Soldiers and civil power: supporting or substituting civil authorities in peace operation during the 1990s

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Soldiers and Policemen in Banteay Meancheay

The maxim goes that few plans ever survive the first shot fired on the battlefield. Ascribed to the nineteenth century General Helmut Von Moltke, who led the Prussian armies to victory over Austria and France in the nineteenth century, the same appears to be true for the murky area between war and peace. The military plan in Cambodia got bogged down almost as soon as UNTAC crossed the starting line. Its leaders therefore had to either abandon the mission or improvise and change the mission drastically, but this decision was postponed for several months. This left UNTAC’s military to muddle through from August 1992 onwards, while hoping the Khmer Rouge would join the peace process after all. Parallel to the limited cantonment activities some of the peacekeepers had become involved in civic action, but when it came to “winning the hearts and minds” of the people, no amount of humanitarianism by the soldiers would compensate for the lack of security that persisted for many Cambodians as a result of the surge in banditry and political violence. UNTAC’s official approach to ending the violence in Cambodia was twofold. Violence resulting from military conflict was a matter for the military component to monitor and negotiate. Criminal violence was a matter for the UN Civilian Police (CivPol) under the Agreement. This model, based on the rigid distinction between “military security” and “public security”, did not match reality in Cambodia and certainly not in Banteay Meancheay province where the Dutch Marines went far in improvising ways to establish a secure environment.

Peacekeepers and Police Monitors
One of the most obvious problems related to the gap between police and military peacekeeping operations proved to be that in areas ravaged by civil wars the local police were often hard to distinguish from military forces. The strict segregation of the two trades, occupations, firmly established in western democratic societies in the twentieth century, was not as clearly defined as the drafters of the accords had envisioned. Although CivPol was tasked to monitor all four factions’ police forces, the only distinguishable police apparatus was that of the State of Cambodia. The UN estimated SOC police at 47,000 in number, but this was a largely untrained and poorly equipped force that lacked standardised procedures and a functioning criminal code. Moreover, the police were seriously underpaid, if paid at all. It was not until October 1992 that a law was passed prohibiting soldiers from arresting civilians. Although this represented a major change in the official powers of the Cambodian military, it was unlikely to have much influence over their behaviour.¹ The Khmer Rouge’s police
force had been estimated at nine thousand, but neither CivPol nor the UNTAC military were able to distinguish them from regular Khmer Rouge fighters. The other two factions’ police forces were negligible in size. The Khmer Rouge’s unwillingness to disarm had also been linked to police matters, a causal connection related to its obstinacy and the failure to dismantle the SOC administrative structures. With the SOC police intact and still under party control, the Khmer Rouge could not allow itself to be disarmed by UNTAC without making themselves vulnerable. “With the armed forces of the Parties cantoned, disarmed and largely demobilised as the Agreements required”, Sanderson concluded in retrospect, “the relative power of the police would have been markedly increased.”

In the course of the 1990s, monitoring and reform of local police became an ever more prominent element of peace operations. At the end of the Cold War Namibia had been the testing ground for the use of a large force of UN civilian police monitors in a peace building operation in the wake of intra-state conflict. In a rather benign environment with overall continued cooperation of the parties involved, it proved a relatively effective tool to control the factions’ police forces, which tended to play a large role in civil wars. With 3,600 police officers, UNTAC’s civil police component was the largest ever assembled by the UN. The force, led by the Dutch Namibia veteran Brigadier Klaas Roos, was charged with ensuring that law and order among the civilian population was maintained “effectively and impartially and that human rights and fundamental freedoms were fully protected.” Although the executive responsibility for public security in Cambodia would continue to rest with the factions’ police forces, these were envisaged to operate under UNTAC supervision during the transitional period. Like the UN mission as a whole, the responsibility given to the CivPol component was extremely ambitious.

The authority and means given to CivPol did not match its responsibilities. Conventional policing powers are reporting incidents, investigating violations, searching premises, seizing evidence and the arrest and detention of suspects. CivPol initially only had the first of these powers in order to control and help transform a police force that rather than providing protection to civilian population, served to terrify inhabitants through intimidation and torture. This proved far more complex than had been anticipated, even after the Namibian experience. For a large part, the Cambodian government police were not community police, but a politicized force designed to protect the interests of a one-party state. The peace agreements had not specified any control measures, which proved to be a major omission. While the scope of UNTAC’s activities was enormous, a number of missions was not included in the mandate that would have given it more of an “institution building” character. There was, for example, no provision for restructuring local police organisations or vetting personnel, and no program specifically focused on judicial reform. The UN police had no law enforcement responsibilities, was unarmed and was obliged to work with the existing police officers. The police monitors had no method to follow through on their investigations into human rights abuses. They could transfer a case to the local police that was unlikely to do anything. In the likely event that the police themselves were involved in hu-
man rights abuses the only method of ensuring compliance was to have UNTAC apply political pressure in response to CivPol investigations.

The overall poor quality of the police force and its slow deployment seriously hampered the UN’s ability to control the Cambodian police forces. While it had taken UNTAC’s military contingent about five months to deploy, the CivPol component was not fully fielded until November 1992. By then, the planned eighteen-month mission was half way to completion and the police force lost credibility from which it never satisfactorily recovered.\(^7\) The problematic recruitment of international police personnel by the UN was one of the causes for its partial malfunctioning. During the hasty process the UN had not exactly been choosy. What Cambodia required, according to UNTAC special prosecutor Marc Plunkett, was trained investigators “who understood the apprehension of offenders, the collection of evidence and the preparation of prosecutions, and personnel who were experienced in community policing.”\(^8\) Many of the CivPol were not police at all but border guards, security guards, anti-terrorist forces, paramilitary police and even civilian clerical staff redesignated as police, many of whom were not at all suited to the task and set very bad examples for the Khmers. A large number of police personnel were hardly able to drive a car while others did not speak an international language, which seriously limited interaction in the field, especially radio communications. The problems often originated in the contributing countries. Of the fourteen nations that sent over one hundred police monitors thirteen were developing countries. Many of these had police forces that suffered from problems similar to that of the Cambodian police: lack of discipline, corruption and human rights abuses.\(^9\) On the other
hand, some police officers were of a very high standard and initiated valuable police training programs, as well as intervening at great personal risk to prevent violence and to bring offenders to justice.

While a minority of the military forces was ill disciplined, most notably the first Bulgarian battalion, it was the CivPol branch that gave UNTAC its worst public relations problems. After several months, the mission was losing popular support, most of all in the capital where ten percent of the population lived. An internal UN report based on fifty interviews with the urban population concluded in October that the Cambodians had started blaming UNTAC for many wrongs, such as corruption, unsafe streets and the rapid rise in traffic accidents. In the meantime there were hardly any civic action programs initiated in and around the capital like those improvised by some battalions in the countryside. In Phnom Penh, but even more so in the rural areas, the rapid rise of crime and overall lack of security seriously undermined the people's trust in UNTAC as a whole.

Apart from destruction and harm resulting from sporadic military confrontations between the two remaining military forces, the Cambodian population faced many types of threats related to public security. The most common problems were theft, robbery, extortion, kidnapping, assault and murder, commonly categorised as "banditry." These problems were closely entwined with illegal taxation, a common practise mostly ascribed to serving CPAF military as well as demobilised soldiers from the other three factions. The population did not often mention the Khmer Rouge in connection with banditry in the Dutch sector, although this proved hard to monitor. Overall, Khmer Rouge troops were better paid and not located close to the population centres. Another threat to law and order was political violence and intimidation, which rose sharply during the voter registration process in late 1992 and continued during the electoral process in the following year. This type of violence was ascribed to both SOC forces and the Khmer Rouge. Finally, there was a wave of serious ethnic violence directed at the Vietnamese minority by the Khmer Rouge in 1993 in the run up to the elections.

Government soldiers were responsible for a large portion of the illegal taxes raised throughout the countryside. These were either army units ordered to tax and extort by their superior officers, or renegade elements both in and out of uniform. As far a the first group was concerned, Sanderson wrote to Akashi in March 1993, "[t]he root cause of the problem is that there is a war going on out there and SOC cannot afford to maintain the military force to fight it. The local commanders are left to their own devices. They have to hold the force together without pay and continue to hold the NADK at bay. It is remarkable that some of them do as well as they do and it is not surprising that some of them resort to extortion and other illegal activities." The second group resulted from the partial and poorly prepared demobilisation process. As described in the previous chapter, a substantial part of the now unemployed troops formed local criminal gangs and started roaming the countryside. In the Dutch sector the surge in extortion and violence that plagued the Cambodians as well as the
UN mission was largely ascribed to this group, which was joined by deserters and common criminals.14

Some of the factors contributing to the upsurge in serious crime were related to UNTAC’s presence and even connected to some of its limited successes in 1992. Not only was banditry stimulated by the demobilisation process as thousands of ill-disciplined veterans were released into society. Local criminals also took advantage of the absence of state power caused by UNTAC’s presence. Government officials and local police complained that they were unable to take more forceful measures due to the requirements imposed by UNTAC to respect human rights. Still another contributing factor to the rise in crime was the sudden sharp rise in Cambodia’s population as a result of the successful repatriation of over 300,000 refugees under UNHCR control. Amongst those returning from the Thai border camps were both criminals as well as those who were easy prey for thieves.15 On the local level, the presence of Dutch military posts and the resulting relative security attracted people and trade. In Phum Nimit, in a matter of months an entire new community grew up around the encampment of Charlie Company. A small, but flourishing market and video parlour operating nearby attracted more criminal activity.

**Banditry**

Crime struck particularly hard in the northwestern part of Cambodia, where the Dutch were stationed. While the number of reported armed robberies had been relatively low in early 1992, their number in Banteay Meanchey rose more sharply than elsewhere in Cambodia.16 This seemed to mirror the demobilisation process in this part of the country that had been more successful than elsewhere in Cambodia. Banteay Meanchey was the only province where all four parties had a military presence and the two smaller factions produced a relatively large share of the 40,000 demobilised troops nation-wide. The high concentration of demobilised troops in Banteay Meanchey makes the province an interesting case in point for the argument by Dukers and Huijssoon that Cambodia was likely to have slipped into further anarchy had the poorly prepared demobilisation proceeded as planned.

The presence of the important trading Route Five, linking Cambodia with Thailand contributed heavily to the high crime rates in Banteay Meanchey. In the months following the arrival of Dutchbatt there had been virtually no fighting between the factions. The “frontline” had stabilized along Route Five between Sisophon and the border town Poipet. South of the highway was Khmer Rouge territory and the area north of the highway was controlled by government forces. The main threat for the Cambodian population in the sector was banditry and extortion. “The important theme for this sector in not waging war,” a visiting team of Khmer speaking UNTAC officials concluded, “but earning profits.” Goods coming from Thailand were “taxed” at various locations along the road, at the only two official government checkpoints at Poipet and the bridge in Sisophon and at multiple “informal” checkpoints where soldiers stood by the road and demanded money. A one-way trip from Poipet to Sisophon became an expensive journey for the local population.17 Of even a graver concern to personal security were armed bandits operating in mobile teams of
up to fifteen persons, both serving and demobilised soldiers, attacking civilians along the road.

Dutchbat started to improvise in order to quell the upsurge in crime and violence. The commander did not stop short of the tasks officially assigned to him after the demobilisation process was derailed by August. Given the quest by the Marines for alternative ways of creating a secure environment, the strict segregation between military security and public security was discarded. However, this should not be confused with a conscious decision on the part of the Marines to take on a policing role in Cambodia. "If you are unable to execute the mission you have come to perform, you use your common sense", Dukers reasoned. The Marines tried to halt crime and extortion at checkpoints in various ways. The operations officer, Major Gonzales, developed an elaborate and rigid "patrol and presence plan" for his companies in order to create a maximum dispersal and visibility of UNTAC troops. Foot patrols and mounted patrols were conducted day and night and concentrated in and around Route Five and the most densely populated areas. Although frequent patrols improved the situation along the roads it proved beyond the capabilities of the battalion to totally disrupt extortion activity along the routes. After the Dutch removed checkpoints the bandits merely reappeared after the patrols had passed. The measures along the roads were even reported to increase other forms of banditry as renegade soldiers moved activity from "taxation" at checkpoint towards more violent form of robbery further away from the untarred "highway."

The possibilities for action were very limited since the peacekeepers were officially prohibited from using force, let alone detaining offenders. They would not pursue fleeing bandits or gangs and were not allowed to disarm the Cambodians on sight, even if they had directly threatened UNTAC. In UNTAC's Standard Operating Procedures, it was correctly anticipated in May that "[i]n an environment where decades of civil war had dislocated the fabric of society" the potential for criminal acts "outside the spirit of the Paris Agreement" was very real. "These could include actions by undisciplined or disenchanted members of the faction or by bandit groups." However, the response to criminal activity was considered "a matter for the civil police, monitored by the members of the UNTAC Police Component."

In order to "retain credibility among the local population, but also to remain credible for the Khmer Rouge", Dukers asked UNTAC in Phnom Penh to allow him to take stronger measures in late August. Force Headquarters did not issue such instructions, as this would have meant a substantial broadening of the military mandate. In order to find more structural ways to address the lawlessness, Dutchbat therefore increased its cooperation with the local provincial government and the local police forces. Such cooperation was most extensive with the provincial authorities of Banteay Meanchey, where the battalion headquarters was located in the town centre. The provincial governor was in control of between 2,200-2,700 police officers, including border guards, and a further two thousand provincial CPAF military forces. It was mostly in this capacity that Dutchbat coordinated its efforts and
cooperated with the governor. They also dealt with the governor in connection with the community relations projects carried out in Banteay Meanchey.23

One of the first joint actions occurred when the governor asked for Dutch support for his police force that planned to remove settlers illegally occupying ground and building houses in Sisophon. Apart from occupying ground owned by the municipality, these armed squatters, mostly government soldiers, had driven local inhabitants away from their houses and farms at gunpoint. For the most part, the soldiers were acting on their own, but they would also render services to local businessmen for "odd-jobs." Apart from occupying land, they would sell their services to protect valuable transports and for settling scores with adversaries or competitors. Construction was big business in Sisophon, a city that doubled in size during the first half year of UNTAC's presence, and several months after the arrival of the battalion numerous stone housed were built in an area where an owner of a wooden house was considered a rich man.24

In coordination with the governor of Banteay Meanchey, who declared the occupation of property illegal, Dukers decided to have his troops support the provincial SOC police that would otherwise have been no match for the armed settlers. On August 27, after the governor's ultimatum time had passed, a platoon was visibly present as backup during an operation that in total involved fifty Dutch troops. They were allowed to act in case local civil servants and armed police, sixty-five in total, were molested while "upholding the law." In order to protect them the platoon was authorised to use "minimum force", including the use of warning shots and possibly aimed fire. Troops were equipped with smoke grenades and teargas, shields and batons, and prepared to detain "amok-makers", ringleaders pointed out by the platoon commander in charge. The detailed orders for these crowd and riot-control measures in a potentially hostile environment referred to UNTAC Standing Operating Procedures on the use of force, but it is unclear what section allowed such public security measures. More interestingly, the operations staff officer who drafted the plan referred to the British Army Field Manual on peacekeeping operations and his British manual on Counter Revolutionary Operations, with its elaboration on support to the civil power. The Marines—used to cooperating closely with the British Royal Marines within NATO—had brought both to Cambodia, and all the battalion's operational orders referred these two volumes. The latter volume appeared to contain the most relevant reference material for this particular operation as the orders specifically referred to its chapters dealing with "arrest and evidence" and "crowd dispersal" in which the sections "taking over from the police", "crowd dispersal without opening fire" and "opening fire with small arms during crowd dispersal" were specifically referred to.25

Apparently the support operation was sufficiently successful for the Marines to report on their initiative to the Dutch Minister of Defence, Relus ter Beek, when he visited the troops two weeks later. Although Ter Beek had not been aware of the commander's intentions prior to the operation, the minister briefed parliament on the support action as one of the examples of the many activities in which the Marines were involved that justified
them staying in Cambodia despite the failure of the primary military mission. Neither the minister, nor parliament raised questions about this law and order mission in support of the Cambodian authorities, a task that went well beyond the UNTAC mandate. Although such measures did not become common practise in the Dutch area of responsibility, they did not stand alone. In Phum Nimit, Charlie Company faced related problems when CPAF soldiers forced local inhabitants to leave their houses. Apparently the company commander “solved the issue” after receiving complaints from locals who could thereafter stay.26

Cooperation between Dutchbatt and local authorities in order to increase the sense of security amongst the local population was expanded on an ad hoc basis. From early September on, Dutchbatt frequently joined the local police on night patrols in Sisophon in order to protect them from local bandits and ill-disciplined government troops.27 In early October, the Dutch operations officer Major Gonzales called for a meeting with the governor of Banteay Meanchey to discuss and possibly formalise further measures against banditry. The battalion’s intelligence officer, the newly appointed civiloperations officer and two other officers joined him. UNTAC’s civil component was represented only by the provincial deputy administrator, while CivPol sent no representative at all. The new provincial governor, Morgne Kosal, used the occasion to announce his plan to create a new specialized “mixed police military unit” in order to tackle the high incidence of banditry in Banteay Meanchey. This local initiative was part of a nationwide program developed by the Cambodian Ministries of Defence and Interior Affairs.28 In Sisophon this unit would initially consist of 148 personnel, two-thirds of whom were provincial police and the rest provincial CPAF troops. Eventually the unit was to be over three hundred strong, the large majority of whom would be civilian police officers.29 The unit was to report directly to the newly created “mixed group B”, chaired by the deputy governor, the former governor Woong Kaan, with whom the Dutch had established reasonably good relations.

Although the local SOC authorities were partially driven by the approaching elections, the Dutch commander estimated that the governor was genuinely concerned about the steadily deteriorating law and order situation. He was therefore willing to have his battalion contribute to the training of the task force.30 Gonzales made it very clear, however, that Dutchbatt wanted something in return for the support given to the local police. He called on the military representatives to control their units that contributed much to the extortion and violence and reminded them that the Dutch military hospital was frequently treating the victims of this violence. After the conference between Dutchbatt the SOC authorities in Banteay Meanchey proved reasonably successful, it was decided to have a weekly meeting with the vice governor, police and provincial CPAF. It would take another six months and insistence from the Dutch before the local UN Civilian Police branch joined what became known as the “anti-banditry committee.”31 Most of the measures taken by the Marines in relation to public security continued to be directly coordinated and executed with local authorities and hardly involved the UN civilian police monitors or UN Civil Administration. The UN police, for instance, played no part during the action against illegal settlers.32 The
local CivPol commander had merely been informed of Dutchbatt’s intentions the day prior to the action. At the time, the police force was still in the process of deploying and the UN police had only just arrived in more distant locations such as Phum Nimit. Amongst the villagers they created a frightened impression as they limited their patrols to set hours, while returning to their headquarters in Sisophon during the night.33

Some cooperation between the Marines and CivPol did occur. Joint patrols with the UN police were started and the Dutch coordinated their efforts towards the training of the new SOC-Police Task Force with superintendent Herbertson, the Swedish CivPol commander for Banteay Meanchey. The Dutch military police, the “Koninklijke Marechaussee”, although officially only deployed to police the Marines, also played a small role in support of the training, which was divided in general street police duties and criminal investigations courses. Although it was only a two weeks course, the training made a rather professional impression on the Dutch Military Police. In one other incident the Dutch MPs also exceeded their mandate by “arresting” eight suspected thieves in Sisophon and transferring them to the local police.34 The joint training initiative in Banteay Meanchey was one of the makeshift training programs that emerged after the security sector gap within UNTAC’s state building program became painfully apparent. Some international police developed courses using training manuals they themselves had brought.35 UNTAC had made no official effort to train a new police force and training of the existing force was low on UNTAC police’s list of priorities. As in other regions, CivPol scrounged resources from military contingents such as the Dutch, who were willing to contribute to any task that might relieve them of activities related to public order in the hope of contributing to sustainable solutions for the law and order vacuum in northwestern Cambodia.

The fact that the Marines had something substantial to offer in return for good behaviour, often gave them more leverage over the local authorities than UNTAC civilian officers. CivPol, Civil Administration and the Human Rights component, all of whom had a role to play in public security matters, had little to offer but their advice, which did not always go down very well with the autocratic rulers. What the Dutch could provide most importantly, was security. The local police force could hardly function, as they were often too terrified to patrol the streets, especially at night. SOC police often became the victims of attacks by both bandits and Khmer Rouge troops.36 CivPol officers did not patrol at night and their presence during the day added little value in the eyes of local police. The Marines on the other hand liked to work at night, as it was much cooler while the night-vision goggles they had brought gave them an edge over their possible opponents.37 Apart from protection, the Marines provided transport during patrols. Moreover, the Marines had an additional carrot for the local government in the form of their civic action program. Gonzales was very direct when communicating to the local authorities that “results” in anti-banditry measures would play a crucial role in allocation of these funds. In 1993, the so-called Dutch Development Funds were used to build a prison and a court-house. The second Dutch battalion enhanced their leverage over the governor of Banteay Meanchey by providing his private house with elec-
tricity from one of their generators at battalion headquarters. Disconnecting the electric wire to the governor’s house was a simple, yet effective way of showing the Dutch commander’s discontent.  

In the course of September and October activities in support of the civilian authorities were steadily increased. Dukers tended to regard this development as inevitable:

As the only constant and well organised unit in this area, we are confronted with and picking up tasks that would normally not belong to a Marine battalion. It should be obvious, however, that in many areas any form of organisation is lacking and that we cannot accept more examples of anarchy and disorganisation.  

The commander was aware of the dangers involved in extending his role into the civilian sphere as well as the legal minefield upon which he was treading. While UNTAC’s civilian branches had a formal role in public security, the military officially had none. During their cooperation with local civilian authorities the battalion nevertheless faced many of the same problems as the civilian component. After all, by cooperating with the local police the Marines were substituting for civilian police monitors, while there was no functioning justice system and no properly functioning criminal law to guide operations. UNTAC had no mandate to re-establish the rule of law in an anarchic country where local police and judiciary were under total political control. Throughout Cambodia there were no more than two to three judges per province, appointed by the governors and clearly serving party interests. On the measures taken and the limits to cooperation—set primarily by the limited local human rights standards—Dukers reported to The Hague:

Contacts with local and provincial governments are generally good with a free and unconditional exchange of ideas aimed predominantly at ameliorating the general security situation and human rights in the province. As far as the Cambodian legislation does not provide appropriate directives or as far as local legislative and administrative practise does not match UNTAC measures or directives, or the norms and values prescribed by Dutch law, the battalion’s personnel only cooperates with the local government if we can reach clear and acceptable agreement. Until now, this has worked well. We have agreed on hard measures to jointly combat banditry and reduce illegal taxation and tolls by CPAF military.  

The Marines could not rely on legal support when taking on these responsibilities. While negotiating a combined policy and deciding what was acceptable behaviour, the commander had to rely on his own judgement. In order to address the lawlessness that reigned in Cambodia, he had to improvise, which usually meant sticking out his neck and hoping things would go right.

Apart from cooperation with local authorities, Dutchbatt tried to improve security in their area of responsibility by disarming unruly elements. Just as there was no provision in the mandate for detention and arrest, UNTAC battalions could officially do nothing about
civilians openly carrying weapons. Under the initial mandate and Rules of Engagement, UNTAC had no authority to take weapons from individuals other than through the cantonment process. 41 "I created my own rules", Dukers admitted. He regarded it "our duty to do something about the illegal roadblocks where civilians were extorted." 42 The commander claimed to have paid very little attention to UNTAC’s Rules of Engagement, which had arrived only after the deployment in Cambodia. 43

While UNTAC was deliberating in October on how to address arms control in a country ridden with small arms, Dukers instructed his troops to disarm all members of “local militias” or other individuals not in uniform and not in possession of cards identifying them as on-duty faction members. 44 In the preceding three months Dutchbat patrols had already confiscated several weapons of the unruly militias on sight, but it now became formal Dutchbat policy that only official faction military in uniform and SOC-police were allowed to carry weapons. It was left up to the patrol commander to decide how far he would go in enforcing the directive, depending on his estimation of the dangers involved. Dukers expected that the disarmament measure would “certainly ameliorate the local security situation and facilitate a return to normal, pre-war conditions.” 45 However, he was realistic and accepted that there was an almost unhampered flow of small arms and ammunition from large numbers of hidden arms caches to the bandits. Disarming Cambodia was clearly beyond the capabilities of UNTAC. The total amount of arms confiscated by the Dutch is more likely to have been in the high hundreds than in the thousands. A number of the weapons would be returned to those owners capable of demonstrating a weapons-pass, which the Marines helped to introduce in cooperation with the local authorities. Another requirement the Marines introduced before handing back a weapons was that a faction member showed up in a correct uniform. 46 The crux of the measure was that it gave Dutchbat a means of controlling and sanctioning, and thereby establishing their authority. Cammaert, the second Dutch battalion commander, recalled with a subtle grin: “It was very frustrating for them when we took their weapon in the streets.” There appear to have been no similar measures in other sectors at the time, although some troops may have disarmed on an ad hoc basis. 47 It would take more than six months before UNTAC caught up with Dutchbat regarding the disarmament policy, as it had to wait for legislation on arms possession to be passed through the slowly turning bureaucratic wheels of UN Civil Administration and the malfunctioning Cambodian government departments.

The Dutch battalion commanders in Cambodia had a degree of autonomy that would make colleagues in later operations jealous. It was one of the first sizable deployments overseas and the western military and political leaders had not yet suffered the traumatizing setbacks in places such as Srebrenica and Mogadishu. There was not yet a national contingent commander, who would operate as the Dutch Minister of Defence’s watchdog in future operations. Moreover, there was little experience and therefore hardly any terms of reference while executing an often unclear mandate. Dukers reported first to the Royal Netherlands Navy Headquarters and subsequently to the Ministry of Defence operational centre, both

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located in The Hague. The general tendency amongst all three subsequent Marine battalion commanders was to involve “The Hague” as little as possible, as this “would only lead to meddling by those incapable to properly estimate the local situation.” They would not report on every single fire-fight in which the Marines became involved, as they would only worry the authorities in The Hague and lead to increased interference.  

All three Dutch battalion commanders who served a tour in Cambodia felt their primary allegiance was to Sanderson and not to The Hague. Even though Dukers had briefly clashed with Sanderson over the decision to halt the deployment in May, he developed a good relationship with the Force Commander. Within UNTAC, the lines of command were short for a division-size operation of some 16,000 troops. The Force Commander directly commanded his battalions, instead of having a brigade structure in between as would be normal in combat operations. Sanderson delegated much responsibility and set the general outlines of the mission, the “commander’s intent”, in broad strokes. This was done in operational orders drafted by his chief planner, Huijssoon, when the mission was structurally altered. However, until December 1992 no changes in the overall mission were provided and UNTAC was left to muddle through. Sanderson gave most of his instructions verbally, either during the regular meetings of his battalion commanders at headquarters in Phnom Penh or by telephone. As one of the best-equipped units with its own logistical lines, and positioned in a distant corner of Cambodia, UNTAC headquarters left the battalion to fend for itself most of the time. Sanderson’s energy was increasingly absorbed by political matters and by units in more urgent need of attention. All three battalion Dutch commanders liked this freedom to determine how they went about creating a “safe and secure environment.” They admired Sanderson as a commander, but saw him grow older by the day as the mission progressed into 1993 and as he took on ever more responsibility for the mission as a whole.

Sanderson and Cammaert connected particularly well. Every six weeks the sector commanders would come to Phnom Penh. “I would usually come in half an hour early on the general’s request to discuss the situation”, Cammaert recalled. “He seemed to enjoy that.” They would call frequently on the phone and Huijssoon even suspected that Sanderson would call Cammaert to hear his perspective on problems that may have occurred for other battalions. They were soldiers of a kind, combining the qualities of a field commander with that of a diplomat—a blend of skills that was in greater need in military operations in the post-Cold War disorder. Sanderson probably spent more time on politics and diplomacy than he did on commanding his troops. Cammaert would have a similar experience after he worked his way up to the position of Force Commander of the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) in 2000. Two years later he became Military Advisor to Secretary General Kofi Anan. After completing his mission in Cambodia, Sanderson would serve as Commander in Chief of the Australian Army for a number of years, until he retired from the army and became the governor of Western Australia. The qualities of the diplomat-soldier, while a rare combination in the early 1990s, would become ever more
important as the role of the military steadily expanded into the civilian sphere. Not only would this be the case for generals, but also for the military on the tactical level during the ever more complex operations in areas ravaged by war.

Although the Dutch battalion commanders were overall quite comfortable with the leeway given to make many of their own decisions, it placed them in a "lonely" position, as Dukers warned his successor Cammaert. "You take all these decisions all by yourself and you hope they work out well. You have neither backing from Sanderson, nor from The Hague. The Netherlands will probably cover for you when things go wrong, but what if you take casualties?" Cammaert operated under his own rule, accepting that of the decisions a commander had to take—mostly under the pressure of time and without sufficient information or intelligence—eighty-five percent are good, ten percent is so-so, while the remaining five percent turn out to be the wrong decisions. Dutchbatt’s disarmament policy was launched without asking permission from either Phnom Penh or The Hague. “Every day we reported on our activities to Phnom Penh”, Dukers said referring to his disarmament measures, “so they were well aware of what we were doing.” Headquarters never told him to stop, so he gathered that Sanderson agreed. Cammaert continued the policy and recalled that when he told Sanderson during a visit to the Dutch sector about these disarmament measures, the general started to laugh. Yet he left it at that. The Hague was never formally notified of the weapons policy, however, both Naval Headquarters and the Ministry could have been aware if they read the weekly situation reports closely.

Sanderson never stopped the Dutch commanders from stretching their mandate to include disarmament and mixed police patrols. He nevertheless tried to resist the strong pressure of having his force become formally involved in what he called “internal security operations.” Although it was not quite clear what his exact interpretation of internal security operations was at this point, the term rang bells of counterinsurgency operations, military operations such those by the British in Northern Ireland, and even policing. In military circles it was also associated with colonial days and tasks performed by military forces in autocratic regimes, and it was clearly not what the Force Commander intended his troops to become involved in. Sanderson later placed the argument against internal security operations in the context of the debate about the virtues of “neutral peacekeeping” versus enforcement. In August 1992 Sanderson dismissed an early draft proposal on mixed units against banditry. The proposal from the UNTAC Civil Administration component irritated the general. Although it intended that military peacekeepers to contribute to these mixed military and police formations, it had been prepared without input from his headquarters. At the time he was still hoping for the Khmer Rouge to join the demobilisation process and considered such mixed units “not feasible until all military forces are cantoned and disarmed.” He argued that as the factions were de facto at war with each other despite their stated commitment to the Paris Agreement, “what may be seen as banditry by one faction can be considered by another as a legitimate [act of war by the other].” Huijssoon, as one of his principle deputies, also argued that UNTAC had succeeded in keeping a neutral posture, amongst
other things because it had resisted becoming involved in public security. It was never clarified how a certain military contribution to public order would impede the military force’s neutrality. This assumption ran counter to Dukers’ argument that he was driven towards measures against banditry and extortion—often against the CPAF but in cooperation with other SOC-authorities—in order to maintain his credibility with the Khmer Rouge.

Not only was the western military not enthusiastic about contributing to internal security and public security tasks, Sanderson also feared that this would overstretch his force. His concern that his means would not match his ends if he took on additional internal security tasks was very real. He had no more than ten thousand troops in infantry units at his disposal. Compared to much larger military operations in Somalia and the Balkans, his twelve infantry battalions were thin on the ground. In March 1993 he would repeat that “[t]he mission is not defending Cambodia. Therefore the UNTAC Military Components will not be drawn into internal security operations. Nor is the mission to defend the political process. We are in Cambodia to defend an electoral process.” It would be hard to say where “defending the electoral process” stopped and where defending Cambodia or the Cambodians started. Nevertheless, the Force Commander’s decision to focus the efforts of his military force first and foremost on the elections proved to be sound.

### Changing the Guard

The first Dutch battalion handed over responsibility to the second Marine battalion in a hectic period. The transfer was taking place in the middle of the voter registration process, which—although well organized by the electoral component—leaned heavily on military support. In November Akashi and Sanderson had taken a bold step by pushing ahead with the elections. In doing so they adopted Prince Sihanouk’s proposal to go ahead with elections, despite the Khmer Rouge’s refusal to cooperate. This meant that at least eighty-five percent of the Cambodian population could vote. The electoral process started on 23 November and the elections were to take place in May 1993 as planned. The UN would thus organise elections, if need be amidst continued civil war, although it was seriously doubted at this point if the Khmer Rouge was still capable of mounting a large scale offensive.

Apart from containing the military violence, Sanderson now had to swing the full force of the military component behind the elections and all the civil components involved. In order to facilitate cooperation with the civilian components, the military deployment drastically changed by adjusting the military sectors to the provincial boundaries. Sanderson explained his move in an interview for UNTAC’s newsletter, suggesting quite openly that the other aim was to seal off the Khmer Rouge as much as possible in their enclaves:

Operationally, the redeployment involved a major clockwise rotation of troops. Within Cambodia’s more unstable regions, for example, the Malaysian battalion moved westward into Battambang province, enabling its Dutch counterpart to consolidate positions to the north, in Banteay Meanchey, a strategically located province separating the two largest Khmer Rouge-controlled zones in the country. The Bangladeshi battalion, meanwhile, expanded eastward
into Siem Reap, freeing up the Pakistani battalion to redeploy farther eastward, to accessible areas of Preah Vihear province. UNTAC carried out smaller-scale redeployments throughout Cambodia’s southeasters areas, close too and around the Khmer Rouge’s more dispersed “leopard spot” operating areas.62

For the Dutch this meant a substantial increase of their area of operations. It now also came to include the districts of Tma Pok and Phum Ampil in the “Free Liberated Zone” and all four factions were represented in their sector. Despite the alteration of the sectors the Force Commander decided to keep one Dutch platoon in the distant KNLPF enclave of Sok San. From here they could more or less monitor the conduct of the Khmer Rouge around the area. In Banteay Meanchey the new Dutch contingent took over areas from the Bangladesh battalion, which was poorly equipped and short of logistical means and transport. Although the Bangladesh’s had conducted much civic action in the area, they had been unable to assert any form of control in most of the province. According to Cammaert “Bangabatt” had hardly left their compound and in many of the more distant areas of the sector the locals had not seen a single UN soldier. “Our aim was to get as many men and white vehicles out there, so that everyone could see what we were doing and that we would take care of security.”63

The decision to push ahead with the elections was daring since the security situation was still deteriorating rather than improving nationwide. This was true for both public security and military security, although the distinction between the two was often quite hard to make in Cambodia. In November the rainy season had come to an end, which led to a marked increase in military infiltrations and artillery exchanges between the Khmer Rouge and CPAF. Meanwhile, banditry was on the rise and political violence surged as the parties started to manifest themselves in the run-up to the elections. The threats to UNTAC also sharply increased, as international personnel, both civilian and military, suddenly became targets for kidnappings by the Khmer Rouge. Ever more often UN helicopters were being shot at from Khmer Rouge territory. Their failure to halt the peace process obviously frustrated the Khmer Rouge, but they were also reacting to economic pressure. The dry season always saw a surge in economic activity as loggers could once again use the jungle roads. However, on 30 November the UN Security Council imposed economic sanctions in an effort to compel the faction to join the peace process. The imposed moratorium on the lucrative trade in logs and an oil boycott were to be monitored by the military component and UN Civilian Police. Although UNTAC had no means of enforcing these measures, monitoring economic activity in combination with diplomatic pressure on Thailand—the only direct buyer of Khmer Rouge products—appeared to frustrate their transactions to a certain degree.

In January, after the hectic registration period, unit rotation and the change of sectors, the battalion could finally settle down. In the course of November and December, at the time of the electoral registration the Marines had been dispersed over no less than thirty-nine locations throughout Banteay Meanchey. The static guard duties and logistical support to the electoral component had made intensive patrolling nearly impossible, which had resulted in an increase in banditry and the number of illegal tolls. There was also some political vio-
lence, such as an attack on a FUNCINPEC party office in Sisophon with a rocket propelled grenade. Luckily, the grenade failed to explode. The battalion held daily morning security briefings for civilian organisations and the weekly coordination meeting with the UNTAC civil administrator, electoral and CivPol representatives were continued.\(^4\)

After the electoral registration was successfully concluded, patrolling was stepped up with the emphasis on joint patrols and mobile checkpoints. In Sisophon, night patrols were conducted by a rifle group of around thirteen Marines, when possible one equipped with night vision goggles, and with a translator in order to communicate with the local SOC police. Other than his predecessor Gonzales, who had created an extensive but rigid patrolling regime, the new operations officer Major Jaap Bijsterbosch delegated much of the responsibility, leaving the patrolling patterns to his company commanders. With the battalion still spread over twenty different locations and operating down to individual rifle-groups in an even wider area, this decentralized approach appeared more practical. Rifle groups of about nine men were positioned at fixed locations in villages, at border locations and near arms caches of demobilised soldiers. The aim of the patrols was unchanged: "We wanted to put as much ‘blue on the streets’ as possible"—a term commonly used in The Netherlands for increasing the amount of “beat cops.”\(^5\) Meanwhile the forty Haglund BV snow vehicles that had proven invaluable during the wet season were temporarily replaced by additional Land Rovers shipped over from the Netherlands. With their wide tracks the vehicles created an intolerable amount of dust that would literally take half an hour to settle down. This was bound to strain relations between Dutchbatt and the local population. Moreover, the rocky roads were eating away at their rubber tracks.

Apart from enhancing public security, the intense patrolling regime was essential for intelligence gathering and for force protection. As the UN peacekeeping force was officially barred by UN rules from creating an intelligence gathering organisation—which was considered improper and conflicting with the UN’s need to remain neutral—little useful information on the factions’ intentions and actions was forthcoming from UNTAC headquarters. When Cammaert asked for intelligence from headquarters, he was usually given the reports he or his own intelligence officer had written.\(^6\) The battalion thus had to rely on its own efforts coordinated by its staff officer Andrew Blackhurst, a U.S. Marine Corps Captain who was on a regular exchange program with the Dutch Marine Corps. The lack of intelligence made the battalion vulnerable. Paradoxically, positioning large numbers of small units in populated areas was considered to enhance their security, although they would not set up camp in the most violently disputed areas. Their presence provided the local population with a reasonable degree of protection against attacks by the factions and banditry. This substantially improved community relations, which in turn increased the flow of information and thus security for the Marines.\(^7\) To further relations with the villagers, platoon commanders were encouraged by battalion headquarters to adopt community projects. Another informal method of gathering intelligence was through the use of the battalion’s interpreters. The six former Cambodian refugees the Marines had brought from the Netherlands proved insuffi-
cient, so local interpreters were also recruited. The official interpreters would normally work in a Dutch military uniform, but when out of uniform they were sent into the streets and market squares to blend in and “and keep their radars open.” Cammaert recalled how “these people are able to create a local network”, which was much harder for the Marines. Black-hurst reported that their reports were important in measuring the overall posture of the local population towards UNTAC:

The translators have expressed that many Cambodians have trust and confidence in Dutchbatt. There is the general feeling with many locals that Dutchbatt takes its mission very seriously and is putting its heart into its work. The many aid projects that Dutchbatt has completed, i.e. wells, schools etc., have helped foster these feelings of trust with the Cambodian people. This is a point which should not be considered trivial as it carries a great amount of weight with the people.

The program of combined patrols with the SOC authorities started by the first battalion was extended to the new zones under Dutch control. Mixed patrols were now also extended in the Free Liberated Zone, and there were special “four-faction units” wearing special blue armbands. The reason for bringing in all factions on these patrols was related to the peculiar character of the zone. Its conquest by a tripartite anti-government coalition in the 1980s had resulted in a complicated patchwork of sectors. “It was ideal to have all those guys with you on patrols”, Bijsterbosch recalled, “as their presence in our Landrovers allowed us to cross from one sector into the other without problems and even made it possible to enter disputed territory.” Moreover, the Dutch preferred to have the local factions deal with the illegal roadblocks and bandits they encountered. The battalion’s mediating role even resulted in a joint CPAF-Khmer Rouge patrol along their border and a UN checkpoint operated together with all four factions on the border of Khmer Rouge territory. The Khmer Rouge displayed their enthusiasm for the concept in the Mixed Military Working Group in Phnom Penh, where they proposed four-faction units in order to solve conflicts in Battambang and Kampong Thom. It proved hard to measure the success of the patrols against banditry, but a televised BBC Newsnight item on UNTAC called the mixed patrols “a sign of hope” for the future of Cambodia and proof that reconciliation was possible despite the faltering peace process.

Meanwhile, the local SOC leaders were eager to step up joint patrols with the Dutch, especially at night. There were signs that their joint presence was paying off in the towns and villages, but bandits increasingly targeted rural areas to compensate for their loss of income. Cooperation with the local authorities nevertheless continued to be difficult. Whenever the local police and provincial CPAF troops were not paid by the governor, they refused to join the Dutch at checkpoints or on patrols. In Sisophon the Marines temporarily solved this by providing the Cambodians with their own combat-rations. They were also stimulated to cooperate by the fact that without the presence of the Marines the regular CPAF units tended to display little respect for the police and provincial army units. Nation-
wide banditry appeared to be increasing and after a short lived decline in incidents in Banteay Meanchey, there was a sudden surge in serious crime. This rise in armed robbery was linked to the return of large numbers of unpaid CPAF soldiers from recent fighting with the Khmer Rouge around Battambang, south of the Dutch sector. Simultaneously a sudden influx of refugees in February 1993 contributed to a worsening security situation. According to captain Blackhurst, banditry continued to be "the area of most concern for Dutchbatt." 75

While the second Dutch battalion was initially hopeful about coordination with the UN Civilian Police, cooperation turned out to be as erratic as in Cambodia’s other provinces. 76 The relationship between the battalion and CivPol became more strained as police monitors failed to show up for planned combined patrols in some districts. In Sisophon some officers refused to assist the Dutch company in an investigation into a shooting incident in which a local citizen had died, arguing according to the Dutch report it had been "too late on a Sunday evening." The provincial CivPol commander Herbertson promised to take disciplinary measures against the police monitors. 77 The rumour spread amongst the Dutch that his Bulgarian deputy commander spent more time in Thai brothels than at his post in Sisophon. Although aware of some notable exceptions, Bijsterbosch was unforgiving in his overall judgement of the UN police in Banteay Meanchey: "they were largely inactive." Relations between the battalion and CivPol further deteriorated when a Dutch reporter quoted Cammaert saying that UNTAC would be better off if two-thirds of its civilian police monitors were sent home. Although the commander claimed to have been blatantly misquoted, it is unlikely to have deviated much from his overall opinion at the time. 78 Another unfortunate incident occurred when the Khmer Rouge ambushed a combined patrol of Marines and Japanese CivPol officers. One Japanese police officer was killed and four Marines injured when their convoy was attacked with rocket propelled grenades and small arms. A diplomatic row followed when the Washington Post accused the Dutch of giving priority to their own troops during the medical helicopter evacuation. An investigation into this claim showed the the claim was false, but the damage had been done as the story was out there and had been picked up by the international press.

In March 1993, the UN police in Banteay Meanchey finally joined the weekly "anti-banditry committee” meetings. It had taken the Marines some serious effort to get the CivPol district commanders to join the conference between Dutchbatt and the local authorities. 79 The provincial authorities received a plan for increased cooperation between CivPol and SOC-police on the district level with “mixed feelings” and the next week the vice-governor failed to attend the meeting for the first time since October. 80 However, he returned the week thereafter and by mid-April Bijsterbosch was becoming more optimistic about the results coming out of the weekly meetings. Since March there had finally been a significant decline in the number of robberies and murders in the province, which the governor ascribed to the increased number of patrols, especially those with the Marines. The atmosphere during the meetings also improved.
The meetings are held in an increasingly relaxed atmosphere and ‘doing business’ is becoming an increasingly smooth process. Topics that initially would have been avoided out of courtesy are now openly addressed. Especially the way in which topics are addressed has been substantially ‘westernized.’ The vice-governor promised to put offenders on trial, combat illegal tolls and the use of weapon-licences by SOC-police and the CPAF. In return they asked for more combined night-patrols in order to combat banditry.  

However, the “free expression of ideas” earlier mentioned by Dukers also unleashed the worst inclinations of the autocratic rulers. During the next meeting the vice-governor not only suggested even more intense patrolling, but also the creation of a “special force” in order to root out the remaining crime. The vice-governor enthusiastically suggested that this unit “was to perform as little arrests as possible.” Instead, he argued, its members were to shoot the criminals on sight. This tendency amongst the local forces to shoot first and ask questions later had already been a problem during joint patrols. “They would sometimes startle us by running straight into the bush in pursuit of criminals, mines or no mines, and immediately open fire on fleeing bandits at a checkpoint.” Dutch pressure on the local administration to put more offenders on trial was related to such incidents, but the Marines felt they had no choice but to continue cooperating with the local police as it was the only effective method of countering the high level of crime.

On 17 March 1993, after legislation was finally adopted by the SOC, FUNCINPEC and KPNLF, Akashi issued a directive that made the possession of weapons illegal without a firearms license from the police force of the relevant Cambodian authority. Those found in possession of a firearm without a license could have their weapon confiscated according to the new legislation. The next month, during a “weapons amnesty”, the Cambodians could voluntarily hand in their arms or apply for a weapons licence. In April the military and CivPol components, along with local police, began to enforce the directive at fourteen random weapons confiscation checkpoints. Since the Dutch had already applied similar rules since October, they did not implement the amnesty. A dip in gun related crime was reported throughout Cambodia after March, but there was no proof of a direct cause and effect relationship. The measure proved hard for UNTAC to enforce and it would seem unlikely to have achieved such results that quickly. Only fifteen weapons were confiscated per day. Moreover, the Dutch weapons policy had been constant in Banteay Meanchey, where a similar drop in crime was detected.

The Dutch extended their disarmament policy after February by introducing “Operation Entrapment.” One company of Marines would close off all routes to Sisophon and confiscate all illegal arms going in and out of the city. The aim was to give the population and authorities in the city and its surrounding a clear signal that “creating a secure environment could be optimally executed” by Dutchbatt. The action raised confidence, “both amongst the local population and within the battalion, about our ability to counter banditry and other irregularities.” As it was a serious drain on the units manpower resources, the
operation could only be executed a few times in the run-up to the elections, but it gave the Marines a great sense of accomplishment.\textsuperscript{89}

Overall, there was a large disparity in the calibre of UNTAC troops. Partly, this could be expected given the different training levels and the quality of equipment. Some contingents, such as those arriving from Ghana, lacked the most basic equipment and had to be equipped by the UN on arrival. The first Bulgarian battalion even lacked basic military training and for the most part appeared to consist of ex-convicts. Many units completely lacked basic language skills in one of the mission’s two official languages, English and French. The interpretation of the Rules of Engagement also differed substantially. Lieutenant Colonel Steve Ayling, the commander of the Australian communications battalion that operated throughout Cambodia in support of all infantry battalions, noticed that the French and the Dutch battalions used a more aggressive approach to the establishment of control in their sectors than most other battalions.\textsuperscript{90} Both battalions were known to shoot back when fired upon. The French, although effective in their area of responsibility, were criticized for running their sector “like a French fiefdom rather than as part of a multinational operation.”\textsuperscript{91} In her book on the transition of peacekeeping in Cambodia, Janet Heininger, described the general impressions of the various contingents:

The well-equipped and well armed, specialized Dutch battalion stationed in northwestern Cambodia had a reputation for rapid and decisive action in defence of its soldiers and civilians. The Malaysians, in western Cambodia, also had a tough reputation. Many of their soldiers learned the Khmer language and attempted to develop a working relationship with Khmer Rouge in the region. By contrast, the Indonesians and Uruguayan were more passive when threatened. In one incident, thirty Indonesians were asked by the Khmer Rouge to give up their weapons and to come to its provincial headquarters. They were then held prisoners for five days.\textsuperscript{92}

The most interesting assessment of the overall calibre of UNTAC’s national contingents was offered to an U.S. researcher by the FUNCINPEC head of security, General Thon Penh in the presence of prince Naradom Sirivudh, vice president of the royalist party:

[S]ome of the UNTAC contingents had no teeth. Some military units simply camped out, did not protect Cambodians, and did not fire back even when the Khmer Rouge fired upon them... Some troops however, were to be respected. The Dutch and the Malaysians were to be feared. The Bulgarians he had no respect for. The Uruguays were simply after money and artefacts. The Khmer Rouge and all forces knew which troops were weak and not to be respected, and which could be taken advantage of. All the factions also knew which troops to avoid and not to anger.\textsuperscript{93}

The Cambodian General was specifically referring to his positive experiences with the first Dutch battalion. Army Colonel Huijssoon, who visited his compatriots in Banteay Meanchey in January, reported to Sanderson with a hint of national pride that in his opinion
“this [second] battalion is even better than the first one and you have the best the Marine Corps can deliver during the most critical period in the peace process.” 94 The standing of the Marines resulted from many months of intense and exhausting operations that were taking its toll on the troops. “We literally reacted on every single report of banditry by local civilians”, Bijsterbosch said, “which was a serious drain on manpower. The locals came to see us as the authorities, since there was no central authority, only the factions in control of their part of the patchwork.” Much of their authority was based on their overall appearance. “A professional image, correct uniform, intense patrolling and always have someone looking backwards.” 95 Much of it may have been based on bluff, as there were no official measures to enforce law and order other than the self-styled disarmament policy.

One particular incident stood out that helped them earn them their “tough” reputation. On 11 March a combined patrol consisting of Marines, SOC police, provincial CPAF and CivPol were patrolling the streets of Sisophon when they encountered a CPAF soldier in civilian dress carrying an AK-47. In line with Dutchbatt policy the patrol commander ordered him to hand in his weapon. According to a Dutch situation report “he refused, and released the safety catch on his weapons. From experience, our personnel know that a Cambodian always had a bullet in the chamber.” He pointed his weapon toward the patrol and after he failed to react to a warning shot the patrol commander signalled one of his soldiers to take him out. Using “minimum force”, this meant not shooting to kill, which the corporal did with a well-aimed shot in the upper leg. 96 The man fell to the ground and was taken to a medical post. The incident was widely broadcast throughout Cambodia, and even shown on UNTAC’s new TV-station. Bijsterbosch remembers elation at headquarters in Phnom Penh about “UNTAC finally showing its teeth.” 97

Sanderson considered his force lucky so far. Referring to the shooting incident he wrote to Akashi that he formally considered “this sort of activity” beyond the mandate. Nonetheless, he showed his support when he joined the Marines the next night on a patrol in Thmar Pok. His overall fear was that such actions could lead to reprisals. After the Dutch shot the CPAF soldier, troops from the same CPAF unit fired at a UNHCR convoy in the area. There were no casualties but the convoy was held up for eight hours. 98 Similar problems, involving much higher levels of violence and with more dramatic consequences, also arose in Bosnia. The Danes, the only contingent equipped with tanks, fired seventy-two shells on Bosnian-Serb positions in retaliation for incoming artillery fire near Tuzla in 1994. They were lauded for their assertiveness within a mission that was criticized for its overall passive posture. As a retaliatory measure, however, the Dutch UN battalion and population in Srebrenica were cut off from military and humanitarian supplies for some time by the Bosnian-Serb troops besieging the enclave. 99 Dilemmas about the use of force in rapidly changing concept of peace operations would haunt soldiers in the years to come.

The incident in Sisophon appeared to be relatively clear-cut as there had been an imminent threat. Cammaert saw a direct connection between the action by his Marines and the fall in crime thereafter. 100 There were no protests from the CPAF, who called the man a
deserter and local commanders even appeared to become somewhat more cooperative. However, the sharp, yet temporary decline in banditry and extortion seems to have been the result of a complex set of factors, some local and some nation wide. All developments in Cambodia in early 1993 were centred on the upcoming elections. Overall, despite their strenuous efforts, the long term impact of the Marines on public safety in the northwestern corner of Cambodia should not be overexaggerated. However, their posture considerably augmented the UN’s credibility in their sector. By doing so, Dutchbat enhanced UNTAC’s ability to perform the combined civil-military operation in the period leading up to the crucial elections, when violence struck throughout Cambodia.

1 HQ Sector 1, Maj C.B.J.E. van den Berg, “NLBATCAMB 1: De Wapenolie in de Civiele en Militaire Component van UNTAC”, IMH, UNTAC, 099, inv. 62.
4 For an general analysis of UN Civilian Police operations Annika S. Hansen, From Congo to Kosovo: Civilian Police in Peace Operations (IISS Adelphi Paper No. 343, 2002). UN Civilian Police monitors were first deployed in traditional peacekeeping operations since Cyprus. CivPol was already been active in intra-state conflict during the Congo crisis in the early 1960s. Police monitors were first deployed in traditional peacekeeping operations since Cyprus.
5 Sanderson, “UNTAC’s Military Component” (Lecture, 3 Augustus 1994).
6 Ibid.
9 Klaas Roos would defend his UNTAC CivPol force by pointing at the lack of attention from the UN and contributing nations to the police monitoring component. See Findley, Cambodia, 144. See also Yasushi Akashi, “The Challenges Faced by UNTAC,” Japan Review of International Affairs, Vol. 7, No. 3 (Summer 1993) 189.
10 Findley, Cambodia, 46
13 Sanderson to Akashi, Control of CPAF Activities, 17 March 1993 (Referring to memorandum from UNTAC Police Commissioner Roos), 1 March 1993, ADFA, Sanderson Papers, box 2, folder 12.

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16 The sharpest rise in crime occurred in Banteay Meanchey, where the available crime figures on for instance armed robbery from early 1992 had been relatively low. UN Police Commissioner Klaas Roos to Sanderson, “Crime Review”, 30 September 1992, ADFA, Sanderson Papers, box 3, folder 18.


19 Dutchbat Operation Order 9/92, 12 October 1992, IMH, UNTAC, 099, inv. 52.


21 UNTAC Standing Operating Procedures (SOPs, Section 4 – Use of Force, 76) May 1992, IMH, UNTAC, 099, inv. 22.

22 Entries in UNTAC Dutchbat Logbook on 21 Augustus and 26 September 1992, CAD, TCBU, Documents UNTAC, boxes 52, 65 and 67 (Hereafter cited as “UNTAC Dutchbat Logbook”, followed by date of entry). As the UNTAC Dutchbat Logbook was not encountered in its entirety at one location it was recreated by the author from various parts encountered in the various boxes within the TCBU archive.


25 Mariniersbataljon Cambodja 1, Operatiebevel no. 008/92, Sisophon, 23 August 1992. Bataljonsoperaties – Taakstelling Beveiligingspeleton, IMH, UNTAC, 099, inv. 52. The detailed orders refer to UNTAC Standard Operating Procedures, Operations-Use of Force, and to the British Army’s *Field Manual Vol. V; Land Operations Volume III – Counter Revolutionary Operations*. They specifically refer to the Field Manual’s Chapter 3 (Arrest and Evidence), Chapter 8 (Crowd Dispersal), section 23 (taking over from the police) and sections on “crowd dispersal without opening fire” and “opening fire with small arms during crowd dispersal.”


31 Dutchbat to Cmdr CivPol (Ltcol Herbertson) on Public Areas of Sisophon, 24 August 1992, IMH, UNTAC, 099, inv. 52.


34 Heininger, *Peacekeeping in Transition*, 82.

35 Uitgave Bureau S3, Local Mixed Military Working Group, Sector 1, 30 September 1992. IMH, UNTAC, 099, inv. 52; On 29 January 1993 eight people, amongst them many police officers were killed in Siem Reap. The attack was ascribed to the Khmer Rouge.

36 Dukers, “Peace-keeping in Cambodja”, 2860.
Lieutenant Colonel Jaap Bijsterbosch in interview with author (Willemstad, Curacao, 28 January 2004).

Dukers, “Tussentijdse Rapportage UNTAC” (8 October 1992), IMH, UNTAC, 099, inv. 37.

Ibid.

“Operation Order no. 2 for the Joint Milcom of UNTAC”, 9 December 1992, IMH, UNTAC, 099, inv. 49. In Operation Order no. 2 the military component was allowed to “take action in concert with other UNTAC components to ensure the limitation of ownership and transportation of unauthorized weapons by the civilian population.” The only official way to actively confiscate weapons was through cooperation with the faction police forces. See Appendix 2: “Under the current circumstances the military component has only the authority to monitor ownership and transportation of illegal weapons. Battalions can only discourage transportation of weapons by civilians through their presence. In areas where factions have issued permits to those individuals authorized to carry weapons the military may monitor the situation in support of the faction police.”

Dukers, Het Mijnenveld voor een Vredesmacht, 55. Dukers claims not to have been provided with UNTAC ROEs, so he acted on the Dutch Rules of Engagement (which in Dutch are more narrowly called “geweldsinstructie”, instructions for the use of force). After his return to The Netherlands Dukers quite frankly said during a lecture: “At times we did things for which we had no orders, such as having civilians handing in their weapons. This happened without any serious problems, probably because people had a barn full of weapons at home anyway.” Dukers, “Peace-keeping in Cambodia”, 2860.

UNTAC Standing Operating Proceeduring (May 1992), Section 4 – Use of Force, 76.

“Draft Directive of UNTAC relating to the possession and carrying of weapons and explosives applicable in Cambodia during the transitional period” (14 October 1992) ADFA, Sanderson Papers, box 16, folder 77; Opbevel 9/92, 12 October 1992; Uitgave Bureau S3, Local Mixed Military Working Group, Sector 1 (30 Spetember 1992) IMH, UNTAC, 099, inv. 52 Again, Gonzales refers to British counterinsurgency doctrine in this Dutchbat directive.

Dukers, “Peace-keeping in Cambodia”, 2850.

Dukers, “Peace-keeping in Cambodia”, 2852. It is impossible to reconstruct the exact number of confiscated weapons, since the Marines did not report in any length on this informal measure and its results. The estimates number of weapons confiscated in this manner was probably in the high hundreds. In the month of March 1993, for instance a mere ninety-one weapons and 3647 pieces of ammunition were confiscated. Twenty of those arms were returned to their owners. UNTAC Dutchbat II, Weekly SitREP no. 13 (21-27 March 1993); UNTAC Dutchbat II, Weekly SitREP no. 27 (29 May – 5 June 1993), CAD, TCBU, Documents UNTAC, box 1.

Both Cammaert and Huijssoon know of no other battalion initiating this policy prior to March 1993, but do not exclude that ad hoc disarmament occurred in other sectors. Interview with Major General Patrick Cammaert, New York, 15-16 October 2003; Interview with Colonel (retd.) Willem Huijssoon, Amsterdam, 4 May 2004.

Bais, Het Mijnenveld voor een Vredesmacht, 70.

Interview with Cammaert, 15-16 October 2003.

Bais, Het Mijnenveld voor een Vredesmacht, 69-70, 72. Dutch members of parliament showed how for estranged they were from the realities on the ground when Sanderson ordered his forces to create quick reaction forces for emergencies. The representatives considered such measures ‘not done’ in a peacekeeping operation. It was regarded as too aggressive. Meanwhile, the Marines had created a quick reaction force almost as soon as they had arrived in Cambodia.

Interview with Cammaert, 15-16 October 2003.

Interview with Huijssoon, 4 May 2004.

Bais, Het Mijnenveld voor een Vredesmacht, 73.

Interview with Cammaert, 15-16 October 2003.

Bais, Het Mijnenveld voor een Vredesmacht, 55.
56 Interview with Cammaert, 15-16 October 2003.
57 Sanderson, "UNTAC's Military Component", (Lecture, 3 Aug 1994). During a debriefing session in 1994 Sanderson recalled being plagued from the beginning of the operation to have the UNTAC military component become involved in internal security operations.
58 "This may be the understanding of the authors of the draft report, but unless it is stated fully and without equivocation there is likely to be considerable confusion and embarrassment." Sanderson to Gerard Procell (Director Civil Administration), 17 or 18 August 1992 (Handwritten note), Sanderson Papers, box 16, folder 77.
61 Fourth Emergency Meeting MMWG Level 1 (15 Oct 1992). All parties present, including the Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans. The ability of the Khmer Rouge to mount a large scale offensive was seriously questioned at this meeting. Schoonoord, Mariniers in Cambodja, 131.
63 Interview with Cammaert, 15-16 October 2003. Like for every UNTAC battalion, the name of the Bangladeshi unit was shortened. Huijssoon, who allocated these names prior to the deployment made a mistake by writing "Bangabatt" instead of "Banglabatt." The Bangladeshi commander never complained and it proved impossible to correct this mistake once it started appearing in every official document. Interview with Huijssoon, 4 May 2004.
64 Huijssoon to Sanderson, "Visit to Sector 1 (Dutchbatt)," 20 January 1993, ADFA, Sanderson Papers, box 26, folder 145.
65 Interview with Bijsterbosch, 28 January 2004.
66 Interview with Cammaert, 15-16 October 2003.
67 Interview with Bijsterbosch, 28 January 2004.
68 Interview with Cammaert, 15-16 October 2003.
71 Schoonoord, Mariniers in Cambodja, 182.
72 BBC Newsnight item on UNTAC, 22 February 1993.
73 UNTAC Dutchbatt II, Weekly Sitrep, no. 12 (13-20 Feb 1993), CAD, TCBU, Documents UNTAC, box 1.
74 Schoonoord, Mariniers in Cambodja, 182.
75 UNTAC Dutchbatt II, Weekly Sitrep, no. 13 (20-27 Feb 1993) CAD, TCBU, Documents UNTAC, box 1; UNTAC Dutchbatt II, Weekly Sitrep no. 15; In February the Marines escorted 40,000 returning refugees. UNTAC Dutchbatt Logbook (8 Feb 1993).
76 Interview with Cammaert, 15-16 October 2003; For the overall poor cooperation between the CivPol and the Military Component see Jamer A. Schear and Karl Farris, "Policing Cambodia: The Public Security Dimension of U.N. Peace Operations", in: Robert B. Oakley, Michael J. Dziedzic and Eliot M. Goldberg (eds.), Policing the New World Disorder, 90.

78 Interview with Cammaert, 15-16 October 2003.

79 UNTAC Dutchbat II, Weekly Sitrep no. 18, 28 March - 4 April 93, CAD, TCBU, Documents UNTAC, box 1.

80 UNTAC Dutchbat II, Weekly Sitrep no. 17, 21-27 March 1993, CAD, TCBU, Documents UNTAC, box 1


82 UNTAC Dutchbat II, Weekly Sitrep no. 20, 10-17 April 1993, CAD, TCBU, Documents UNTAC, box 1.

83 Interview with Bijsterbosch, 28 January 2004.

84 UNTAC Dutchbat II, Weekly Sitrep no. 15, 6-13 March 1993, CAD, TCBU, Documents UNTAC, box 1: “Problems” were addressed during anti-banditry meeting on March 8; Interview with Bijsterbosch, 28 January 2004.

85 Under UNTAC Directive 93/4 (17 March 1993) anyone illegally carrying weapons could be imprisoned from six months to three years.

86 UNTAC Dutchbat II, Weekly Sitrep, no. 19, 3-10 April 1993, CAD, TCBU, Documents UNTAC, box 1; UNTAC Dutchbat II, Weekly Sitrep, no. 19, 3-10 April 1993, Ibid.


91 Findley, Cambodia, 140-141.

92 Heininger, Peacekeeping in Transition, 75. As reported by the U.S. General Accounting Office investigator Tetsuo Miyabara. Record of meeting with Prince Norodom Sirivudh, vice president of FUNCINPEC and General Thon Penh, head of FUNCINCPEC Security.

93 Ibid.

94 Chief of Plans to Force Commander, “Visit ot Sector 1 (Dutchbat), 20 January 1993, ADFA, Sanderson Papers, box 26, folder 145.

95 Interview with Bijsterbosch, 28 January 2004.

96 UNTAC Dutchbat II, Weekly Sitrep no. 15, 6-13 March 1993, CAD, TCBU, Documents UNTAC, box 1.

97 Interview with Bijsterbosch, 28 January 2004. Later in the mission, there were other incident with much higher levels of violence involving Pakistani and Indian troops. However, it was the first known incident where UNTAC used force and did so with restraint. Interview with Huijssoon.

98 Sanderson to Akashi, Control of CPAF Activities, 17 March 1993, ADFA, Sanderson Papers, folder 12.


100 Interview with Cammaert, 15-16 October 2003. Also reported in the commander’s evaluation in UNTAC Dutchbat II, Weekly Sitrep no. 16, 13-20 March 1993, CAD, TCBU, Documents UNTAC, box 1.

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