

## NATIONAL

# City Hall, Interior Ministry at Odds Over Future Cooperation

By COLIN MEYN  
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Phnom Penh governor Kep Chuktema met with senior officials at the Interior Ministry yesterday to urge the national police force to cooperate more closely with city police when carrying out operations in the capital, officials said.

Although Mr. Chuktema has not publicly specified why he has requested heightened cooperation with national officials, his request—first made during a closed door meeting at City Hall last week—came a day after a January 5 sting operation targeting an online extortion ring. During the operation, national police accidentally targeted a Phnom Penh villa owned by Educa-

tion Minister Im Sethy.

"The municipal authority [Mr. Chuktema] said that police and government authorities should inform him before they do anything," said Interior Ministry spokesman Lieutenant General Khieu Sopheak, who was present at yesterday's meeting.

Despite Mr. Chuktema's request, Lt. Gen. Sopheak said that in cases deemed by national authorities to be a threat to national security, national-level officials retain the authority to conduct operations without informing local authorities.

"National authorities must be accountable in front of the law, but are not required to inform all local authorities," he said.

Mr. Chuktema yesterday de-

clined to comment on the meeting, which was presided over by Interior Minister Sar Kheng. City Hall spokesman Long Dimanche also declined to comment.

In a letter to Mr. Sethy on January 10, national police commissioner General Neth Savoeun apologized to Mr. Sethy for police forces approaching his house during "a mission to raid cross-border crimes." The letter also said that the exercise was conducted "with cooperation from the Phnom Penh municipal prosecutor and local police authorities."

"The National Police commissioner very much regrets... knocking on the gate of your Excellency's residence, which looked similar to the criminal's house, which was

pointed out by the investigation unit," the letter stated.

The series of raids conducted on seven properties in Phnom Penh on January 5 successfully netted 80 Taiwanese and Chinese nationals suspected of involvement in operating a telecommunications extortion ring targeting people in Taiwan and China.

The arrests follow a spate of similar arrests by police in Cambodia and other countries in Southeast Asia. The alleged scam involves the use of Voice Over Internet Protocol technology to call people in China and Taiwan and use different ruses to defraud and extort money by tempting them to invest in fictitious investment portfolios.

## UN Steps Up Efforts to Fight Drug Smuggling in Cambodia

By KHY SOVUTHY  
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THE CAMBODIA DAILY

After record seizures of narcotics in 2012, the organization in charge of the fight against drugs in Cambodia yesterday took possession of new equipment to help track drug trafficking across the country's borders.

In a meeting in Phnom Penh yesterday, the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) donated more than \$32,000 worth of equipment to the National Authority for Combating Drugs (NACD), said Lieutenant General You Sun Long.

The equipment, which includes cameras, office equipment, walkie-talkies and motorcycles, will go to two new border liaison offices on the Cambodian-Vietnamese border in Bavet City, Svay Rieng province, and in Ka'am Samnor, Kandal province, he said.

"In 2012, Cambodian law enforcement suppressed a lot of drugs cases including cases in which criminals attempted to produce drugs in Phnom Penh municipality and Kompong Speu province, resulting in the arrest of foreign criminals and the seizure of a lot of illegal importation of precursor chemicals," Lt. Gen. Sun Long said.

"The border liaison offices are taking on several forms of organized crime, not only drugs," said Olivier Lernet, country director for the UNODC.

"Drugs are particularly of concern with a number of seizures, the levels, the flows of trafficking. It's increasing all over the region, of course mostly amphetamine type stimulants. So, yes, it's our way to try to support the government efforts to contain the drug flows."

Still, he said that Cambodia was a "minor player" compared to Burma, where heroin and amphetamine are produced on a much larger scale.

"The flows going in and out of Cambodia are of concern, and the fact that some are targeting Cambodia to produce drugs—we have a few cases in the past—so there is a need to improve regional cooperation, capacity for law enforcement," Mr. Lernet said.

In 2012, more than 40 kg of cocaine—previously a rare drug to be found in Cambodia—30 kg of heroin and 20 kg of methamphetamine were seized, according to preliminary NACD figures.

Brigadier General Huot Sophally, NACD's director of planning and training, said new border liaison offices were planned for Oddar Meanchey, Pursat and Ra-

tanakkiri provinces.

Songsat Kittichunwachana, project coordinator for the UNODC's partnership against transnational crime through regional organized law-enforcement (PATROL), said as well as helping to set up border liaison offices, the project was promoting cross-border cooperation by arranging meetings of front line Cambodian border staff with their Thai and Vietnamese counterparts.

"We would like to see more effective results at the border area, particularly in the field of effective cross border cooperation either it be building up trust or cooperation with neighboring countries more successful of case handling between front line officers of Cambodia and neighboring countries," he said.

(Additional reporting by Simon Lewis)

## Forestry Officials Confirm Illegal Logging by Vietnamese Firm

By AUN PHEAP  
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THE CAMBODIA DAILY

During a joint investigation with police and military police last week, the Forestry Administration found evidence of large-scale illegal logging by the Vietnamese owners of a rubber concession in Ratanakiri province's O'Yadaw district, officials said yesterday.

Phan Phoeun, deputy chief of the provincial Forestry Administration, said that forestry officials had discovered more than 1,000 logs on land belonging to the Day Dong Yoeun rubber company—which was granted a 4,000-hectare economic land concession in 2007—over the course of an investigation that began on December 6.

company's land concession and we ordered them to pay tax [on the logs] for the national revenue," he said, adding that the wood was cut on forested land, which is illegal in all cases.

"We know that logging is illegal, and although the company did not respect its agreement with the Ministry [of Agriculture], it agreed to pay tax on the logged wood, and we accept the payment, which will go toward the state revenue," Mr. Phoeun said.

Whether the government decides to take further action against the company will be the decision of the Ministry of Agriculture, which has requested a report of the Forestry Administration's findings, Mr. Phoeun said. "The report will

We will implement the orders from the top if they decide to handle this with a court case."

Local officials and ethnic Jarai villagers living in Paknhai commune's Lom village have accused Day Dong Yoeun and Company 72—another Vietnamese rubber firm with a land concession nearby—of extensive illegal logging and exporting the wood to Vietnam. Rights groups have called for the government to cancel the companies' concessions and begin criminal proceedings against their owners.

Forestry Administration spokesman Thun Sarath said yesterday that any company found guilty of violating the Forestry Law must face court prosecution, and that the Council of Ministers has the

belonging to companies that violate the terms of their contracts.

"The Prime Minister has the right to cancel the contract if the company [Day Dong Yoeun] destroyed forest resources," Mr. Sarath said.

"The Council of Ministers never objects to a proposal by Ministry of Agriculture," he said. "They will do it."

But Pen Bonnar, land and natural resources monitor for rights group Adhoc, said that while he is holding out hope that the government will pursue legal action against Day Dong Yoeun, he is frustrated that nothing has yet been done.

"I don't know why the Royal Government hasn't taken action to cancel the economic land concession," Mr. Bonnar said. "It is an example of all the cases in my