

# Drug Arrests Double in First Half of 2011, U.N. Report Finds

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In a week that saw the former head of the government's anti-drug authority, ex-anti-drug czar Moek Dara, stand trial on multiple charges of drug trafficking and bribery, a new report by the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime (UNDOC) found that drug-related arrests in the first half of 2011 had more than doubled.

According to the report "Patterns and Trends of Amphetamine-Type Stimulants: Asia and the Pacific," which was released this week, there were more than 1,500 drug-related arrests in Cambodia in the first six months of 2011.

"In 2010, the number of drug-related arrests in Cambodia totaled 684 persons.... In the first six

months of 2011, however, the total number of drug-related arrests more than doubled to 1,524 persons," the report says.

There was no breakdown of those arrests into categories such as drug users, dealers, producers or international traffickers.

Olivier Lermet, country manager of the UNDOC, said that the report showed a widespread attempt to cut down on drug crime.

"It seems that the recent cases do concern big fishes as well as small ones," he said via e-mail. However, "a pure law enforcement response will not suffice, and public health considerations are essential."

Still, if indeed those who are being arrested for drugs are ending up in prison, the crackdown could place

yet more strain on Cambodia's prison system.

"We anecdotally do see cases that seem small-time, and if they are making that many arrests, it's going to have an impact on the prisons," Jeff Vize, a prison project consultant for rights group Licadho said.

While the government last week passed a new drug law allowing the courts to force addicts into rehabilitation centers for up to two years, the UNDOC report noted that the post-treatment relapse rate is nearly 100 percent.

The UNDOC report also noted a myriad of other problems, including greater intravenous drug use and consequently greater risk of HIV infection, a rise in the use of crystalline methamphetamine, and the

possibility that the large-scale domestic manufacture of methamphetamine is expanding.

The report made no mention of the endemic corruption in the policing of drug trafficking, which the trial of Mr. Dara has brought to light.

"We have had the biggest success so far in the last year in cracking down on drug-related crime," said Khieu Saman, the new head of the National Authority for Combating Drugs [NACD].

"Even if a three-star general is selling drugs, we still crack down," he said.

Mr. Dara was previously the head of the NACD before his arrest.

*(Additional reporting by Saing Soenthrith)*