



**AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY
PHNOM PENH**

MEDIA RELEASE

**AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY LAUNCHES PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITION
TO MARK 20 YEARS SINCE UNTAC AND THE 1993 ELECTION**

To mark the 20th anniversary of the 1993 election for the Constituent Assembly, the Australian Embassy presents *UNTAC 20 Years On: The Australian Perspective*, an exhibition of photographs taken during the period of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) from February 1992 until September 1993.

UNTAC 20 Years On: The Australian Perspective will be displayed upstairs at Meta House and opens with a public reception at 18:00 on 23 May. It will close on 14 June. It features the work of Australian photographers, including Heide Smith, Tim Page and George Gittoes.

Through UNTAC, the international community worked together with the Cambodian people to build on the success of the Paris Peace Accords and to keep Cambodia on the road to peace. The photographs in this exhibition show different aspects of UNTAC's mission, including training of Cambodian personnel, escorting returning Cambodian refugees from the Thai border, and supervising Cambodians lining up to vote in a democratic election, many for the first time in their lives.

Over 40 countries contributed military, police or civilian personnel to UNTAC, which had a mandate to help bring peace and stability to Cambodia by monitoring the cease-fire and cessation of external military assistance, organising and conducting the election for a Constituent Assembly, and working with the different Cambodian factions to administer Cambodia until the election. While UNTAC did not achieve all of its aims, the election on 23-28 May 1993 was a landmark event after more than 25 years of civil conflict. Ninety-six per cent of eligible voters were registered to vote, and of those, ninety per cent turned out to vote on election day.

Australia was heavily involved in UNTAC, contributing Australian Defence Force personnel, Australian Federal Police, staff from the Australian Electoral Commission, and human rights workers. The head of UNTAC's military component was Australian Lieutenant General John Sanderson and around 1,215 Australian Defence Force personnel served in Cambodia during this period. Australia's contribution to UNTAC built on Australia's leading role in the peace process and is an example of Australia's long-term commitment to Cambodia's development. This continues today in the form of Australia's development cooperation program, ongoing cooperation in law enforcement, defence and security, and our high level government to government dialogue and cooperation in regional forums.

Journalists are invited to attend the launch of *UNTAC 20 Years On: The Australian Perspective*.

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