

RELEASED U.S. ALIEN INMATES TO BE JAILED HERE

By Matt McKinney
The Cambodia Daily, P. 12
Tuesday, May 7, 2002

A group of Cambodians who have finished prison sentences in the U.S. for crimes committed there will be jailed when they return to Cambodia, said Prime Minister Hun Sen on Monday, in a ground-breaking ceremony in Kampot province.

"America has asked the Cambodian government to accept Khmers that went to America illegally or were convicted in America," said Hun Sen. "Persons who were put in prisons in America, when they return they have to stay in Prey Sar."*

The Cambodians were living in the U.S., some for most of their lives, as resident or illegal aliens when they committed their crimes and were automatically slated for deportation to their native country when they were convicted.

Their return was secured by an agreement signed in March between the government and U.S. ambassador Kent Wiedemann.

"The agreement that I signed with the Cambodian Ministry of Interior provides that Cambodia will accept these deported aliens back, and provide for ways in which they will be reintegrated," Wiedemann said.

The agreement does not spell out how the Cambodians will be reintegrated into local society, though Wiedemann said it would take time for the Cambodian government to track down families and find an appropriate home for each of the returnees.

He said he did not know how many Cambodians will be deported from the U.S., but an initial group of 28 has been identified for deportation. All have completed a prison sentence in the U.S. for their crimes, and if they were naturalized U.S. citizens would have been released in the U.S.

* NOTE FROM SEARAC:

Prey Sar is a detention center (prison) just outside of Phnom Penh holding political prisoners where torture is likely to occur, according to the Human Rights Watch World Report on Cambodia (2002) (<http://www.hrw.org/wr2k2/asia3.html>):

"Prison conditions continued to be poor, with many facilities seriously overcrowded and lacking adequate medical care, food, and water. At least six prisoners died within a two-month period in Prey Sar prison in Phnom Penh because of insufficient food and medication, according to a report by a Cambodian human rights organization. The use of shackles was reported in prisons in Kompong Som and Kompong Cham. Pre-trial detention beyond the legal limit of six months was common.

"Torture continued to be used with impunity, particularly by police officers attempting to extract confessions from suspects in custody. Police also failed to intervene to stop violence against women either in the home, where domestic abuse was considered a family matter, or in the sex industry, which is often supported and protected by members of the military, police or other government officials."