



*Witness Norng Sophang began his testimony at the ECCC on Wednesday.*

### **Secret Telegrams: New Witness Details Communication Structures** By Mary Kozlovski

On Wednesday, August 29, 2012, trial proceedings in Case 002 involving the accused Nuon Chea, Ieng Sary, and Khieu Samphan resumed at the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC).

During the morning session, defense lawyers for Khieu Samphan completed their questioning of civil party Em Oeun, whose testimony was subsequently concluded. The prosecution began its examination of new witness Norng Sophang.

Ieng Sary waived his direct presence in the courtroom, and followed proceedings from a holding cell. Khieu Samphan and Nuon Chea were present in court, but Nuon Chea retired to the holding cell after the morning session, citing health issues.

#### ***Defense Team for Khieu Samphan Resumes Questioning of Civil Party Em Oeun***

International Co-Lawyer for Khieu Samphan Anta Guissé began questioning for the day by citing Mr. Oeun's August 23 testimony, asking him to describe his functions as a student leader during the training program he attended at the Khmer-Soviet hospital<sup>1</sup> in Phnom Penh. Mr. Oeun said that, after being appointed to the position by Chuon Choeun, he was asked to monitor trainees and act as a focal point for communication to the upper level if trainees required

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<sup>1</sup> "Russian hospital," "Khmer-Soviet Friendship Hospital," "Cambodia-Soviet Friendship Hospital," "Khmer-Soviet hospital," and "17 April Hospital" refer to the same facility in Phnom Penh.

anything. When asked why he was chosen among some 1,000 trainees to be student leader, Mr. Oeun said “Ta Outh” and “Brother Khim”<sup>2</sup> from his sector recommended him, as he had been educated at the base. There were few people at the training who were in the youth league and could be trusted in the position while he was a party member, Mr. Oeun testified.

Ms. Guissé read two excerpts from Mr. Oeun’s victim information forms that referred to the arrest of Leng Sey<sup>3</sup> and attempted to clarify whether Mr. Oeun saw both Leng Sey and her husband, Tiv Ol, being arrested. International Senior Assistant Co-Prosecutor Vincent de Wilde stated at this point that he believed there was a discrepancy between the English and French translations and suggested that Ms. Guissé rely on the original Khmer version of the document. Ms. Guissé said she indicated to the court that she was reading from a French translation and it was incumbent upon the civil party, not the prosecution, to provide clarification. International Civil Party Lawyer Christine Martineau said she felt Ms. Guissé’s manner of addressing the prosecution was inappropriate and that questioning should rely on the original version. Ms. Martineau also stated that the defense had been “quick to overlook” discrepancies in translation when it suited them.

Ms. Guissé began to reply but was interrupted by Trial Chamber President Nil Nonn, who told Ms. Guissé that she should follow her own recommendation and pause before speaking. President Nonn said that there was no need for French-speaking counsel to rely heavily on a French translation rather than verifying the Khmer original with their national colleague. Ms. Guissé apologized for not observing a pause and said she was seeking clarification from Mr. Oeun and relying on the French translation because she noticed a discrepancy between the Khmer and French versions. “When translation problems arise, I believe that it is in the courtroom that such problems be highlighted, so that clarifications or corrections be made. If the French says one thing and the Khmer says another, I believe that for the sake of clarity of proceedings, we should elucidate such issues and bring a solution to them,” Ms. Guissé said.

After the counsel repeated her inquiry, Mr. Oeun testified that Leng Sey was arrested at the hospital, stripped naked and tossed into a truck, but she was not arrested at the same time as her husband, Tiv Ol. Ms. Guissé again referred to testimony by Mr. Oeun on August 23, in which he stated that political training sessions at Borei Keila lasted anywhere between one week and 10 days and occurred every one or two months, and he had only attended one such session. When asked how he was aware of other sessions, Mr. Oeun said that at the hospital he spoke with people from the bases after they attended training sessions, though he could not remember their names.

Moving to Mr. Oeun’s August 27 testimony, Ms. Guissé sought confirmation from Mr. Oeun that he saw Pol Pot, Nuon Chea, Khieu Samphan, and other leaders for the “first time” at the

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<sup>2</sup> This individual’s name was unclear in the English translation and has also been spelled “Kham.”

<sup>3</sup> Ms Guissé read the two excerpts as follows: “At the end of 1977 during my studies, I saw a cadre who was presumed to be an enemy. This person was called Leng Sey; she was handcuffed and she was being transported on a truck”; “I was an eyewitness to the arrest of the teacher Madame Leng Sey who was the spouse of Mr. Tiv Ol. The husband had been accused of being a CIA agent. She was accused of being a KGB agent. This was a particularly traumatizing event. Before she was tossed into the truck, the couple was stripped of their clothes, and some were beaten until they lost consciousness. These events unfolded at the Soviet Hospital in Phnom Penh near the end of 1976.”

training session at Borei Keila. Upon receiving confirmation, Ms. Guissé asked how Mr. Oeun recognized leaders – citing Nuon Chea, Khieu Samphan, and Leng Sey from Mr. Oeun’s August 23 testimony – onstage if he had never seen them before. Mr. Oeun reiterated that they were introduced to the participants; he also told Ms. Guissé that So Phim was not in attendance.

In response to queries from Ms. Guissé about the composition of participants, Mr. Oeun said that the most senior district-level representatives were invited to attend the training along with participants from zone and sector committees. Mr. Oeun testified that when he worked at the hospital in Sector 20 he would not have been entitled to participate in such training, but because he was sent to Russian Hospital and appointed student leader, he was called to attend. Ms. Guissé asked if the civil party brought people from his class to the political training session, to which Mr. Oeun replied that they only called on student leaders and people could not attend the training at will. Upon questioning from Ms. Guissé about the presence of Leng Sey, Mr. Oeun said Leng Sey did not speak at the political training but was onstage because there were students from her hospital and ministry there. When Ms. Guissé sought clarification on whether other students were present besides Mr. Oeun, Mr. de Wilde termed the line of inquiry pointless as the civil party previously noted that several student leaders were present. President Nonn instructed Mr. Oeun to respond. The civil party said again that he was sent to the training because he was a student leader and Leng Sey was probably there to observe other students.

Taking over from his colleague, National Co-Lawyer for Khieu Samphan Kong Sam Onn pursued questioning of Mr. Oeun about conflicting dates and timelines in his testimony and prior statements, citing the differing dates of his father’s disappearance as an example. Mr. Sam Onn asked if this inconsistency was the result of memory lapse, being told by someone to testify differently, or being informed of the court’s temporal jurisdiction.<sup>4</sup> Mr Oeun said the facts were there but he may have mistaken the dates, and after receiving assistance in copying his statement to the official form, he did not thoroughly review whether the dates were consistent. Mr. Sam Onn asked Mr. Oeun if 1974 was the date he recalled as his father’s removal and execution. Mr. Oeun acknowledged that dates were inconsistent and events confused, using the example of his mother’s death.<sup>5</sup>

Earlier on, I thought that my mother was dead because of the aerial bombardment by B-52 of the US. And then later on when I went back home, I thought over it again, and I thought of the date when my father was arrested and brought away, and then I started to factor in all the information and the events that took place at the time. That’s why I came up with subsequent dates concerning the execution of my father.

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<sup>4</sup> The temporal jurisdiction of the ECCC is April 17, 1975, to January 6, 1979.

<sup>5</sup> When Em Oeun spoke about the deaths of his mother and father and the aerial bombardment, the testimony and English translation were unclear.



Mr. Sam Onn asked if the civil party recalled that B-52 bombs were dropped aerially, to which Mr. Oeun said that at his hometown there was a big pond as a result of B-52 bombing and people – including his parents – were all terrified. Mr. Oeun said there was a lot of misery because people were “constantly threatened” with aerial bombardment.<sup>6</sup> When asked by Mr. Sam Onn to elaborate on the bombardment, he said there were hundreds of craters as a result of carpet-bombing; some ranging from seven to 10 meters deep.

Mr. Sam Onn moved his questioning to Mr. Oeun’s tenure at the Khmer-Soviet hospital in Phnom Penh, asking Mr. Oeun what his authority was as student leader. Mr. Oeun explained that he supervised students, overseeing their welfare, study and livelihoods, and received instructions from the hospital director on designating certain tasks. “Without the authorization, I would not have the power to do anything with the students,” he testified. In response to inquiries from Mr. Sam Onn, Mr. Oeun said that among approximately 1,000 students at Khmer-Soviet hospital, there were three student leaders including a president, a vice-president, and a “member.”

Turning to Mr. Oeun’s attendance at the political training session, Mr. Sam Onn asked if he was present for the full course. Mr. Oeun said he was called back by the hospital director to treat patients and only attended the first four days of the seven-day session. Citing Mr. Oeun’s statement<sup>7</sup> that indicated Nuon Chea talked for three days and Khieu Samphan spoke on the fourth and fifth days of the training session, Mr. Sam Onn inquired how Mr. Oeun knew Khieu Samphan spoke during a session he did not attend. After a comment from Mr. de Wilde on an apparent translation issue, Mr. Oeun again apologized for being unable to recall facts in proper sequence due to the passage of time and memory deterioration because of the suffering he endured.

Mr. Sam Onn pressed Mr. Oeun on the names of students who attended the training. The civil party said he did not know any participants except his uncle – Kong Sakun, alias Tuy, originally known as Mok, the “head of sector 20” who was arrested and killed by the Khmer Rouge possibly in late 1976 or early 1977.

Mr. Sam Onn sought clarification on previous explanations from Mr. Oeun about his mother’s death,<sup>8</sup> quoting Mr. Oeun as saying in another statement that his mother was “killed by Pol Pot during the year when my father was arrested and executed” and that they were arrested from a

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<sup>6</sup> Mr. Oeun also testified, “The next morning my mother died so it was a very grief-stricken moment in our lives.” It was unclear in the English translation which date he was using as a point of reference.

<sup>7</sup> This document appeared to be a statement Mr. Oeun provided when seeking the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam’s) assistance in applying to be a civil party. DC-Cam is a sponsor of the *Cambodia Tribunal Monitor*, and its director, Youk Chhang, serves as co-managing editor.

<sup>8</sup> It appeared Mr. Oeun provided different explanations for his mother’s death, including one relating to aerial bombardments and the other to the removal of his father. The English translation was unclear when this issue was discussed.

pagoda while paying homage to monks. Mr. Oeun said he had written the information but noted that his memory was not good and there was no pagoda at the time. Mr. Sam Onn asked if Mr. Oeun recanted a previous statement that his mother died of “shock” in 1974, as a result of US aerial bombardments. Mr. Oeun agreed.

The defense team for Khieu Samphan concluded its questioning of Em Oeun.

### ***Civil Party Em Oeun Shortens Statement***

President Nonn informed Mr. Oeun that the civil party now had the opportunity to speak of the harm he experienced as a result of the crimes alleged in Case 002/01 and the suffering he endured during the regime. Mr. Oeun thanked the court and the public for attending proceedings and stated that he “never imagined” he would testify before the chamber. When Mr. Oeun began talking of his family life and education, President Nonn reminded him to limit himself to talking about the suffering he experienced under the regime, that he was not allowed to “beat about the bush” and had five minutes to “go straight to the point.” If Mr. Oeun did not wish to make a statement he could choose not to do so, President Nonn said. Abruptly, Mr. Oeun said: “To cut short, I have no more idea.” President Nonn said Mr. Oeun’s testimony had concluded.

### ***New Witness Takes the Stand***

Following a short recess, a new witness took the stand. In response to preliminary questions from President Nonn, witness Norng Sophang<sup>9</sup> said that he was born on January 2, 1952, and is 60 years old. Mr. Sophang testified that he lives in Battambang province and is a retired schoolteacher; he is married with three children. Mr. Sophang confirmed that he has no relationship with any civil parties or accused and had taken an oath. Mr. Sophang told President Nonn that he gave two interviews to investigators from the Office of the Co-Investigating Judges (OCIJ) and that he had read the record of his interviews, which were consistent with the accounts he gave.

### ***Prosecution Begins Questioning of Witness Norng Sophang***

National Senior Assistant Co-Prosecutor Veng Huot led the prosecution’s questioning of Mr. Sophang, referring to a document<sup>10</sup> in which Mr. Sophang stated that a “Mr. Hom,”<sup>11</sup> a sector chief, appointed him to work at B-17. In response to queries from Mr. Huot, Mr. Sophang said Hom was sector secretary in Preah Vihear and assigned him to work at B-17 in 1973, after Hom conducted political training to indoctrinate Mr. Sophang and others so they could be disciplined before working at “the center.” Mr. Sophang said they were trained to act in line with party policy in order to be disciplined and have “good morality” before being assigned to work for the center.

Mr. Huot next inquired about the purpose, location, and structure of B-17. Mr. Sophang testified that B-17 was a place of production to support Angkar where vegetables were grown, people’s “stance” would be tested, and people could receive training before working in the center. Mr. Sophang said “Mr. Dim” was in charge of B-17, which was located in Kampong Cham province.

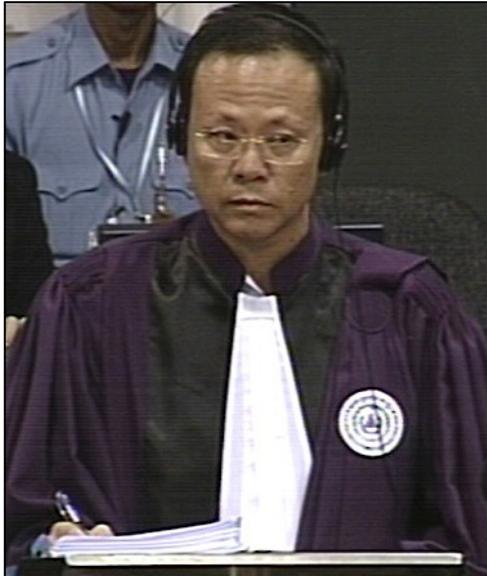
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<sup>9</sup> Norng Sophang said his “original name” was Norng Seng Chim, but he had no alias.

<sup>10</sup> The document appeared to be one of Mr. Sophang’s interviews with OCIJ investigators, but it was not directly named in court.

<sup>11</sup> In Mr. Sophang’s testimony later in the day, he appeared to refer to the same person as “Hang.”

In response to further questioning by Mr. Huot, Mr. Sophang said he grew vegetables, bananas, and sugarcane at B-17 for half a year, before attending a training session there on telegrams in mid-1973. Mr. Sophang explained that “Ponn” taught him to translate telegrams at the sessions, which were attended by “The” and other people, and he soon became skillful at it. The witness testified that he was initially alone at the training, the purpose of which was to teach him to receive and translate “secret telegrams” before sending them to Angkar.



Mr. Huot sought clarification after quoting Mr. Sophang as saying in his statement to OCIJ investigators that Ponn was the group leader who taught Mr. Sophang and there were “four or five people” in Mr. Sophang’s telegram section. Mr. Sophang confirmed the statement, adding that he was the only trainee initially as others had already been taught or were skillful enough so as not to require training. When asked about his duties and the communication system, Mr. Sophang said he received telegrams in secret codes and translated them and submitted them to Ponn, who arranged to have them sent to Angkar. Mr. Sophang explained that incoming messages would be sent to them from zones, bases, and battlefields through radio communication or telegrams before being sent back to targeted areas. Mr. Sophang said Ponn would assign messengers and explained that the process for outgoing messages was the same, with

Ponn sending normal telegram text to be translated into a secret code for messengers to deliver to targeted areas.

Referring to Mr. Sophang’s statement to OCIJ investigators in which he indicated that he met Pol Pot and Nuon Chea at B-17, Mr. Huot asked if the two men worked and stayed at B-17. Mr. Sophang said Pol Pot and Nuon Chea did not work at B-17, but they came there to inspect production and, he believed, to relax. Mr. Sophang testified that people at B-17 knew Pol Pot and Nuon Chea and when he asked about the identities of senior leaders, he was told about “Bang Pol” and “Bang Nuon.” Mr. Sophang said he did not know or see other leaders at B-17.

### ***Witness Testimony Moves to B-20***

Mr. Huot returned to the witness’s training in telegrams, inquiring about the duration and his work thereafter. Mr. Sophang said he believed he mastered the skills by 1974, at which point his group was assigned to work at B-20, where he was chairperson of the telegram translation unit. Upon further questioning from Mr. Huot, he described B-20 as a place for production and supplies to support Angkar – as well as an office – where he remained confined to a banana plantation. Mr. Sophang said the telegram translation unit was comprised of himself as group leader, Vangng as deputy group leader, and Deam<sup>12</sup> as a member. The groups were divided into two at the time, with Mr. Sophang at the rear and Ponn sent to work at the frontline with Pol Pot to the west of Phnom Penh, Mr. Sophang testified. He also described the telegram section as having three interrelated units with his “standalone” section responsible for telegram translation

<sup>12</sup> The spelling of this name was unclear in the English translation.

– which was not supervised by another unit and therefore somewhat “autonomous” – a telegram “receiving and sending” unit, and a radio broadcasting unit. “These three units were separate units, and we never knew each other. That was the organization put in place by the Angkar and we did not relate to one another; we had to do our own task,” Mr. Sophang testified.

Mr. Huot steered his examination to the people present at B-20, asking Mr. Sophang if he met leaders there. Mr. Sophang said he did not meet leaders, because telegrams he translated were ferried by messengers to leaders and he did not know where they resided, where the telegrams were sent, or for whom they were intended. However, Mr. Sophang confirmed to Mr. Huot that he knew Pang – the person who “supervised the overall task” – who “designated” him to B-17 and indoctrinated him. Mr. Huot asked Mr. Sophang if the telegram unit at B-20 belonged to the center. The witness responded that he did not inquire about the location of or know the whereabouts of the center office, but when he was studying telegram translation in the jungle, he learned from others that the center office was “deep in the jungle.”

Regarding the nature of incoming and outgoing telegrams. Mr. Sophang explained that incoming telegrams came to “the rear” in the form of “reports” from the base or the frontlines of battlefields to the upper authority. Outgoing telegrams were in the form of “directives” from the upper to lower authority, including measures, instructions, and circulars for implementation at the base, Mr. Sophang said. The witness testified that reports sent by messengers were usually encoded on every page – sometimes in Khmer numbers, “signs” that had to be decoded, and letters or shorthand writing, the latter usually originating from the frontlines and battlefields. Mr. Sophang said telegrams had to be decoded and sent to the upper authority through messengers, but if reports were in Khmer he did not have to translate them.

Mr. Huot asked how the upper authority prepared directives. Mr. Sophang said that normally secretaries had to take notes on leaders’ instructions, which were written as telegrams sent via messenger to the telegram unit and encoded. Mr. Sophang said he had to ensure the whole message was in code numbers and could not be read by anyone but the intended recipient. The messages was then typed by the “telegram typing unit” and sent out, he testified.

Mr. Huot questioned the witness about who couriered telegrams or reports to the upper authority and which leaders frequently received them. Mr. Sophang said reports were addressed and sent to Angkar through messengers after he decoded them; when he was working in the jungle he did not know the recipients, or who represented Angkar. However, Mr. Sophang said the telegrams usually mentioned “Pol.” “It was my understanding that ‘Pol’ was referred to as ‘Pol Pot,’ and he was the frequent recipient of telegrams,” Mr. Sophang said. The witness also testified that the occasional report or telegram would be sent to “Brother Nuon.”



*Pol Pot as he appeared during the period of Democratic Kampuchea.  
(Source: Documentation Center of Cambodia)*

When asked by Mr. Huot who could authorize who telegrams were sent to in the upper authority, Mr. Sophang said that prior to 1975 he did not know much about the procedure, but after the liberation of Phnom Penh – when he moved to the city – he learned that his unit chairman Ponn was vested with that authority. Mr. Sophang said he did not see to whom incoming reports were copied as it was usually not stated and was at Ponn’s discretion, but the “salutation line” mentioned “to Brother Pol” or “to Office 870.”

In response to Mr. Huot’s inquiries about the substance of directives, Mr. Sophang said the content could depend on the nature of reports from lower levels requesting decisions from the upper authority, to which the upper authority provided comments or instructions. Mr. Sophang said directives could detail political, economic, cultural, or social affairs, and the general situation nationwide. Mr. Huot inquired as to who gave opinions or directives on the economy, as an example. Mr. Sophang said most telegrams about the economy came from the committee of Office 870, whose telegrams normally covered the overall situation in the country, though leaders were responsible for different areas. Mr. Sophang testified:

As for economic affairs the person who was responsible at that time was, if I recall correctly, the person who was handling the materials to be distributed to the base level, and the person who was in charge at that time was Mr. Khieu Samphan. But as for cultural affairs - for example if there was [*sic*] any moral issues among people in society - I believe it was Nuon Chea who was the person in charge. So once again there were different portfolios for different people at that time. As for Pol Pot he was the person who oversaw ever sector and every field. He had the right to say anything concerning anyone.

When asked how he knew that distribution fell under Khieu Samphan, Mr. Sophang said it was not difficult to know Khieu Samphan because he was head of state and during official visits by foreign heads of state, Khieu Samphan would welcome or have an audience with delegates. “Normally before he distributed those materials to the local levels he sent the telegrams to my unit first so that I could relay it to the local authority as to how many items were to be distributed to any specific locality. So it had to go through my unit,” Mr. Sophang testified.

Mr. Hut inquired if Mr. Sophang recalled telegrams or directives on the capture of Phnom Penh. The witness replied that from late 1977 and early 1978 there were messages sent about Vietnamese troops moving closer to the border and he saw injured combatants transported for treatment in Phnom Penh due to the conflicts on the eastern border. Mr. Huot clarified that he was referring to the pre-1975 period and Mr. Sophang said that regarding a plan to liberate Phnom Penh from the Lon Nol regime, he received instructions concerning the arrangement of troops for attacking specific targets, for which the bases requested sufficient ammunition and weaponry. However, he did not recall seeing messages relating to the evacuation of people from Phnom Penh.

With Mr. Huot's questioning still on the pre-1975 period, Mr. Sophang said that at each base, zone, sector, and division unit there had to be a communication section and telegram unit. Mr. Sophang told Mr. Huot he did not recall receiving messages or telegrams from foreign countries.

### ***Prosecution Questions Witness on Relocation to Phnom Penh***

In response to queries from Mr. Huot about his relocation to the capital, Mr. Sophang said he came to Phnom Penh in late 1975 after the city was "prepared and organized" – under the orders of his team leader Ponn – and was located in an office at the Sotheiros School. "When I reached Phnom Penh I noted that the city was very quiet, it was empty of the population. It was not as populated as Phnom Penh these days," Mr. Sophang testified.

Mr. Sophang reported that he was a schoolteacher at the time, charged with training people from various provinces in reading, writing, and typing, understanding "Latin" letters and English, and, gradually, decoding secret telegrams. Mr. Sophang said he also decoded telegrams sent to him by Ponn.<sup>13</sup> Mr. Huot asked about the ages of the children he taught and why they were taught to decode telegrams. Mr. Sophang said the main motive for teaching children was to ensure that they acquired skills to serve the party in the future, as decoding telegrams and typing were important. Mr. Sophang said the children were mainly 12 years old and he did not know whether Angkar used them for military or civilian purposes because it was not his business. In response to further questioning from Mr. Huot, Mr. Sophang said there were only a few people who were capable in decoding telegrams, though about 40 children were trained at the time. Mr. Sophang said Ponn and The – heads of the telegram section and then the most senior people in the CPK telecommunications sector – supervised him and he never sent or typed the telegrams himself.

### ***Prosecution Returns to Examining Pre-1975 Period***

Continuing the prosecution's examination of the witness, International Senior Assistant Co-Prosecutor Tarik Abdulhak began his line of questioning by seeking to clarify points in Mr. Sophang's testimony thus far. Mr. Abdulhak asked Mr. Sophang which zones were reporting to the upper authority while he was working at B-20 prior to April 1975. Mr. Sophang said the special zones, East Zone, North Zone, Northeast Zone, Northwest Zone, West Zone, and Southwest Zone and three autonomous regions – Preah Vihear; Mondulkiri; and Siem Reap/Oddar Meanchey – sent telegrams to the upper authority. In relation to the armies, only Son Sen had direct communication with the leaders in the upper authority, Mr. Sophang said.

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<sup>13</sup> Mr. Huot's subsequent question referred to Mr. Sophang as "teaching children." The word "children" did not appear in the English translation of Mr. Sophang's response.

Mr. Abdulhak asked how Mr. Sophang identified telegrams coming from a specific zone in the pre-1975 period, using the East Zone as an example. Mr. Sophang explained that normally telegrams had secret code numbers, but also had letterheads – such as “NR” followed by a number, then “CK”<sup>14</sup> – with a date underneath. Mr. Sophang said there were also codes – “A-75” for the East Zone, for example – which were formulated by Ponn and Mr. Sophang, who assigned them for zones.

Mr. Sophang testified that the frequency of reports to the upper level prior to April 1975 depended on the situation in respective zones:

If there were contentious battles, then the telegrams were sent 24 hours around the clock, but for zones that were already liberated then the telegrams communication was less frequent. For example, the East Zone had to communicate very often; it had to operate 24 hours a day.

Mr. Sophang responded to Mr. Abdulhak that he could not recall how many incoming and outgoing telegrams he translated per day as it depended on circumstances, but at times he had to work all day and night to get them sent and outgoing telegrams were less frequent than incoming telegrams.

Mr. Abdulhak inquired when the witness’s unit split into two prior to April 1975, with one group staying at B-20 and another group – or Ponn – moving to the frontline west of Phnom Penh. Mr. Sophang said the division occurred in late 1974, and he only knew that Ponn was close to Pol Pot and accompanied Pol Pot wherever he went. In response to a query about communication from Ponn or Pol Pot from the location west of Phnom Penh, Mr. Sophang said that he received within 24 hours messages or instructions Pol Pot wanted to send. He also said he communicated with Ponn through secret coded telegrams. “If it was the information about the victory from the battlefield, then my section or unit at the rear would prepare the report of the victory and submit it to the broadcasting unit in order for public broadcast,” Mr. Sophang testified.



Mr. Abdulhak questioned Mr. Sophang about whether he received such information about the victory of April 17, 1975. Mr. Sophang said telegrams were classified into two categories: secret telegrams and open messages, with a message about victory communicated in a “public form” using Morse code. He explained that he only had to prepare the Khmer version of such a message and forward it to the broadcasting unit.

Mr. Abdulhak again asked if Mr. Sophang received that message and it was broadcast on April 17, or if it was after that date. Mr. Sophang said technology was slow and they did not broadcast a message immediately upon achieving victory:

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<sup>14</sup> It was unclear in the English translation what these letters referred to.

I remember that it was 9:30 when the victory was claimed, but actually the message ... reached my unit at about 10 or so, so I had to prepare written documents to submit to the broadcasting unit. So it was not in a very timely manner, and I was also blamed that I was belated in pronouncing the victory of the Democratic Kampuchea, so at that time there was some one- or two-hours' delay. To my recollection the public pronouncement on radio of the victory was made sometime around 11.

In response to another query from Mr. Abdulhak, Mr. Sophang said that he was referring to the announcement of the victory in Phnom Penh.

Citing Mr. Sophang's statement,<sup>15</sup> Mr. Abdulhak quoted the witness as saying that "Hang"<sup>16</sup> appointed him to work at B-17 in 1973. The prosecutor asked how he knew B-17 was associated with the "party central committee" at that time. Mr. Sophang said Hang told him he was being sent to the "center office" and when he arrived at B-17, after traveling on foot for a month, he was not sent anywhere else, and thus he assumed it was the party center office.

***Witness Describes Situation and Duties after Fall of Phnom Penh***

Mr. Abdulhak steered his examination to Mr. Sophang's teaching in Phnom Penh, asking if his pupils were returned to the bases after their training was complete. Mr. Sophang said some of the children were required by Angkar to work in bases where people skilled with telegrams were scarce; others not capable in decoding telegrams even after training learned to type and receive telegrams, and those who were "very weak" learned how to drive. Mr. Sophang said two children were sent to work in the Northeast Zone – one to Monduliri province and the other to Kratie province – but others he taught would be returned to their bases. In response to further questions from Mr. Abdulhak, Mr. Sophang said he provided training first in 1976 and then in mid-1977 to children from only some of the zones.

Mr. Abdulhak inquired whether the telegram transmission and translation offices were set up in Phnom Penh when he arrived in late 1975. Mr. Sophang recalled that the departments and telegram decoding sections were in place as Ponn and his group had arrived in the city before the witness did.

Citing Mr. Sophang's statement,<sup>17</sup> Mr. Abdulhak quoted an excerpt that stated Mr. Sophang's unit was under the supervision of Ponn and The, who also oversaw the radio communication and telegram transmission units at the former United States Embassy. In the statement, Mr. Sophang is quoted as saying that the two chaired the "telecommunications section" comprised of the radio communication unit at the former embassy and the telegram translation unit at K1 and Mr. Sophang's school. Mr. Abdulhak sought clarification on whether there were two telegram-

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<sup>15</sup> The "statements" appear to refer to Mr. Sophang's interviews with OCIJ investigators, though they were not directly named in court.

<sup>16</sup> In Mr. Sophang's testimony earlier in the day, he appeared to refer to the same person as "Hom."

<sup>17</sup> The passage quoted by Mr. Abdulhak was as follows: "My unit was under the supervision of Ponn and The. They both also supervised the radio communication and telegram-transmitting unit at the old American embassy. Ponn and The were the chairmen of the telecommunications section which composed of two units: one of which was the radio communication unit at the old American embassy and another was the telegram translation unit at K1, as well as my school."

decoding units. Mr. Sophang said there was a unit inside the school where he was in charge but supervised by Ponn and Ponn was in charge at K-1. Mr. Sophang said that Yuos was in charge of telegram work at the old U.S. embassy, while Ponn and The were in charge of his unit and of sending telegrams at the embassy. Mr. Abdulhak noted that Mr. Sophang's second statement identified Yuos as head of K-18 and queried whether the unit at the old U.S. embassy was called K-18. The witness confirmed the unit was called K-18 and said telegrams from all over the country would be received and transmitted at the former embassy. Yuos was also supervised by Ponn and The, he testified.

Mr. Sophang confirmed, in response to Mr. Abdulhak, that incoming telegrams would be received at K-18 before being decoded at K-1 or his school. Mr. Sophang said when zones or sectors, or commanders like Son Sen, wanted to send messages they would do so through K-18, where messengers would be assigned to deliver them to K-1 or any particular section, such as his own. Mr. Abdulhak asked who would determine whether an incoming telegram was sent to K-1 or the witness's school. Mr. Sophang said Ponn managed telegrams and would decide if, for instance, Mr. Sophang decoded telegrams or if Ponn had to receive them.

[Ponn] also had to tell Yuos that if it had to be sent to him, then the telegrams had to be sent to K-1. And if they were destined to be sent to me, then they send to Code 38 – 38 is my code – and Yuos had his own code, it would be 57. So 57 here refers to K-18, which was the place where telegrams would be transmitted and received.

Mr. Abdulhak asked if Ponn had a standing instruction as to which telegrams would be sent to K-1 and which to Mr. Sophang's school. Mr. Sophang said Ponn made decisions on telegrams "time and again". Giving an example, he said a telegram would be marked with "A-57" when it referred to the East, which was where the Vietnamese were invading and therefore an important location; therefore, that telegram had to be decoded at K-1, while telegrams to be sent to other areas where there were not serious conflicts were decoded by Mr. Sophang.

In response to an inquiry from Mr. Abdulhak, Mr. Sophang explained that once he decoded an incoming telegram into Khmer text, it would be typed, placed in an envelope, and sent to K-1 where Ponn would manage it from there. Mr. Abdulhak asked if there were telegrams addressed to other offices in Phnom Penh. Mr. Sophang testified that incoming telegrams were decoded into letters or text and sent to the leaders – not to various ministries or people in Phnom Penh – and when telegrams were sent to K-1 it suggested that Ponn would have them delivered.

Mr. Abdulhak read another excerpt from Mr. Sophang's statement relating to outgoing telegrams<sup>18</sup> and requested the witness confirm if outgoing messages were handwritten by Ponn and The and coded by K-1 translators or Mr. Sophang and his staff at the school. Mr. Sophang

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<sup>18</sup> The passage quoted by Mr. Abdulhak was as follows: "If the Committee 870 wanted to send a message out, Ponn and The would go in person to get it from them. They went to take note of the words of the Committee 870 and then took the handwriting message to the telegram translation group to have its text coded. After it was coded, the message was given to my personal messenger or the messenger at K-1 to take to the radio communication at the old American embassy. Yop [*spelling unclear in English translation*] who was in charge of the radio communication there would manage to get the message to be transmitted to its respective destination. ... The message that was sent out by the radio communication unit was in code numbers since its text had been coded by the translator group and the receiver unit would receive it in code numbers format."

confirmed the practice, testifying that when the central committee needed instructions sent to zones and sectors, Ponn would be summoned to take notes that he would then submit to respective units, such as K-1, for coding. Mr. Sophang said all communications had to be converted into secret coding, which was “complicated” and multi-layered. When asked for an estimate on how many incoming and outgoing telegrams his office handled per day, Mr. Sophang said that after Phnom Penh was liberated the workload reduced and they decoded an average of four to 10 incoming telegrams per day, but they only had to send out a small amount of brief telegrams, which mainly related to how Khieu Samphan wanted goods distributed to the bases. Khieu Samphan would send a telegram to Mr. Sophang’s unit about once every 10 days, so the other side could expect a certain amount of goods to be delivered, he testified.

Mr. Abdulhak referred to Mr. Sophang’s previous comment that in the pre-1975 period there were telegrams from zones and autonomous sectors and asked if the same was the case after 1975 when the witness was in Phnom Penh. Mr. Sophang said the organization of zones and sectors was the same, except that there was a telegram unit in the Phnom Penh special zone. In response to a question from Mr. Abdulhak, Mr. Sophang confirmed that communication via telegram continued until the date when the Vietnamese entered Phnom Penh.

Citing Mr. Sophang’s second statement,<sup>19</sup> Mr. Abdulhak queried whether zones were allocated specific times of day to transmit coded messages to K-18. Mr. Sophang said zones allocated times to contact each other through radio communication, which could happen once or twice a day. Mr. Abdulhak asked if telegrams were being described between zones or from a zone to K-18. Mr. Sophang said he was unsure about communication between zones, and only received messages sent from zones through his telegram unit. In response to questions about radio communication between K-18 and the zones, Mr. Sophang said such communication occurred in accordance with certain times and varied in frequency depending on the circumstances. However, he testified, if the circumstance justified it, the parties could communicate at any time of the day.

Mr. Abdulhak asked if designated zones or offices always received telegrams sent from K-18. Mr. Sophang said he could not be sure if the telegrams reached the targeted recipients or if the person supposed to forward the information did so.

At this point, President Nonn adjourned the proceedings, which are set to resume on Thursday, August 30, 2012, at 10.30 a.m. for a hearing on the fitness to stand trial of accused Ieng Thirith. President Nonn sought confirmation from the Ieng Sary defense on whether their client – as the husband of Ieng Thirith – would participate in the hearing. National Co-Lawyer for Ieng Sary Ang Udom said he would be present and Ieng Sary would participate from the holding cell. President Nonn informed defense teams for Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan that they did not need to be present.

President Nonn said testimony of Norng Sophang would continue on Monday, September 3, 2012, at 9 a.m. with further examination by the prosecution.

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<sup>19</sup> Mr. Abdulhak quoted the excerpt as follows: “In communicating with Committee 870, they had their own timing. For example, in one zone, one had to make contact at 7 a.m., 10 a.m., or 1 p.m., 1900 hours. This is an example of one zone; the other zones were all the same.”