

## **Deputy Prime Minister Tea Banh Meets with U.S. Secretary Gates and Deputy Secretary Steinberg**

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Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defense Tea Banh is in Washington D.C. on a four-day visit designed to strengthen cooperation and to reinforce the U.S. commitment to substantive, reform-linked security cooperation.

On Sept. 21, H.E. Tea Banh met with U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and U.S. Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg, according to a press release of the U.S. Embassy in Phnom Penh dated today.

Secretary Gates stressed the commitment of the United States to enhance Cambodia's capabilities in peacekeeping, maritime security and counterterrorism. The Secretary cited establishment of a Cambodian Defense Attaché office in Washington and the newly minted sister state program with Idaho's National Guard as positive developments in the bilateral relationship. Secretary Gates also offered the Minister an opportunity to engage in a Defense Policy Dialogue in the near future.

In a separate meeting, Deputy Secretary Steinberg and H.E. Tea Banh discussed security cooperation between the United States and Cambodia, highlighting Cambodia's ongoing support for international peacekeeping operations and Cambodia's commitment to host the 2010 Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI) regional capstone exercise. GPOI is a U.S.-funded G-8 program to expand global capacity to train and equip 75,000 peacekeepers by the year 2010. They also discussed human rights and issues related to Cambodia's role as a member of ASEAN.

Since 2004, the United States has sought to strengthen and expand its bilateral defense relationship with Cambodia. Our cooperation focuses on international peacekeeping, counterterrorism, counternarcotics, border and maritime security, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief operations, and defense sector reform. Our goals are to develop the capabilities of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces in these areas, while encouraging Cambodia's commitment to the rule of law, transparency in governance, sustained democratic development, and respect for human rights.

Since 2006, Cambodia has received approximately \$4.5 million worth of equipment and technical assistance through the Foreign Military Financing (FMF) program. The FMF program also funds grants of excess military transport equipment and technical assistance to the Ministry of National Defense and the High Command; training materials and technical assistance to the RCAF English Language Training Program; and Maritime Security and professional development training to the Royal Cambodian Navy. Participants in all U.S. funded training programs are thoroughly vetted in accordance with U.S. law.

The United States works to achieve its goals through humanitarian assistance as well. Since 2005, the U.S. Army, Navy, and Marine Corps have helped to build and refurbish schools and medical clinics throughout the country. U.S. Military medics and dentists have also worked with their Royal Cambodian Armed Forces counterparts to provide critical, free health care to some of the most isolated and impoverished communities in Cambodia.

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