



## **Leaked cable shows US sought China refuge for Pol Pot September 5, 2011**

Phnom Penh - A US State Department cable published by WikiLeaks showed that in 1989 Washington wanted China to take in a number of 'unacceptable' senior Khmer Rouge leaders, including Pol Pot, as part of efforts to end the conflict in Cambodia.

It followed the failure of international talks to bring peace 10 years after Pol Pot's government had been driven from power by a combined force of Vietnamese troops and Khmer Rouge defectors.

'The continued presence in Cambodia of senior Khmer Rouge leaders like Pol Pot, (foreign minister) Ieng Sary and (military commander) Ta Mok is particularly troublesome,' the cable stated in a section of talking points for embassy staff to take up with China.

'It would be helpful to efforts to find a solution to this conflict if your government would strongly encourage these unacceptable Khmer Rouge leaders to relocate to China,' it said, adding that Beijing should also cut military aid to the Khmer Rouge.

The September 1989 cable came from the office of then deputy secretary of state Lawrence Eagleburger.

After losing power in 1979, the Khmer Rouge had withdrawn to western Cambodia along the Thai border, where it fought for years against the Vietnamese-installed government in Phnom Penh.

Between 1.7 million and 2.2 million people had already died during the movement's 1975-79 rule in its pursuit of an ultra-Maoist society.

Throughout the 1980s, the Khmer Rouge were supported by China, Thailand and Western nations including the United States. The Soviet Union helped the government in Phnom Penh.

But by the close of that decade the international changes sparked by the end of the Cold War saw a concerted effort to bring peace.

The request that China take in the 'unacceptable Khmer Rouge leaders' was not taken up, despite Beijing's decades-long ties with the movement. Pol Pot died in 1998 on the Thai-Cambodian border after being ousted as Khmer Rouge leader by Ta Mok.

Ta Mok was later arrested by the Cambodian government and died in custody in 2006.

The third leader mentioned in the cable, Ieng Sary, is due to stand trial at the UN-backed war crimes tribunal next year along with three other surviving leaders of the movement, including Nuon Chea, who was Pol Pot's deputy.