



KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA
Nation-Religion-King

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Key Points of the Prime Minister's Address at the National Seminar on Counter-Terrorism

On 28 April 2006, Samdech Prime Minister Hun Sen presided over the closing of National Seminar on Counter-Terrorism, held in Phnom Penh. The Prime Minister highlighted that to prevent any form of terrorist act aiming at sustaining peace and political stability and social security for our people and to sustain a favorable business environment for the development of the economy toward reducing the poverty of the people, Counter-Terrorism is an important issue that we must all joint together to prevent by having a close cooperation with the international communities in the region and the world. This represents the main reason for conducting this seminar which is due to come to a halt today.

Taking this great opportunity, on behalf of the Royal Government and myself, the Prime Minister congratulated and highly valued the efforts made by all managements, government officials and all the staffs of the working group in organizing of this seminar who have devoted their time and efforts and which have closely cooperated with national and international partners in hosting this important seminar to achieve such a proud and positive outcome.

This outcome is clearly revealed in the summary report of the seminar that was successfully conducted over these two days with support from Great Britain and Australia. It is also worthwhile to note that the participation of civil servants, police officers and all militants in this seminar reflects the efforts and high responsibility of all concerned parties in preventing terrorism and to have national and international cooperation to seek peace, prosperity and security for the people living in the country, region as well as the world.

At the same time, on behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia, the National Committee on Counter-Terrorism and myself, I would like to compliment the organizers in raising awareness of the current situation regarding the terrorism. In this sense, the unity and cooperation between all concerned partners have been strengthened and expanded which provided an important contribution to support and enhance the establishment of a planning document and to protect objectives identified by the National Committee on Counter-Terrorism. I believe that the participants have listened to the case of the London Bombing and regarding the role and responsibility of different agencies, intelligence unit, police department, military, and emergency unit. At the same time, I would like to thank for the cooperation and support extended by the Great Britain and Australia to Cambodia to make this important seminar possible. I strongly believe that the outcome of this national seminar will lead to new changes on the quality of work and close cooperation among relevant agencies, including the National Committee on Country-Terrorism and its secretariat as a leading unit to facilitate this cooperation.

We remember that recently threats of terrorism and explosions have occurred at various locations which are not far from our region. For instance, only within the Asian Pacific region the terrorism threat still continues in some areas. In this sense, countries have put forward their measures in order to prevent terrorism activities. In fact, presence of some terrorism movement and their followers in Cambodia, threats on Canadian Embassy in Bangkok via email originated from Cambodia, threat fax message to British Embassy in Phnom Penh, all these are concern. This factor clearly shows that even though Cambodia is

not a primary target of terrorism, but it does not mean that here we are free from terrorism related activities.

Looking from the other side, we have made much success, including disintegrating the Khmer Rouge that conducted a campaign of genocide; we brought back full peace to the people. We have made success in maintaining security and order domestically and to some extent internationally. Are these successes sufficient for us? The answer is not, we need to put more efforts and preventative measures to address the issue.

Base on the above, the law on counter-terrorism has been drafted and submitted for inter-ministerial discussion at the Council of Ministers. I would like to appeal to armed forces, authorities at all levels and relevant national and international agencies to effectively implement the following recommendations:

1. Continue to maintain social order by participatory approach and involvement of people in maintaining national security as a basis to ensure successful implementation of the above law.
2. Continue to implement the policy of national unity by ongoing efforts in harmonization among different ethnic groups, religions within the country and preventing the disintegration of national and religion unity.
3. Timely put a stop to extremist movements which can lead to an unrest and social imbalance by preventing of all forms terrorism related activities in Cambodia.
4. Strengthening and expanding the cooperation among inter-agencies within the nation, regionally and globally base on the principle of respect, understanding, sharing information, good cooperation in stopping and cracking down the terrorisms.

On behalf of the Royal Government, I would like to ask the secretariat of the National Committee on Counter-Terrorism to exert their efforts in establishing the planning document on time and work hard on cooperation regarding the sharing of information and its analysis.

Once again, I would like to express my appreciation to Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen for participating and sharing your thoughts and opinions in this seminar which aims at formulating strategy and necessary measures to prevent all forms of terrorism activities and yet again let me extend my gratitude to the National Committee on Counter-Terrorism and international partners for organizing the seminar. I would support the organization of this seminar at least once a year to review and revisit, and to develop policy and measures on counter-terrorism as well as experiences and information sharing between relevant agencies both nationally and internationally.

Key Points of the Prime Minister Remarks in the Meeting with workers of the Sihanoukville Autonomous Port on International Labor Day

On 01 May 2006, Samdech Prime Minister Hun Sen presided over the ground breaking ceremony to construct a “**One Stop Service**” administrative building and the meeting with staff, workers and employees of the Sihanoukville Autonomous Port, including civil servants of relevant departments working here on the **International Labor Day**.

In the meeting, the Prime Minister stated that indeed, the **International Labor Day of 1st May** in Cambodia have a profound meaning and it is celebrating every year, in particular since the liberation day of our people from the genocide regime on 7th of January, 1979. At the same time, the **International Labor Day of 1st May** is a good opportunity for me to joint and meet with you all and personally encourage all the 1273 staff and workers of the Sihanoukville Autonomous Port, which a model organization for its best performance, and it is a successful public enterprise with high returns paid to the government budget, good management, solidarity, disciplines and orders.

As, I have highlighted, the Sihanoukville Autonomous Port is still the gateway of our nation economy which is strategic and have potential in supporting national and international trade activities of Cambodia and it is the center of Sihanoukville Industrial Zone which is the gateway in west of Cambodia in facilitating warehousing and distribution of goods within the country, in the region and the world; it is generating substantial revenues into the national budget, creating employments to our people and in particular providing direct 1273 jobs to workers and employees in the port and 169,000 jobs to the population living in the Sihanoukville.

On behalf of the Royal Government and my own self, I am please and have been providing full support to initiatives in development of the Sihanoukville Autonomous Port in the past and future which include the construction of 160 meters additional container-loading pier which is equipped with a modern and high capacity **Gantry and Transfer Cranes**, and in particular now we are participating in ground breaking ceremony to construct a “**One-Stop-Service**” building which is IT-equipped and use Electronic Data Interchange aiming at facilitating container loading by reducing paper works, time and illicit costs.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude to the Government of Japan for helping to expedite the grand proposal from the Japan Bank for International Cooperation and to support the study on Phnom Penh - Sihanoukville corridor development project by facilitating loan disbursement for detailed planning study in order to establish a **Special Economic Zone** in the Sihanoukville Autonomous Port and to provide additional loan to develop this zone during 2008 -2009.

Moreover, the continued rehabilitation and development of physical infrastructures, including development of Sihanoukville Autonomous Port infrastructure is in line with the efforts put forward by the government to ensure that Cambodia has strong political stability, harmony and undertake reforms in every aspects to accomplish the objectives of the government’s **Rectangular Strategy** aiming at accelerating “**economic**” growth, “**employment**” generation for our people, enhance “**equity**” in the society, also to improve “**efficiency**” in public sector under collaboration and support of development partnership, especially the “**Government**” and “**People of Japan**” and with effort and active participation

from all ministries, institutions, authorities at all levels, workers, employees and all people in the country.

On behalf of the government, I would like to express my conviction to support and set priority for planning and development of transport infrastructure, which is objective number two of the **Rectangular Strategy** for improvement, expansion and well connect transport movement to others regions and entire country, especially for region in northeastern and southeastern to gain access to Sihanoukville Autonomous Port, in order to quickly integrate Cambodia within the region and the world. Obviously, in order to achieve this objective the government has invested to a great extent include public and private finance, foreign assistance and others loan to ensure the continuity of roads and bridges of entire country and especially national road that lead to Sihanoukville port, also include a maintenance of national road number four by **AZ** company; in addition, more reconstruction and repair included **national road number three lead from Veal Veng to Tra Pang Pov**, which just has been successfully completed; **national road number three connecting Trapang Ropov to Kampot province** has been 50% completed, **national road number forty-eight connecting KohKong province to national road number four** has 50% paved and **building four bridges across ocean strait** has completed about 20%, repair part of **the national road number one and number two** by customized bridges follow the regional standard; about 50% of the grand provided by Japanese government has been utilized. On top of this, I would like to express my full support to the Ministry of Public Works and Transportations to construct KangKeng airport and to repair railroad in both direction, especially from **Phnom Penh to Sihanoukville** and **connect directly to the port** as quickly as possible.

All over again, on behalf of the Government of Cambodia, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the **People and Government of Japan** for actively participating in the reconstruction and development of our nation. Indeed, it provided credit of **77 Million USD** for repairing and development port infrastructure and provided grants such as scanner and equipments for combating terrorism to the port as well as the budget for the detailed study of economic zone that has approximate size of **70 ha** within the port compound and would absorbs labor force from 30-50 thousands in the future.

I would like to take this auspicious day of **1st May International Labor Day** to express my care and full support to enhance legal rights of workers and all forms of labors all over the country. And, I would like to dedicate this great day to be a day of **solidarity, unity, equity, fraternity and development** for all Cambodian people and to obtain bright future for all of us and for our next generation.

It is clear that to accelerate poverty reduction policy of the people, it can be done via promoting economic **growth**, creating **jobs** for people, promoting **equity** in society and strengthening **efficiency** in public management. These have implemented for the sake of a bright future of Cambodia. I would recommend all relevant competencies and organizations put more effort and increase a close cooperation and coordination among each other in transparent manner and at high efficiency by making efforts to improve service delivery and management in the port, aiming at gaining confidence from customers, national and international investors and development partners in our commitment in rehabilitation and development of the nation.

The Visit of European Parliamentary Delegation to Cambodia

During one-week visit to Cambodia to seek the reality in this country, the European Parliamentary delegation led by Mr. Marc Tarabella, first vice chairman of European Parliament in charge of the relation with ASEAN-member countries, had a meeting with Samdech Prime Minister Hun Sen on April 20, 2006. The Prime Minister informed the delegation that Cambodia is one of the Southeast Asian countries which take the lead in allowing the freedom of expression through the media such as newspapers and radios. The Royal Government of Cambodia has launched the reform program which includes the fighting against corruption, judicial and legal reform as well as armed forces reform and demobilization. Cambodia has established a National Council for solving land dispute which currently has occurred between the poor and reach people. The Prime Minister added that the Royal Government has paid special attention on some priority tasks such as rehabilitation and construction of irrigation system, infrastructure and transportation system, hydro-electric power; the development of human resources and tourism industry.

In the meeting with Deputy Prime Minister HOR Namhong, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, ***Mr. Marc Tarabella praised Cambodian government for all efforts in making the country become democracy and freedom after the long internal war.*** The Deputy Prime Minister informed the delegation that the Royal Government of Cambodia has successfully implemented the Triangle and the Rectangle strategies which are the key fact for the poverty alleviation in Cambodia by paying much attention to various reform in particular legal and judicial reforms. *In this regard, the Royal Government of Cambodia has built the Royal Academy of Professional Tribunal with assistance from France and has increased the judge salary in order to avoid corruption and to make judiciary and justice.*

Meanwhile, His Excellency Deputy Prime Minister HOR Namhong acknowledged that there are some problems of land disputes, as the civilian and military officials have bought land from local people, on one hand. And on the other hand, there were a few local people who already sold their land and later denied the sale of their land. However, the Royal Government of Cambodia made every effort to tackle those problems by setting up a committee to address the issues. His Excellency also touched upon the issues of Human trafficking, especially women and children that occurred not only in Cambodia, but in foreign countries as well. The mafia traded them as illegal workers and illegal drug traffickers. The Royal Government of Cambodia has been working in close cooperation with neighboring countries by taking strict measures to prevent and crack down the crimes. Mr. Tarabella has also met with Representatives of Trade Unions, NGOs, UN Agencies and political parties.

On 24 April 2006, Mr. Marc Tarabella, leader of the six-member European Parliamentary delegation, ***made the comments at the news conference on the final day of their visit to Cambodia and stated that much has improved in Cambodia, listing voting right, democracy, human right and improved circumstances for women. “Stability is needed and stability has been achieved”*** he said “I believe the UN Representative (on human right in Cambodia) did not assess the situation here as we did.” he added “the election in 2003 was judged by all as held in excellent conditions”; “Elections, they don’t happen in every country in the world, here, the opposition can criticize” he added.

Selected Judges for Khmer Rouge tribunal

The process of preparation for trials of surviving Khmer Rouge leaders over their brutal 1970s rule has moved forward to a crucial step when Cambodian and U.N. judges were selected for the tribunal.

On 04 May 2006, the country's highest judicial body, the Supreme Council of Magistracy, under the chair of the King, selected seven Cambodian judges, five U.N.-appointed judges and 2 prosecutors for the tribunal to hear the cases. King Norodom Sihamoni and Cambodia's eight-member Supreme Council of Magistracy based the selection of judges on a list of 13 candidates of foreign judges (from New Zealand, France, Austria, Canada, U.S., Australia, the Netherlands, Japan, Poland and Sri Lanka) submitted by the United Nations in March and 17 candidates of Cambodian judges. Twelve will serve as judges in the two levels of court, and the rest will stay as reserve. The two levels of court include the trial Chamber and the Supreme Court Chamber. At the Trial Chamber, there will be 5 judges comprising 3 Cambodian and 2 international judges. At the Supreme Court Chamber there will be 7 judges including 4 Cambodian and 3 internationals. Both Cambodia and UN have also provides one prosecutor and one investigating judge each to lead the investigations.

Mr. Reach Sambath, a spokesman for the tribunal, said that from June of this year, after the appointments of the judges and prosecutors, the legal process will start. The actual trials are expected to begin early 2007. Mr. Peter Foster, another spokesman for the tribunal, said the next few months would mark an important step forward. It is wrong to think that the bulk of the work won't start until 2007. It will start when the investigations begin, and they will start when the chief prosecutor arrives.

The Kingdom of Cambodia and the United Nations agreed in 2003 to establish a special court for the Khmer Rouge leaders, accused of responsibility in the deaths of an estimated 1.7 million people from starvation, disease, overwork and execution during their rule in 1975-79. The Khmer Rouge drove people out of Cambodia's cities to work at forced-labor collective farm as it attempted to impose a communist agrarian state. Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot died in 1998, many fear that remaining Khmer Rouge leaders may die before they can be tried. Funding problems have delayed the trials, under the 2003 Agreement, Cambodia and the United Nations set a three-year budget for the trials which is about US\$56.3 million, of which the UN will pay US\$43 million and US\$13.3 million is earmarked to come from Cambodian government.

Communication Workshops on Avian Influenza

A workshop on bird flu was held at the media training center in Phnom Penh on May 8, 2006. The workshop, organized jointly by the ministry of Information, UNICEF and Academy of Educational Development (AED) with the participating of 25 journalists, is aimed at improving journalists' awareness of basic information on bird flu, high risk, behaviors, practical prevention measures and recognition and response to bird flu in animals and human.

In order to raise awareness of the public, it is necessary to use all forms in the coverage of bird flu information in an effort to effectively prevent the spread of the deadly virus, said Information Minister HE Khieu Kanharith. While the world expressed great concern over the bird flu outbreak, he added, the workshop will help the journalists disseminate information on bird flu to strengthen prevention of the spread of the fatal virus, as well as on the removal of the confusion and the dismissal of the people's fears. Mr. Mare Vergard, Chief of Communication under UNICEF said that through the workshop, UNICEF wants to help Cambodian journalists do their job better and be able to contribution to the national efforts to prevent and control the spread of Avian influenza.

At the recent inauguration of a medical school in Phnom Penh, Prime Minister Samdech Hun Sen instructed Information Minister HE Khieu Kanharith to ask the broadcast media help to educate the public, specifying that broadcasters should devote prime-time spot during pop music shows to bird flu information in fighting against the spread of the pandemic disease.

The Government of Japan has donated US\$ 1.55 million to UNICEF in the support of its work in Cambodia to prevent the spread of avian influenza. The donation is used for the coverage of information on the awareness of the birth flu, social mobilization and the procurement of essential supplies.

The contribution is a part of the \$49 million donation from Japan to support UNICEF's work in 11 countries that are considered at high-risk of avian influenza, namely Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Laos, Mongolia, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, Nigeria and Niger. Japan considers education and awareness-raising at the community level as most effective in preventing infection with avian influenza. Japan also recognizes the fact that many of the victims of avian influenza have been children, including in Cambodia.

Since the beginning of this project, UNICEF has been supporting the development, production and broadcasting/distribution of TV spots, radio spots, posters and other communication materials on the subject to avian influenza. In view of the latest human cases in Kompong Speu and Prey Veng Provinces, both of which involved children, UNICEF is further stepping up its cooperation with the Royal Government to deliver vital messages and information through all available channels, including health institutions, pagodas, schools and commune Councils.

CAMBODIA'S ECONOMIC GROWTH

Cambodia's economy in 2005 grew twice as quickly as in the previous year on the back of booming tourism and strong garment exports, the International Monetary Fund said. The IMF projected the kingdom's gross domestic product (GDP) grew by 13 percent, against 6.0 percent in 2004, saying Cambodia was one of the fastest growing economies in the region. "Cambodia's economy did very well last year, an excellent result," Jeremy Carter, the IMF's Asia Pacific Department, said at a news conference. Cambodia's garment output *jumped over 12 percent thanks to US and European restrictions on Chinese garment imports*, Carter said, adding the kingdom's *robust tourism and strong construction business* also helped the economy. Carter said the IMF expected Cambodia's economy to grow by around five percent in 2006, due to high oil prices, a slowdown in tourism, and fierce competition from China in the garment industry.

In the meeting with Prime Minister Samdech Hun Sen in Phnom Penh on May 9, Mr. Jeremy Carter said that previously, IMF did a wrong estimate of economic growth in Cambodia, but now recognized that Cambodia's GDP grew at 13.9 percent in 2005. He told the Prime Minister that IMF announced to write off a loan of 83 million US dollars Cambodia owed in the past and proposed to provide 33 million US dollars for agricultural development in the country as well as asked the royal government to make a project by using a remaining fund of 50 million US dollars.

As far as anti-corruption law is concerned, Prime Minister Samdech Hun Sen said he promoted to have a mechanism and a law established to be carried out effectively. Samdech Hun Sen also asked IMF to help Cambodia in coordination with the USA and the former USSR to hold the discussion on repaying loans without being effected to Cambodia's economy.

Cambodia is struggling to recover from three decades of civil war that ended in 1998 and tourism is one of the country's few viable money-spinners. The famed Angkor temple complex in northwest Cambodia remains its biggest draw. In 2005, tourist arrivals in Cambodia surged 35 percent to 1.4 million, mostly from Asia. The government has been trying to persuade holidaymakers to stay longer and see sights other than the World Heritage-listed Angkor temples.

(CAMBODIA HOLDS INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS EXPO)

Cambodia ICT (Information, Communications and Technology) World Expo 2006 opened in Phnom Penh on Thursday May 04, aimed at promoting the country's development of telecommunication industry. More than 30 companies from about 10 countries attended the two-day exhibition organized by the National ICT Development Authority (NIDA) and the International Data Group (IDG) in cooperation with the Cambodian Post and Telecommunications Ministry.

This is the second largest telecom exhibition in Cambodia. "This exhibition is the good chance to allow the large international companies understand the Cambodia market, introduce modern products to Cambodia and reach to create the strong ICT industry in Cambodia," NIDA official Phu Leewood said.

China's Huawei Technologies, a leading telecom equipment supplier, also participated in the expo as the conference sponsor. Huawei, developing telecom market here in Cambodia since 1999, now is the No.1 supplier in Cambodia that deployed in top two operators. "Our rich experience in Turkey and Networking Planning as well as dedicated foreign consultants and a big team of over 30 experienced local staff, have contributed to a rapid growth of our business in the local market," said Zhu Ping, managing director of Huawei's Cambodia, Laos region office. "Huawei aspires to enrich people's lives through communications, which we believe will be greatly beneficial to the local telecommunications industry," Zhu said with confidence.

More than 1 million Cambodians, about 8 per cent of 14 million population, now use mobile phones, according to La Narath, secretary of state of the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications. "We have great potential in developing and promoting our country's communication, especially the development of fixed phones," he added.



The Investment on High-tech Refrigerating Factory Exported Fish and Shrimp

The Cambodian Development Council has authorized a local company named Ocean King to make a large-scale investment ever on modern refrigerating factory for exported fishing products in Sihanouk Ville.

According to Mr. Ty Thina, the Executive Director of Ocean king Cambodia, the factory is equipped with high-tech and automatic operation that can produce and preserve hundred tons of fishing products a day. "What we have now is natural fishing yield. It could not meet the factory's demand, so I have asked for the authorization to build up fish and shrimp farms in Kampog Speu and Koh Kong. And the fishing products are supplied to international markets, especially the market of United States of America," he added.

Now Ocean King is constructing a shrimp farms area of 300 hectares in Koh Kong Province. At the same time, the company also plans to construct another 300- hectare Pra-fish farm at kampong Se La District, along National Road Number 4.



ASEAN-China Joint Cultural Festival

ASEAN-China joint cultural performance was held on April 8 and 9 in front of 900 year old Angkor Wat temple in Siem Reap province, an ancient city of Cambodian civilization. The purpose of this event was to commemorate the 15th Anniversary Dialogue Relationship between ASEAN and China, to promote the public awareness of each country's traditional arts and culture and to strengthen the bonds of friendship between ASEAN and China as well as ASEAN-China strategic cooperation.



Cambodian Apsara



Joint ASEAN-China Symphony Orchestra

The festival was presided over by Deputy Prime Minister HOR Namhong, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister HE Wu Dawei with the participating of Chinese Ambassador and other ASEAN Ambassadors to Cambodia.



Brunei Darussalam



Viet Nam



Malaysia



China

ASEAN-China foundation in cooperation with the Royal Government of Cambodia sponsored the arrangement of the festival, in which the multi-cultural dances and symphony orchestra performed and played to the thousands of public audiences (with a free of charge) by 300 dancers and musicians, 150 of whom are from the host country, 20 from China and others are from ASEAN countries.



Myanmar



Closing Ceremony

CAMBODIAN-AMERICAN: SGT. SAR'S SILVER STAR



Master Sgt. Sarun Sar, Silver Star

One man's journey from Cambodia to America to Afghanistan--where he became a hero.

The sound of the UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters echoed off the rugged, snowy ridges, almost 9,000 feet up in the mountains of eastern Afghanistan, near the Pakistan border. In the dim first light of dawn, the men of U.S. Army Special Forces detachment Alpha 732 were scanning the fog-bound boulders and trees, searching for Taliban fighters.

They spotted a tiny village of earth and stone huts strung out along the top of a ridge. Something didn't look right about the peaceful scene that early morning, March 2, 2005. The Blackhawks touched down, one on either side of the ridge, less than 100 yards below the huts. Six men jumped out of the chopper on the north side of the ridge, and as it flew away they came under intense automatic weapons fire from the village. Returning fire, they sought cover amid rocks and trees in the knee-deep snow.

As the other copter had touched down on the south side of the ridge, Master Sgt. Sarun Sar heard the heavy fire and spotted Taliban fighters around the huts above him. The sudden arrival of the 12-man Alpha 732 team by air had surprised the enemy. But the advantage of surprise was evaporating fast in a hail of fire.

In seconds, Sgt. Sar, a veteran of many combat operations over the past 15 years, grasped that if that fire from the high ground was not quickly suppressed, the Blackhawks could be damaged or destroyed if they tried to land again and his small detachment could be pinned down in this remote area.

Sgt. Sar, Cambodian-born, with a ready smile and a gentle demeanor that belies his toughness, reacted immediately. He charged toward the huts and the scattered muzzle flashes of the Taliban weapons, lifting his knees high to negotiate the deep snow as he ran uphill. He could hear bullets whizzing past him.

Sgt. Sar had his M-4 carbine set on semiautomatic, choosing his single shots carefully. He knew the area from many patrols. He didn't want to hit any of the civilians whose confidence he and his men had worked so long and so hard to win.

The 15 to 20 Taliban fighters, who had pinned down the Americans on the north side of the ridge, seemed stunned by the swift, furious charge of the short, wiry, helmeted figure rushing up the ridge from the south. Taliban began to fall, hit by Sgt. Sar's well-aimed shots. Now he was almost to the huts. Those Taliban who had not been killed broke and ran for the nearby woods. One turned to fire at the onrushing sergeant but was killed. Another, carrying an AK-47 assault rifle, disappeared into one of the huts.

Only then did Sgt. Sar realize that he was alone. His men, who had exited the Blackhawk after him, had been temporarily pinned down. They were far behind him, still working their way up the snowy hill. Keeping his eye on the doorway of the occupied hut, he called on his radio for help. Within minutes the team's medic was beside him.

The door to the windowless hut was partly open. Sgt. Sar could see only darkness inside. He had a flashlight mounted on the barrel of his M-4. Deciding to "keep the momentum," he barreled through the small, low opening, gun to the front. But the heavy load of patrol gear he was carrying caught on the sides of the small doorway.

It was a moment that will ever be frozen in his memory. Sgt. Sar was halfway into the darkened hut, the flashlight on his M-4 illuminating the face of a Taliban fighter, and the muzzle of his AK-47 pointed directly at Sgt. Sar's head. The Taliban fired a short burst, three shots. Sgt. Sar felt the muzzle blast as it lit up the darkness.

Miraculously, two of the bullets missed him. But one struck the lower edge of his Kevlar helmet right at his forehead. It felt like a hammer blow on his skull. "I'm hit, I'm hit," he screamed, falling back out of the doorway. He quickly recovered, realizing the bullet had only grazed him. Sgt. Sar and the medic pressed the attack, tossing a grenade into the hut before he re-entered it and killed the man who had almost killed him.

Within minutes, thanks to Sgt. Sar's fearless initiative, the Taliban ambush that placed the men of Alpha 732 in mortal danger had been smashed. The Americans cleared all the huts in the village, treated two civilians who had been slightly wounded, and rounded up a huge cache of enemy weaponry--rocket-propelled grenades and grenade launchers, a radio, a mortar and shells, bomb-making materials and explosives, and a slew of AK-47 assault rifles. The wounded villagers were flown to a military hospital.

Ten months later, home from Afghanistan at Hawaii's Camp H.M. Smith, Sgt. Sar stood at attention as he received the Silver Star, the nation's fourth-highest award for valor in combat. He was a reluctant recipient. He felt that what he had done that day in Afghanistan was "just my duty as a soldier, protecting my guys like they protect me.

"As to his many missions in harm's way--in the Gulf War, in Bosnia and Kosovo, and through two combat tours in Afghanistan--he says quietly that "it's a small price to pay for this country that I love more than my birthplace, this country that has given me so much.

"Indeed, few at the awards ceremony could have known what a journey Sarun Sar had made to pay that "small price." Born in Cambodia in 1966, he had led an idyllic boyhood even as

the clouds of war gathered over Southeast Asia. His father was a schoolteacher, and his mother looked after their home on a large rice farm with his brothers and sisters.

Then war blew his boyhood apart. The communist Khmer Rouge insurgency of the ruthless Pol Pot overthrew the Cambodian government and began the period of the "killing fields," an orgy of executions and enforced starvation that took the lives of more than a million Cambodians who refused to be "re-educated."

Sarun Sar's father was arrested and sent to a prison camp. He eventually died of ailments resulting from his imprisonment. One of Sarun's brothers was executed. His mother and two younger brothers, dispossessed of their farm and hiding in fear of the communists, eventually died a cruel death by starvation. Sarun and his older sister ended up in a refugee camp along the Thailand-Cambodia border. Under the sponsorship of a church in Montgomery County, Md., Sarun and his sister received visas and came to the U.S. in 1981. His older sister eventually moved to California. Sarun lived with an American family in Maryland until he could finish high school (where he joined the wrestling and track teams).

He felt strongly that he should serve his adopted country. He joined the Army in 1985, one year after graduating from high school. The next year he proudly became an American citizen. While stationed as an infantryman at Fort Benning, Ga., he says, "I was mentored by a sergeant who urged me to consider joining Special Forces."

He did. He also qualified as an Army Ranger, winning honors in his class. Then, between deployments all over the world, he earned a bachelor's degree in American history at Campbell University, in North Carolina. While stationed in Germany, he met and eventually married a Polish girl, Dobromila. Now living in Hawaii, they are currently enjoying the fact that he is "home" from the latest of his many foreign assignments.

With his boyish face and quiet voice, Sgt. Sar hardly seems the combat veteran who has earned the respect of the "toughest of the tough," his Special Forces peers. He prefers not to dwell on the many days and nights of patrols and firefights in Afghanistan. He tries to steer "war stories" toward the countless acts of humanitarian work he and his team did in Afghanistan to gain the trust of the people in the countryside. "When I went there, we were engaged in as many as six or seven attacks each day. By the time we left, they were about one a month."

Sgt. Sar feels the American public has heard only about the fighting in the war against terrorism and not enough about the work to achieve peace. "They should be proud of what their soldiers have done to overcome fear and win the hearts of these people." He chuckles when he recalls that when he first arrived in Afghanistan "the people didn't talk to me. Towards the end they wanted me to marry one of their daughters so I could stay a little longer."

By Ralph Kinney Bennett, Opinion Journal (wsj.com) – USA