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EU-Assistance on curbing Small Arms and light weapons in Cambodia

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EU-ASAC

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Final Report on the Improved Weapons Record Keeping and Safe Storage Project in Military Region 4.



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Office: Golden Gate Hotel: Room: 001-006, #9 Road 278, Sangkat B.K.K.1, Khan Chamkarmon, Phnom Penh

Tel/Fax: (023) 214 805, Mobile phone Project Manager: 012 921 425,

E-mail: eu.smallarms@online.com.kh Website: www.eu-asac.org

សណ្ឋាគារហ្គេតហ្គេត:បន្ទប់លេខ:០០១-០០៦ .ផ្ទះលេខ.៩.ផ្លូវលេខ.២៧៨.សង្កាត់បឹងកេងកង១.ខណ្ឌចំការមន.ភ្នំពេញ

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Improved Weapons Record Keeping and Safe Storage Project in Military Region 4.

Implementing Agency:	EU ASAC in co-operation with the Ministry of National Defence (Department General of Materials and Technical), the High Command (Department of Logistics), the Army's HQ (4 th Office), and the HQ of Military Region 4 in Siem Reap.
Funded by:	The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
Project:	Improved Weapons Record Keeping and Safe Storage in Military Region 4 (Siem Reap).

I. Summary

Since 2000, EU ASAC has been assisting the Royal Government of Cambodia in implementing a comprehensive weapons management programme. "Improved Weapons Record Keeping and Safe Storage" is one of the components of this programme.

Since 2001, EU ASAC has been implementing a nationwide project aimed at registering all the small arms and the improving weapons storage within the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (RCAF¹). The final goal is to get the complete registration of weapons in the six existing Military Regions, the Navy, the Air Force and the Royal Gendarmerie. By the end of this project, the RCAF will have an exact knowledge of the number of weapons under its responsibility, and can strictly control the movements of weapons among the soldiers.

Some officers or soldiers have been serving the RCAF for many years. They get a special "social status" from this. Carrying a weapon often gave to the less intelligent people the impression of invincibility. In the recent past, this was also providing them an essential source of income².

These forces went through 20 years of war during which the main concern was how to "survive". Since 1998, Cambodia has been living in peace. The security in the country is improving year by year, and the Cambodian Armed Forces must leave the Culture of War behind them and move towards a Culture of Peace. This applies to equipment, construction and training.

EU ASAC has designed an Improved Weapons Record Keeping and Safe Storage project consisting of three components:

- Improvement of stockpiling;
- Registration system;
- Training of personnel.

¹ RCAF= Royal Cambodian Armed Forces.

² The monthly salary for a soldier is around 70,000 Riel, approx. US\$ 18.



II. Objectives

The Improved Weapons Record Keeping and Safe Storage Project started in 2001 with the implementation of a Pilot Project in Military Region 2. The positive results of the pilot project led to the European Union extending this activity in 2002 with a similar project in Military Region 5. After the 2003/2004 Project in Military Region 4, EU ASAC is continuing the project in Military Region 1.

Based on the existing hierarchic chain as the Ministry of National Defence, the High Command, the Army, and the six Military regions, year by year, EU ASAC is strengthening the logistical chain and the control of small arms in the RCAF.

After the six Military Regions, EU ASAC plans to concentrate its efforts on the remaining forces as the Navy, the Air Force and the Royal Gendarmerie.

If two projects can be implemented every year, the complete registration of weapons in Cambodia could be completed in 2006.

The Military Region 4 (MR4) Project was designed with additional options, in comparison with the other projects: it not only included all units subordinated to the MR4 Commander, but also Intervention Division 2 (High Command) and Brigade 12 (Army). After a pilot project on Registration and Safe Storage for the National Police was conducted in 2003, it was also decided to equip each unit with racks in order to store weapons under short term storage conditions (according to the Note 277 from the High Command each Unit must keep a certain percentage of its weapons for daily security).

When the Improved Weapons Record Keeping and Safe Storage Project has been completed, all small arms under the control of the Ministry of National Defence will have been registered in a centralised computer database and safely stored under internationally acceptable conditions. This will greatly improve the security in Cambodia and severely limit the dangers posed by military small arms to Cambodian society.



III. Preparation of the Safe Storage Project in MR4.

The Project required the design of a project-planning calendar lasting six months duration. However, before this, field visits were required in order to evaluate the needs in the area of the Military Region 4.

The Military Region 4, like all regions, is subordinated to the Army Headquarters in Phnom Penh. The responsibility of the Military Region 4 covers the four Sub Military Division of Siem Reap, Oddor Meanchey, Preah Vihear and Kampong Thom. The HQ of MR4 is located near Siem Reap town.

On the territory of MR4, all units are subordinated to the HQ in Siem Reap, except two:

- The Intervention Division 2 in Banteay Srey district (Siem Reap province) is directly subordinated to the High Command in Phnom Penh,
- The Brigade 12 in Tbeng Meanchey district (Preah Vihear province) is directly subordinated to the Army Headquarters in Phnom Penh.

The field visits in the Military Region 4 required the permission of the Ministry of National Defence. For the first visit to MR4 Headquarters on 12 May 2003, Lieutenant-General CHEA Saran (Army Deputy Commander) joined the project team composed with Brigadier-General SON Kim Sorn and Mr. Alain PERIGAUD. Major-General CHEA Mon (Commanding MR4) and Major-General HOUY Sopheap (Commanding Intervention Division 2), Colonel SOM Bopha Roth (Deputy Commander of Brigade 12), several generals and officers from MR4 Staff attended this meeting. The presence of Deputy Commander of the Army boosted the importance of the meeting. During the meeting, Brigadier-General SON Kim Sorn and Mr. Alain PERIGAUD made a presentation of the project. This key meeting concluded with the appointment of an MR4 liaison team consisting of Brigadier-General KEO Thy (Deputy MR4 Commander) and two colonels from MR4 Staff. This team facilitated and accompanied the ensuing visits of the EU ASAC team.

A. Visits in the provinces of Siem Reap and Oddor Meanchey.

From 12 to 14 May, the joint team visited several units within the two provinces of Siem Reap and Oddor Meanchay. The administrative level attached to the province is the Sub Military Division, or Sub Military Zone commanded by a colonel.

- **Siem Reap province:**

Siem Reap is the most western province within MR4 Military Region, along the Tonlé Sap lake. Some companies and battalions were visited in the immediate area of Siem Reap town. All the existing depots were wooden houses where the weapons were installed (sometimes quite well), but without any registration, and insufficiently secured. The depot of Phnom Krom (near the lake) was also visited. Two big buildings contained all together weapons in good condition, repairable weapons, weapons to be destroyed, explosives and ammunition. Apart from visiting the existing depot, the team was invited to visit the future location of MR4 HQ about eight kilometres from the city. The construction of around twenty buildings was about to start soon. The positioning of the future depot of MR4 was decided during the visit.



The Intervention Division 2 of Banteay Srey was also visited. This Division is a unique unit in Cambodia because of its size (4,000 staff). Major-General HOUY Sopheap commands this unit subordinated to the Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces in Phnom Penh, General KE Kim Yan. This unit is located one hour's drive from Siem Reap on a large tract of land. On this land, the High Command planned to build several buildings. The Commander showed the planned location for the construction of the future building. EU ASAC decided to build a weapons storage depot in Division 2.

- **Oddor Meanchey province:**

Along the Thai border, this province is in the North East of MR4. Many communes such as Anlong Veng and Osmach are populated by former Khmer Rouge. After 1998 all these units were reintegrated into the regular forces. In general, these units (like the Brigade in Anlong Veng) are professional and relatively well organised forces.

B. Visits in the provinces of Preah Vihear and Kampong Thom.

These two provinces were visited during the first half of June 2003.

- **Preah Vihear province:**

In this province, more than 3,000 weapons to be destroyed were observed during the visit of the existing depots in the Sub Military Division. These weapons were destroyed by EU ASAC (under another budget line) on 11 December 2003.

Close to the capital of Preah Vihear province, Brigade 12 is located in Tbeng Mancheay district. Brigadier General SREY Dek commands this Brigade (around 2,000 men). Composed of four Battalions, this Brigade is subordinated to the Army Headquarters. All weapons were distributed to the units because no storage depot existed. The Deputy Commander raised the question of the very bad reputation of the Brigade in the area. Some soldiers were accused of robbery and various criminal actions using their duty weapons. The installation of lockable racks in each unit could be an appropriate measure. It was decided to build a small warehouse for Brigade 12.

- **Kampong Thom province:**

The visit of the Sub Military Division showed an important number of weapons to be stored. EU ASAC decided that one small warehouse would be built on the land of the Sub Military division. Many weapons (stored under very poor conditions) were observed during the visit. The EU ASAC project officer suggested destroying most of them (5,000). (In the concept of Safe Storage, only weapons in good condition can be stored.)



IV. Implementation

A. Improvement of the stockpiling.

Weapons storage falls into three categories:

- A relatively small number of weapons remaining in each unit (duty weapons) stored on a **short-term** basis. These weapons are stored on lockable racks;
- The rest of the weapons in the military region are stored under **medium-term** conditions in specially constructed depots.
- At a national level, reserve weapons are stored on a **long-term** basis in the existing main national depots. (EU ASAC has already renovated eight of these depots in 2002.)

- **The racks:**

There are three models of racks (6, 12 and 24 weapons). On each rack, weapons are locked vertically with cable and padlocks. A small cabinet can contain the magazines with ammunition. The model of rack is selected in order to match to the size of the unit and the notes of top levels précising the percentage of weapons to be left in the units.

The racks were installed as follows:

- In Siem Reap province, 95 sets for 6 weapons, 94 sets for 12 weapons, and 98 sets for 24 weapons.
- In Oddor Meanchey province, 50 sets for 6 weapons, 74 sets for 12 weapons, and 81 sets for 24 weapons.
- In Kampong Thom province, 11 sets for 6 weapons, 13 sets for 12 weapons, and 23 sets for 24 weapons.
- In Preah Vihear province, 47 sets for 6 weapons, 53 sets for 12 weapons, and 32 sets for 24 weapons.

- **The buildings:**

The size of the building depends on the number of weapons to be stored. The warehouse is built with reinforced cement according a simple design. All weapons are stored horizontally on lockable racks inside the building.

During this Project four new buildings were constructed:

- In MR4 HQ, one large building (24m x 8m) with a capacity of storing 4,200 weapons. Surrounded with a fence, this building is composed of a warehouse, an office and a guardhouse. It is equipped with a generator.
- In Intervention Division 2 one medium building (16m x 8m) with a capacity of storing 3,024 weapons was built. Also surrounded with a fence, it is composed of a warehouse and a guardhouse. It is equipped with a generator.



- In Brigade 12, one small building (8m x 8m) with a capacity of storing 1,092 weapons was constructed. It is composed of a warehouse and a guardhouse. It is equipped with a generator.
- In Kampong Thom Sub Military Division a similar small building was constructed, equipped with a generator.

The total direct cost of the improvement of storage facilities is approximately US\$ 185,000.

At the completion of this project, the improvement of storage in Military Region 4 is:

On racks = 1,896 weapons

In buildings = 9,772 weapons

Total = 11,668 weapons.

B. Registration systems

Photocopiers and computer sets constitute the indispensable equipment for a better registration of weapons.

A network was created by EU ASAC during the Pilot Project in 2001. Each of the three levels of command (Ministry, High Command, and Army) was equipped with two sets of computers and one copier each. Each Military Region is also equipped with two sets of computers and one copier.

Central to the registration system is a special database for the registration of weapons. Developed in 2001 by a private Cambodian firm, this software was upgraded in 2003 on the model developed by the same company for the National Police.

During the project, the registration information collected during the manual registration of weapons is loaded into the software by the computer teams. The result of this registration is backed up on zip drives, and transmitted to the three top levels, i.e. the Military Region, the Army HQ and the Military High Command.

Military Region 4 received two computers and printers and one copier; Division 2 and Brigade 12 each received one computer, one printer and one copier.

The total cost of this equipment is approximately US\$ 10,000.

Maintenance of this equipment falls under the budget. EU ASAC signed an annual maintenance contract with a private company to ensure the consistency of the Project.



C. Training of personnel

Training of personnel is an essential part of this project. Due to of the restricted budget of the Ministry of National Defence, EU ASAC is providing the Royal Armed the unique opportunity to train their staff on the management of small arms. All trainers are from the Ministry, from the High Command or from the Army HQ.

Four different sessions were organised by the Ministry itself and/or Military Region 4.

1. In the Royal Military Institute of Phnom Penh, the High Level training course was organised. 24 high ranking officers from the Ministry, the High Command, the Army, MR 2, MR5, MR 4, Division 2 and Brigade 12 attended a 10 day session.
2. In a private firm in Phnom Penh, 24 staff from computer teams from the Ministry, the High Command, the Army, MR2, MR 5 and MR 4 also attended a 10 day session and were trained on the special database software.
3. In Military Region 4 100 Unit Commanders from MR 4, Division 2 and Brigade 12 were briefed about the Project at a three day training session.
4. In addition, 100 logistical officers from MR 4, Division 2 and Brigade 12 attended a 10 day session on the management of small arms, and a five day session on manual registration.

248 staff participated into these sessions at a total cost of more than US\$ 27,000.

D. Monitoring

Two people compose the Project team: on behalf of the Ministry of National Defence Brigadier General SON Kim Sorn (Director of the Military Equipment) is the counterpart of the EU ASAC Project Officer, Mr. Alain PERIGAUD (Lieutenant Colonel retired from the French Army).

The budget, the preparation, the planning and monitoring of the project was under the responsibility of the EU ASAC Project Officer. The responsible officer from the Ministry of National Defence was in charge of getting contacts and permissions at the highest levels, as well as the organisation of visits, training sessions and registration of weapons. The Project team visited the Project (construction and training sessions) at least once a month.



CALENDAR of MR4 PROJECT

May to June 2003:

The Project team organised a survey in the four provinces under the responsibility of the Commander of Military Region 4. During this survey, the situation was evaluated regarding the possible number of weapons to be stored, and the possible number of weapons to be destroyed. The size and the number of warehouses were decided upon this survey. In order to confirm the different decisions, this survey was completed by a survey by the architect. The architect, in co-operation with the Project Officer, prepared the documents concerning the bid submission for buildings and racks.

June to August 2003:

The details of the Project were prepared by the Project Officer and submitted to the Ministry of National Defence. The units visited during the survey were tasked to provide complete information regarding the racks (quantity, sample, location). The agreement between EU ASAC and the Ministry of Defence was prepared by the Project team and submitted to the Ministry for approval.

29 August 2003:

The agreement between EU ASAC and the Ministry of National Defence was signed by Mr. David de Beer, EU ASAC Programme Manager, and Lieutenant General CHAY Saing Yun, Secretary of State in the Ministry of Defence.

12 September 2003:

Distribution of the bid documents for racks (four companies were consulted) and for buildings, (six companies were consulted). These documents were prepared according to the rules governing European Union tender procedures.

30 September 2003:

The opening of the bids in the EU ASAC office, and the study of the documents provided by the contractors.

October 2003:

The contractors were selected: one contractor to be in charge of the two provinces of Siem Reap and Oddor Meanchey and one contractor to be in charge of the two provinces of Kampong Thom and Preah Vihear.

1 to 10 October: the High Level course and the Computer course were organised in Phnom Penh.

Mid October: the construction of buildings started in the four locations of MR4 Siem Reap, Division 2 Beanteay Srey, Brigade 12 Tbeng Meanchey and Subdivision Kampong Thom.

27 to 29 October: organisation in Siem Reap MR4 of a 3 day session for 100 Unit Commanders in MR4 area.



November 2003:

Consultation of six companies for the purchase of computers and copiers.

Continuation of construction of buildings and fabrication of racks.

17 to 26 November: organisation of a 10 day training course on the management of small arms for 100 logistical officers in MR4 Siem Reap. This included five days dedicated to learning how to manually register weapons. The computer and copier sets were handed over to the three Commanders of MR4, Division 2 and Brigade 12.

December 2003:

Continuation of construction of buildings and fabrication of racks. The manual registration of weapons was implemented in each unit.

January 2004:

Completion of construction of buildings and fabrication of racks. The buildings were handed over on 14 and 15 January 2004 in Brigade 12 Tbeng Meanchey and Sub Military Division of Kampong Thom.

The manual registration of weapons under process in each unit. The results were transmitted to MR4 computer team and were loaded into the software.

Installation of weapons in the new warehouses.

February 2004:

The buildings of MR4 Siem Reap and Division 2 Beanteay Srey were handed over on 10 and 11 February 2004.

Continuation of the registration of weapons into the software,

Preparation of the end of Project (organisation of official ceremonies in Siem Reap, Beanteay Srey, Tbeng Meanchey and Kampong Thom).

Installation of weapons in the new warehouses.

March 2004:

Continuation of the registration of weapons into the software, the Ministry sent two additional staff to speed up the process in MR4.

Installation of weapons in the new warehouses.

30 March: Official Handover Ceremony of Siem Reap Depot at Military Region 4 Headquarters to Ministry of National Defence;

31 March: Official Handover Ceremony of Banteay Srey Depot at Division 2 Headquarters to Ministry of National Defence.

April 2004:

28 April: Official Handover Ceremony of Preah Vihear Depot at Brigade 12 Headquarters to Ministry of National Defence;

29 April: Official Handover Ceremony of Kampong Thom Depot at Sub-Military Region Kampong Thom Headquarters to Ministry of National Defence.



V. GOAL of the PROJECT

To increase stability and establish a secure environment in Cambodia the Ministry of National Defence, assisted by EU ASAC, is setting up a complete and coherent weapons registration and safe storage system for the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces. It is planned to have all military weapons in the six Military Regions in Cambodia, plus those of the Navy, the Air Force and the Royal Gendarmerie entered into one centralized database by 2006 at the latest, with all weapons being securely stored in weapons depots built to internationally acceptable standards.

Step by step, the Ministry of National Defence is converting the structure of the Armed Forces to peace time needs.

In Military Region 2, Military Region 5 and Military Region 4 all weapons not immediately needed for security are now registered and stored according to internationally acceptable standards. After three military Registration and Safe Storage projects tens of thousands of weapons have been secured and registered. A new culture of peace is being born in Cambodia. This can lead the country towards better development.

With the completion of the project in MR4, the High Command of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces has registration details of 50% of its smallarms. This is a big step forward, but it is important for the rest of the work to be completed. A project in Military Region 1 was started in February 2004 and it is planned that Military Region 3 (covering six provinces in the South of Cambodia) will be implemented by the end of 2004.

The Ministry of National Defence has asked that in 2005 the Special Military Region of Phnom Penh, composed of many Brigades subordinated to the High Command, be implemented in a six months project (€300,000). It is also requested that a project for the Royal Gendarmerie, covering all 24 provinces, be implemented by the end of 2005 (€500,000). In 2006 the Air Force and the Navy could also be implemented (€300,000). EU ASAC is still to negotiate funding for 2005/6.

The budget planned for a fact-finding mission of high ranking Cambodian officer to Europe was not used during the project. Given the tight planning schedule, it was unfortunately not possible to utilise this budget line. It is hoped that a similar visit will be made by the end of 2004.



VI. LESSONS LEARNED

- In order to prepare properly the project, a complete field visit is necessary.
- The normal duration of a Project is six months. If the process of construction is well under control (3 to 4 months), other activities under the direct responsibility of the Cambodian authorities are sometimes delayed.
- There are several reasons for these delays. The main reason is the lack of knowledge, limited organisational capacity and inexperience of working under pressure.
- The responsible Cambodian authorities have some difficulties in determining priorities and objectives and in implementing them.
- EU ASAC Project Officer must be very strict in respect of following the planning schedules.
- The organisation of training sessions remains under the responsibility of the Ministry of National Defence, in co-operation with the Commander of the Military Region,
- For training sessions to be successful, the budget must include 100% of the expenses like transportation costs, printing documents, food and drink for trainees, electricity, accommodation, *per diem* for trainers etc...
- The monitoring of the project requires two local field experts during a six month period in the Military Region.
- A strict control of the expenses must be maintained by the Project Officer.
- The construction of buildings is entirely controlled by EU ASAC with the assistance of an architect. Any interference from the Ministry of National Defence would be unacceptable. The tender procedures for the construction of the buildings follow the rules of the European Commission,
- The architect is an indispensable collaborator of the Project Officer. He is contracted to confirm the survey of the project team, to prepare and monitor the bid process and to supervise and certify the work in progress,
- After the planned six-month implementation period, the registration of weapons into the database is often not fully completed, taking a few weeks longer than originally projected.



1- Field visit in MR4.



2- Field visit in MR4.



3- Warehouse in MR4 before the project.



4- Warehouse in MR4 before the project.



5- Weapons stored in MR4 before the project.



6- Weapons stored in MR4 before the project.



7- Weapons stored in MR4 before the project.



8- Weapons stored in MR4 before the project.



9- Bid opening meeting for construction.



10- Fabrication of shelves for buildings



11- Fabrication of racks.



12- Construction of buildings.



13- Construction of buildings.



14- Construction of buildings.



15- Computer training session.



16- Logistical training session.



17- Unit Commanders information days.



18- Hardware for registration system.



19- Handover of equipment to MR4 Commander.



20- Handover of equipment to Div2 Commander



21- Handover of equipment to B12 Commander.



22- Major General Chea Mon MR4 Commander between Alain Perigaud and David de Beer EU ASAC.



23- Construction of buildings.



24- Fabrication of shelves for buildings.



25- Technical handover of building.



26- Technical handover of building.



27- Building in Siem Reap MR4.



28- Building in Brigade 12.



29- Building in Division 2.



30- Building in Sub Kampong Thom.



31- Racks for short term stored weapons.



32- Racks for short term stored weapons.



33- Official handover ceremonies.



34- David de Beer, the Minister of National Defence, and some diplomats.



35- Representative of the High Commander.



36- David de Beer and the Army Commander.



37- Weapons stored and locked in depot.



38- Weapons stored and locked in depot.



39- Weapons stored and locked in depot.



40- Weapons stored and locked in depot.



41- Weapons stored and locked in depot.



**42- Lt General Mea Sophea
Commander of the Army.**