le Monde*, 17 June 1992.

while remaining on a two weeks' notice to report back to the cantonment site in case the Khmer Rouge decided to cooperate and come into the cantonments as well. But the partial disarmament clearly benefitted the Khmer Rouge whose troops were steadily gaining ground and expanding their influence into the vacuum left in the field as a result of the cantonment of the three other factions.³¹² The Khmer Rouge's refusal to provide UNTAC access to its zones endangered the creation of a neutral political environment, which was necessary for free and fair elections that were to be held in May 1993.³¹³ UNTAC's challenge continued to be to determine a strategy that could break the stalemate and induce the Khmer Rouge to cooperate.

312 Cable Akashi to Goulding, 31 July 1992, "implementation of Paris Agreements," UNA, S-0794-0047-0003.

313 Mark Dodd, "Cambodian factions locked in crisis talks," *Reuters*, 5 June 1992; Mark Dodd, "U.N. says it will fight if attacked by Khmer Rouge," *Reuters*, 10 June 1992.