

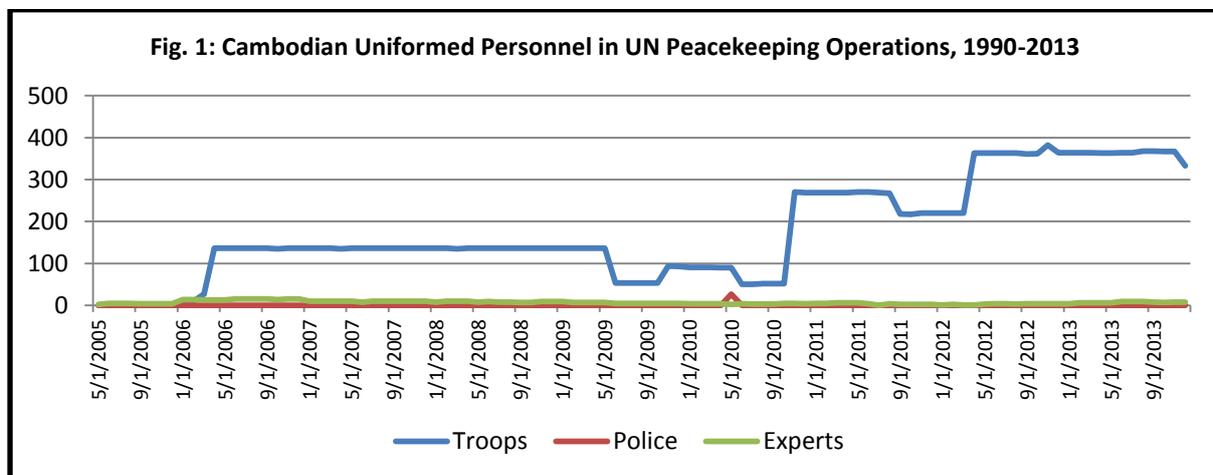
Contributor Profile: Cambodia

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Active Armed Forces ¹	Helicopters	Defense Budget	Uniformed UN Peacekeepers	UN Contribution Breakdown	Other Significant Deployments
124,300	Attack: 5	2010: \$287m (2.55% of GDP)	341 (11 women) 31 Dec. 2013	UNIFIL: 184 troops	None
World Ranking (size): 42	Transport: 15 (inc. recent purchase of 12 Z-9 from China in Nov. 2013)	2011: \$309m (2.4% of GDP)	Ranking: 43 rd (8 th East Asian contributor)	UNMISS: 150 (147 troops, 3 experts)	
Ground Force: 75,000		2012: \$347m (2.44% of GDP)		UNAMID: 3 experts	
Navy: 2,800		2013: \$400.16m		UNISFA: 2 experts	
Air Force: 1,500		2014: \$468m ²		MINUSMA: 2 troops	
Provincial Force: 45,000					
Paramilitary: 67,000					
Defense Spending / Active troop: ³ US\$2,798 (compared to global average of approx. US\$67,959)					

Part 1: Recent Trends

Learning from its experiences of hosting the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) (1991-93), Cambodia started to contribute uniformed personnel to UN peacekeeping operations in 2005. Since then Cambodia has sent more than 1,600 personnel to seven different missions including UNMIS (Sudan), UNMISS (South Sudan), MINURCAT (Chad/Central African Republic), UNIFIL (Lebanon), UNSMIS (Syria), and MINUSMA (Mali). Over that time, Cambodia has more than doubled its average monthly contribution of personnel. Thus far, Cambodian contributions to UN peacekeeping forces have focused on specialized areas such as landmines clearance, engineering (i.e. construction of roads, bridges, and barracks), the maintenance of public order, and the provision of military medicine and other humanitarian assistance such as the provision of drinking water and medical treatment to local populations.



On 31 December 2013, there were 150 Cambodian peacekeepers in South Sudan and 184 peacekeepers in Lebanon. These will be augmented by the despatch of 298 peacekeepers to Mali, where they will work in mine clearance and engineering. Cambodia's total contribution of uniformed personnel deployed in UN peacekeeping operations will thus soon total well over 600. Cambodia contributes only small numbers of police and experts on missions.

Part 2: Decision-Making Process

Cambodia is relatively new to peacekeeping. The Cambodian government takes a reactive approach to making decisions about whether to contribute personnel to UN peacekeeping operations. Cambodia does not yet have a clear strategy or policy on peacekeeping as it is still in the process of experimenting with this type of contribution and learning from its early experiences. In fact, peacekeeping was only mentioned for the first time in any policy document in the [2006 Defence White Paper](#). As such, Cambodian decision-making is framed by the request received from the United Nations and the government's assessment of its capacity to deploy.

The 2006 White Paper stressed the development of peacekeeping capabilities for the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (RCAF) as the main tool for multilateral cooperation and defense diplomacy. It also called for international support to help build and strengthen the military's capacity to contribute to UN peacekeeping. The [White Paper](#) states:

“The RCAF must also consider developing a number of capabilities to contribute to international cooperation ... in order to enhance these capabilities more effectively, cooperation and support from experienced friendly countries are needed. The coordinating committee for force deployment to UN peacekeeping missions was established as a national mechanism to coordinate and liaise with the UN as well as various national and international agencies.”

In terms of the decision-making process, the National Coordination Committee (NCC), an inter-ministry agency established in 2006, has the mandate to coordinate with the UN on the contribution of peacekeepers. The NCC, in cooperation with the Ministry of National Defence (MOD), receives and evaluates requests for contributions and makes a recommendation to the Prime Minister on how the government should respond. The Prime Minister then examines the proposal made by the NCC and takes a final decision on whether to approve the request. Technical issues including coordination, pre-deployment training, and logistical preparations necessary for the deployment of the forces are the combined responsibility of the NCC and the National Centre for Peacekeeping Forces, Mines, and Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) clearance (NPMEC).

NPMEC was created in March 2005 and is responsible for building the peacekeeping capacity of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces, as well as training personnel in peacekeeping operations and the clearance of landmines and ERW. Operating under the joint supervision of the Ministry of Defence and the NCC, NPMEC has four departments responsible for information, database, operations, and peacekeeping, respectively. It also has a dedicated peacekeeping training school. The center, which has received international technical support from several countries, especially France, the United States, Australia, and Japan, has trained more than 3,500 personnel in both peacekeeping operations and mine clearance. In its [strategic goals 2011-2015](#), the NPMEC aims to reduce domestic landmine and EWR casualties in order to improve economic infrastructure and development, promote global stability and peacekeeping through the United Nations, and strengthen the RCAF's capabilities in demining and peacekeeping.

Part 3: Rationales for Contributing

Cambodia's rationales for providing UN peacekeepers derive mainly from political, economic and normative factors, with the most important issue being the government's desire to improve Cambodia's national image and role on the international stage. Institutional rationales also play a role since contributing to UN peacekeeping is seen as part of the process of military reform as well as part of the broader promotion of security sector governance and security sector reform (SSG and SSR).

Political rationales: Political rationales are the single most important considerations for the Cambodian government, which believes that by providing UN peacekeepers it can improve Cambodia's image and increase its prestige on the international stage. In turn, this helps to consolidate the international political legitimacy of the government, which has often been criticized by human rights groups and some other governments for violations of international human rights law. In the [2006 Defence White Paper](#), the government emphasized the image and prestige afforded to the RCAF through its participation in peacekeeping operations. It states: "At present as well as in the future, the RCAF is striving to build its prestige in the international arena. A role in peacekeeping operations is one opportunity to which the RCAF can contribute in an effort to strengthen peace and security in the region and throughout the world."

This point was reiterated by the Minister of National Defence of Cambodia Gen. Tea Banh in his remarks in June 2012 [at the Shangri-La Dialogue](#):

"We have a demonstrated willingness to participate in efforts to enhance regional and extra-regional stability, and have done so in several theaters where peace-keepers were required. I am very proud to note that Cambodia has gone from being a recipient of peace-keepers to an active contributor in peace-keeping operations."

It was echoed by Prime Minister Hun Sen, in his [remarks during the 60th anniversary of the National Independence Day on 9 November 2013](#). The Prime Minister confirmed Cambodia's commitment to UN peacekeeping stating, "20 years ago Cambodia received the UN Blue Berets on their peacekeeping mission in this country. Nowadays, Cambodia sends its forces to take part in UN peacekeeping missions in a number of countries that are hot spots in the world and has been praised by the UN's Secretary General."

As an ASEAN member, Cambodia has exercised its foreign policy and defense diplomacy under the ASEAN framework and its collective identity. General Tea Banh, for instance, has linked Cambodian peacekeeping forces with the ASEAN collective identity. In April 2013 during the sending out ceremony of the Cambodian peacekeeping forces he said: "you have to remember that your identity at this time is not only representing the Cambodian peacekeeping forces, but also peacekeeping forces for ASEAN. Therefore you have to behave well in order to maintain national dignity and to bring the fame of Cambodia to international arena." It needs to be noted that peacekeeping is one of the key cooperation areas within ASEAN and especially within the ASEAN defense sector. These processes create a degree of regional pressure for Cambodia to become more active in UN peacekeeping.

Institutional rationales: After gaining peace and political stability in 1999 when the Khmer Rouge's remaining forces were totally demobilized and integrated into the government, military reform started to gain momentum. Military demobilization and reintegration were carried out with technical and financial support from the World Bank and other related national agencies and intergovernmental organizations. The RCAF's preoccupation with

active counter-insurgency and focus on combat skills has been gradually supplemented with more attention to humanitarian assistance through the provision of human security and services to the people in line with the military's new doctrine in which the roles of the armed forces have been gradually transformed from war time to peace time operations. Over this time, peacebuilding, national reconstruction, and economic development have moved to the mainstream of security and defence policy and military doctrine partly in response to the identification of new security threats stemming from non-traditional sources such as natural disasters, transnational crime and international terrorism. Since 2003, the government's development strategy has emphasized military reform, particularly capacity-building, professional development, and civil-military relations.

The end of the counter-insurgency against the Khmer Rouge forces in 1999 and the new processes of defense reform have helped create a view, commonly held in the military establishment, that through participation in UN peacekeeping, the RCAF can gain important operational experience and knowledge, experience of multinational operations, and practical expertise in the tasks associated with peacekeeping operations such as civil-military relations and humanitarian assistance. It is widely thought that such capacity-building and human resources development improves the RCAF's operational capacity and military reform efforts. Knowledge gained from UN peacekeeping has been shared with and transferred to the local armed forces and personnel. For instance, the culture of civil-military relations experienced in UN peacekeeping operations has been integrated into the RCAF.

Security rationales: Security rationales are not a major consideration in Cambodia's thinking about providing UN peacekeepers.

Economic rationales: The UN's compensation and reimbursement rates are in excess of the costs accrued to the Cambodian government, especially the peacekeeping forces themselves. Individual soldiers can therefore earn extra income through their participation in UN peacekeeping. UN peacekeeping thus generates revenue and financial benefits for Cambodia. Although it is a relatively small amount, the compensation payments from the UN partially supports the funding of military reform efforts.

Normative rationales: Cambodia was a recipient of UN peacekeeping from 1991 to 1993 after the Paris Peace Accord ended its long civil war.⁴ Thanks to the support it received from the UN, Cambodia finally gained peace and political stability after a prolonged civil war that destroyed the country's infrastructure. This experience helped create a normative rationale for Cambodian contributions to UN peacekeeping in that the government committed itself to contribute to world peace through its participation in peacekeeping and humanitarian affairs. The Minister of National Defence of Cambodia [General Tea Banh](#) stated in April 2012 "No nation can live in harmony and prosperity without peace and stability and thus our mission is very important. The departure of the military personnel is indeed a new milestone that manifests our commitment and greater contribution to global peace." All major political factions in Cambodia believe that the United Nations is integral to international peace and security and to economic development. After going through about three decades of civil war, the Cambodian public is aware of the role of the United Nations in peacekeeping. Such historical background and memory encourages and inspires Cambodia to contribute to the UN.

Part 4: Barriers to Contributing

Alternative institutional preferences for crisis management: This is not a barrier to contributing since Cambodia has a stated preference for contributing to the UN. Moreover, ASEAN does not conduct peacekeeping operations and is therefore not a competitor for Cambodian resources.

Financial costs: The Cambodian military and individual soldiers make a net economic gain by contributing to UN peacekeeping and many of its costs and training needs are supported by foreign donors. Financial costs may become an issue if training needs increase or foreign support declines.

Discomfort with the expanding UN peacekeeping agenda: Cambodia has expressed no discomfort with the expanding UN peacekeeping agenda, though it does prioritize alignment with ASEAN's principles of non-interference in the domestic affairs of states. This may restrain it from undertaking any activities that may be perceived as violating the sovereignty and independence of the host country. For instance, [Commander-in-Chief General Pol Saroeun](#) during the sending out of the Cambodian peacekeeping forces to Lebanon in December 2012 stressed that, "You all also build [a] reputation under the UN peacekeeping forces and [must] respect the independence and territorial integrity of the hosting country."

Exceptionalism: This is not a relevant factor, other than the fact that Cambodia's historical experiences create a normative rationale for contributing (see above).

Absence of pressure to contribute: There is a degree of regional pressure to contribute as several ASEAN Member States contribute more to UN peacekeeping and peacekeeping is a central component of regional defense cooperation.

Difficult domestic politics: Cambodia's major political groups support the country's participation in UN peacekeeping. The public also supports participation.

Damage to national reputation: Peacekeeping is seen as making a significant positive contribution to Cambodia's national reputation.

Resistance in the military: The military leadership is supportive of participation in peacekeeping, because of the financial benefits, operational experience, and contribution to military reform.

Lack of fit with legislative, procurement and operational timelines: The principal barrier to deeper participation is its limited human resources and institutional capacity. Currently, training facilities and resources are limited and very much depend on international support. Cambodia also faces major challenges in relation to logistics, the procurement of modern equipment and operational timelines. There are no legislative barriers since Cambodia does not have a law on its participation in UN peacekeeping.

Part 5: Current Challenges and Issues

The Cambodian government appears to be working hard to increase its future contributions to UN peacekeeping regardless of domestic challenges and constraints. It is striving to secure international support in strengthening the capacity and capability of the Cambodian armed forces so that it can contribute more. So far, Cambodian peacekeepers have sustained no casualties or serious injuries: this has further convinced the public and the parliament to

support such peace missions. However, incurring casualties could change perceptions about peacekeeping.

Cambodian decision-making on peacekeeping is not influenced or determined by the impact of the global financial crisis, the politics of contemporary peacekeeping, the UN's force generation strategy, nor questions about success and ill health. It is mainly conditioned by its own capabilities in accordance with the [UN's New Horizon](#) process adopted in 2009. Cambodia needs to improve its own military capabilities in order to reach the standards required for UN peacekeeping before it will be able to contribute much more than it is already. One key challenge for Cambodian participation in peacekeeping is the lack of language capacity (both French and English) and cultural understanding of the host countries.

Part 6: Key Champions and Opponents

Prime Minister Hun Sen is the principal champion in promoting and encouraging Cambodian participation in and contributions to UN peacekeeping. He takes leadership in tasking the NCC, the MOD, and other related state agencies in training Cambodian peacekeeping forces. He personally presided over the sending out ceremony of the first batch of Cambodian peacekeeping forces to Sudan in 2006.

Other senior leaders such as the Minister of the Ministry of the National Defence Gen. Tea Banh, Commander-in-Chief Gen. Pol Saroeun, and the Chairman of the National Coordination Committee His Excellency Prak Sokhon are among the most active and energetic individuals in raising the profile of Cambodia through its participation in the peacekeeping. The NPMEC is the core peacekeeping training centre working closely with the United Nations and donor countries to enhance the capacity of the Cambodian peacekeeping forces.

Currently there are no major opponents of Cambodia contributing personnel to UN peacekeeping. All the major political parties are supportive of such efforts, as is public opinion, as long as they are properly authorized through the UN and respect the sovereignty and independence of the receiving countries or regions.

Part 7: Capabilities and Caveats

Cambodia has limited capacity and resources to contribute to the UN peacekeeping. Demining activity is the core strength of the Cambodian peacekeeping forces. Other areas such as administration, logistics, military medicine, and engineering are being developed. Within such structural and resource constraints, Cambodia needs continued support from international friends. Australia, China, France, Japan, and the United States are among the countries that have provided technical and logistical support to the RCAF.

Since 2010, the United States has supported Cambodian peacekeeping forces through capacity-building and joint exercises. Under the framework of the Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI), the US in cooperation with Cambodia conducted joint multinational military exercises called "Angkor Sentinel." Since then, Angkor Sentinel has become an annual joint military exercise between the US and Cambodia. The latest Angkor Sentinel took place 16-19 May 2013 and involved the participation of the US Army and the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces. It focused on peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance operations, including a battalion staff training exercise, a counter-improvised explosives devices field training exercise, and battlefield medical activities to assist Cambodian peacekeeping forces.

Part 8: Further reading

Cambodia Defence [White Paper in 2006](#) (Ministry of National Defence of Cambodia, 2006).
Sotharith Chap, [Cambodia's security challenges and implications for defence policy](#) (Tokyo: NIDS, 2010).

Vannarith Chheang, [Cambodian security and defence policy](#) (Tokyo: NIDS, 2013).

Tea Banh, "[Strengthening defence diplomacy in the Asia Pacific](#)," Shangri-La Dialogue, Singapore, 31 May 2009.

Tea Banh, "[Deterrence and regional stability](#)," Shangri-La Dialogue, Singapore, 2 June 2012.

Notes

¹ Unless otherwise stated, data is drawn from IISS, *The Military Balance 2013* (London: IISS/Routledge, 2013).

² Figures for 2013 and 2014 from the Ministry of National Defence of Cambodia.

³ A country's annual total defense budget (in US dollars) divided by the total number of active armed forces. Using figures from IISS, *The Military Balance 2013*.

⁴ On 23 October 1991 the Agreements on a Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict (the Paris Peace Accord), were signed by the four factions in Cambodia and eighteen other countries in the presence of the United Nations Secretary-General. The Agreements paved the way for political settlement and the restoration of peace and democracy in Cambodia after three decades of civil war. The United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), the largest and most complex UN peacekeeping mission undertaken up to that point was established to oversee the implementation of the agreement. It comprised 15,900 military personnel, 3,600 civilian police and 1,020 civil administrative staff.