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Cambodian killing fields refugee relates horrors of Khmer Rouge

By Paula Janda
Reporter

When Dith Pran left Cambodia seven years ago after surviving the Cambodian death camps, his nights were filled with the nightmare of the "killing fields." Now he dreams of his homeland the way it once was.

Pran's relationship with *New York Times* reporter Sydney Schanberg and his escape from the death camps were the basis of the film "The Killing Fields." He told an audience of about 400 Tuesday that he sometimes has to drink to make sleep come easier and keep the horrors of his war-torn nation from coming back to him.

The movie "The Killing Fields" is very mild compared to what he went through, Pran said. Although the people who made the movie were true to the story, he said, the scope of killing two to three million people wouldn't fit in a two-hour film.

What makes the killings more horrifying, Pran said, is that the people were being killed by their own government. In 1970, the Cambodian communists, the Khmer Rouge, began fighting the American-supported Lon Nol government and soon gained control of the country.

But during the rule of the Khmer Rouge, Cambodia became a mass grave for two million or more of the nation's seven million people. The killing fields were the places used for mass executions.

"In order to survive, we had to grab lizards, snakes, leaves and scorpions," Pran said. "I ate scorpions like you eat shrimp."

Pran said times were devastating, with Cambodians dying from starvation, disease, overwork and dismaying conditions, he said.

People sometimes died because they ate the wrong things, he said, and children were hit especially hard.

Other deaths were suicides, he said, because many people couldn't handle the horror of the situation.

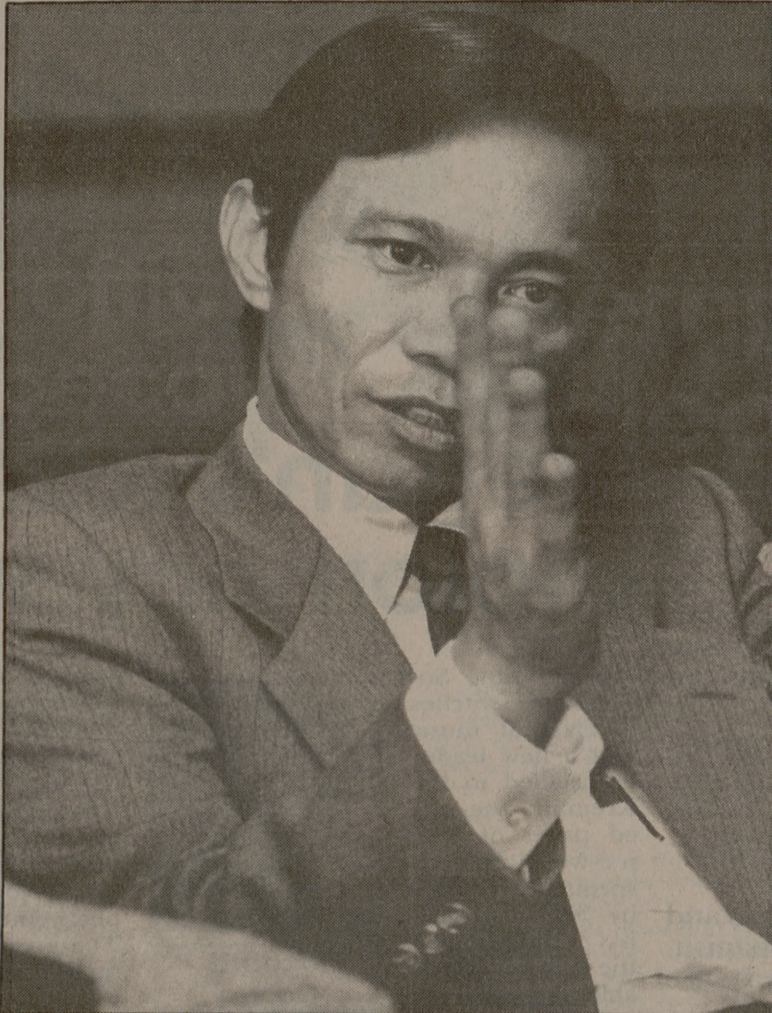
Pran said he was shocked that the Khmer Rouge forced even the crippled and the blind to work, making them chase birds out of the rice fields by clapping and yelling all day. And, he said, the crippled and blind weren't the only ones forced to work.

"They used kids from eight years old to work in the rice fields," Pran said.

The kids didn't have on any clothes and were barefooted, he said.

The movie comes to an end, but this type of killing and torture is going on every day, he said.

"I apologize for the sad story, but I am very happy that the message goes out," he said. "I would feel guilty if I did not speak up for those who died in my country, for those who are still suffering there. The killing fields go on, around the clock and around the world, in Afghanistan, in Nicaragua, in Africa."



Cambodian death camp survivor Dith Pran Photo by Tom Ownbey

GSU requests \$144 million rate increase

AUSTIN (AP) — Gulf States Utilities Tuesday asked the Public Utility Commission for a \$144.1 million rate hike, part of which the company claims it needs to avoid running out of money next spring.

GSU President E. Linn Draper said he knows the increase could be hard on ratepayers in the economically troubled Southeast Texas service area, but that bankruptcy for GSU would be worse.

"GSU wants to continue playing an active role in bringing in new industries and new jobs, but bankruptcy would have a disastrous impact on those efforts," Draper said.

Public Utility Counsel Jim Boyle, the state lawyer who represents residential and small business customers, said he is concerned about the financial well-being of GSU customers.

"If the alternative is to put customers into bankruptcy, that is not acceptable," Boyle said.

"Clearly the company has financial problems," he said. "There is a tendency for a company like this to point the finger at everyone but themselves."

Attorney General Jim Mattox announced he would intervene to challenge the GSU request. He estimated the increase could cost state government an additional \$2.4 million a year for power it buys from GSU.

"We don't want GSU in big trouble and we don't want ratepayers to

pay more than is absolutely necessary," Mattox said.

Company officials Tuesday trucked its 20-volume filing package to the PUC office in Austin. GSU serves 275,500 Texas customers.

The Beaumont-based company filed a two-part request that includes an emergency \$82 million increase that would take effect late this year and an additional \$62.1 million increase for next year.

Under PUC calculations, which differ from the method used by the company, the total increase would be \$153.8 million, according to commission spokeswoman Maria Baker.

According to GSU, the \$82 million emergency hike would raise the price of 1,000 kilowatt-hours for residential use from the current \$68.46 to \$75.05, which the company said would be about the same as customers paid in 1983 before fuel prices declined.

The additional \$62.1 million increase would bring monthly bills for 1,000 kwh to \$85.02.

This second increase would allow the company to cover costs of the River Bend Nuclear Plant in Louisiana, which went into commercial operation June 16 and supplies electricity for GSU customers in Texas and Louisiana.

See Rates, page 12

President 'not firing' adviser Parking garage proposal put on hold by board

By Mike Sullivan
Staff Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Reagan wants his national security adviser to remain on his job and is not annoyed at Secretary of State George Shultz for speaking his mind about U.S. arms shipments to Iran, a White House spokesman said Tuesday.

John Poindexter, the president's assistant for national security affairs, has been widely reported to have coordinated the administration's secret diplomatic contacts with Iran, which have brought sharp criticism from Capitol Hill and elsewhere.

On Tuesday, former President Gerald R. Ford was asked whether Poindexter should have to pay for any errors that may have been committed.

"Anybody who makes a mistake in this very complicated world has to take whatever the responsibilities are, and that's a judgment that the president has to make," he replied.

In a joint appearance on NBC's "Today" program with former President Jimmy Carter, Ford said that, "Who initiated this (dealing with Iran), who carried it out, I think, deserves some condemnation by certain people in the Congress, by people on the outside because it hasn't been, in my opinion, run as well as it ought to have been."

At the White House, spokesman Larry Speakes was asked whether Reagan wants Poindexter to stay.

"Yes," Speakes replied.

He gave the same one-word reply when asked whether Poindexter would remain at his post.

Shultz has made no secret of the fact that he opposes sending arms to Iran, but has acknowledged that he did not have authority to speak for the administration on the subject.

Asked whether the president was annoyed with Shultz for being outspoken, Speakes said, "No, he's not."

"I don't know. What does miffed mean?" Speakes replied, adding that, "All these questions are sort of imprecise."

Referring to another report suggesting that there would be a Cabinet reshuffling, Speakes said, "I haven't heard anybody give him (Reagan) that advice and I haven't given it to him."

Asked directly whether Shultz would remain in the Cabinet, Speakes said, "As far as I'm concerned, as far as the president's concerned."

Most students now at Texas A&M won't be here to reap the benefits of the proposed six-level, 2,000-car parking garage, but if the project is approved by the Coordinating Board in January as expected, students who are now freshmen may be parking in the lot as seniors.

The proposal for the new parking facility, originally scheduled to be considered by the Coordinating Board Oct. 31, was deferred by the board until January, said Wesley Peel, A&M System vice chancellor for facilities planning and construction.

The board's action was one of several taken at the meeting involving the A&M System.

Peel said the Coordinating Board was backlogged with proposals at its last meeting, and because A&M isn't going to award the construction contract until March, he offered to put

A&M gets \$8.2 million to expand utility plant

By Mike Sullivan
Staff Writer

The Coordinating Board has approved \$8.2 million in funding for utility plant expansion at A&M, the board's assistant commissioner in campus planning has said.

Gordon Flack said the utility plant funding was approved at the board's last meeting.

Wesley Peel, A&M System vice chancellor for facilities planning and

construction, said those funds will go toward adding three chillers and making room for additional boilers at the utility plant on the west side of campus.

The additions to the utility plant are needed to support new buildings and future construction in that area of campus, Peel said.

More than half of the money approved for the utility plant project

will pay for the underground piping required for expansion projects on the west campus, Peel said.

In other action, the Coordinating Board:

• Deferred a proposal by the Texas A&M Agricultural Research Station to use \$2.7 million in state funds for renovations to the agricultural labs and residences and for improvements of sites.

Flack said the board also examines whether proposed facilities are really needed.

He said board members were convinced by Peel and his staff that the parking lot is necessary.

"I think A&M has really done its homework on this particular project," Flack said. "Basically the only

thing we wanted a little more time on was to see if the cost that the University was paying is in line with comparable projects."

Paul Stevenson, manager of facilities planning, said that if the parking lot proposal is approved by the board in January, A&M will begin to advertise for bids on the project at the end of that month.

He said bids for the project will be taken during the month of February and the contract will be awarded in March.

"Roughly speaking, it should take about 20 months to complete the project (once it's awarded)," Stevenson said.

Stevenson said the parking lot will be built directly across the street from the Blocker Building where the Physical Plant offices are now located.

Judge: CS official removed because of poor job results

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal judge Tuesday dismissed an Agriculture Department official's charge that he was transferred from College Station in retaliation for a sexual harassment complaint that led to his boss' suspension.

U.S. District Judge John H. Pratt ruled that James P. Jones was transferred to Washington because of poor performance in his role as the second highest-ranking official in the Texas division of the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service.

Jones, 63, filed a discrimination suit in 1984, alleging his move out of College Station that year came because he had filed sexual harassment charges against his boss, Charles W. Mayfield, on behalf of several women in Texas ASCS offices.

Mayfield was suspended for 30 days by the U.S. Department of Agriculture after an internal investigation validated Jones' accusations and found that Mayfield had sought sex in return for promotions on several occasions.

Employees' sworn statements also said Mayfield allowed a woman to drive a government car home and that he carried alcoholic beverages in a government vehicle.

But Pratt said evidence introduced by Justice Department attorneys had convinced him Jones' transfer was made because of a poor

work record and not in retaliation for blowing the whistle on his boss.

"The record clearly shows that Jones had a history of performance inadequacies over a long period . . . that he frequently challenged major decisions of his superiors and was insubordinate . . . that he was disruptive and disloyal and preoccupied with seeking Mayfield's removal and that there was an irreconcilable personality clash between the two men."

"The facts do not support Jones' claim of retaliation," Pratt wrote in his decision. "The decision to transfer Jones was made by Washington officials confronted with an impossible situation . . . which was adversely affecting the office's efficiency."

Jones' attorney, Andrew Lipps, said that Pratt's decision was disappointing and that he would decide whether to appeal after a thorough study of the ruling.

"In light of the very important issues under the civil rights laws, we will be seriously considering an appeal," Lipps said.

"The findings of sexual harassment against Mayfield . . . would never have come to light had it not been for the actions of J.P. Jones," he said.

"Mayfield should take no pleasure in a decision by the court that reaf-

Chernobyl may yet lack nuclear safety upgrade

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Soviet Union most likely has resumed operation of some nuclear plants without making the safety improvements promised in the wake of the Chernobyl accident, Energy Secretary John Herrington said Tuesday.

"Our best estimate is they started Chernobyl up probably too soon to do all the upgrades they said they were going to do," Herrington said after testifying at a Senate hearing. "We are reasonably sure they are operating reactors today without the upgrades they promised."

Asked if the safety improvements eventually will be made, Herrington replied, "There's no way of knowing. I certainly hope so."

Herrington also said the United States is having trouble getting information about two reactors the Soviet Union is building near Cienfuegos, Cuba, 180 miles from Key West. He said the Soviets were reluctant to discuss the plants in August at a meeting in Vienna.

"The typical response was, you will be reading about this in our technical journals," he said. "And that is not good enough in this situation."

The first plant was started in 1983 and scheduled to go on line next year. Construction on the second began in 1985 with start-up planned for 1990. However,

Herrington said there have been delays, and operation of the first plant is "not imminent."

The secretary said he suspects the reactors will not be of the same design as the graphite-moderated plant that caught fire at Chernobyl. But he said the United States has no details about the construction of the Cuban

"Our best estimate is they started Chernobyl up probably too soon to do all the upgrades they said they were going to do."

— Energy secretary John Herrington.

plants, their safety systems and who will be operating them.

The energy secretary said uncertainties about the reactors include:

• Containment building. The first reactor under construction does have one, but U.S. experts lack information about the degree of steel reinforcement, the concentration of concrete used and other specifics.

• Fire safety system. Is there one and if so, what kind?

• Instrumentation. Herrington said Finland has agreed to put a sophisticated system in So-

viet reactors, but it is unclear whether the Cuban plants will have the same one.

• Simulators. The Finns have an outstanding system that operators use to practice, but it is not known whether Soviet reactors or the Cuban ones will have anything comparable, Herrington said.

Ambassador-at-large Richard Kennedy, a board member of the International Atomic Energy Agency, said he has urged Soviet and Cuban authorities to provide the type of information that is in the public domain in this country.

"We have indicated to the government of Cuba . . . we're prepared to make further information available. We expect them to do the same vis-a-vis the reactors in Cuba," he told Sen. Thad Cochran, R-Miss., chairman of the Governmental Affairs subcommittee on energy, nuclear proliferation and governmental processes.

Kennedy said the United States has made it "absolutely clear" it expects the highest safety standards to be applied to the Cuban reactors. He also said the United States is urging the IAEA, a United Nations agency, to become more involved by making safety suggestions to Cuba.

Both Herrington and Kennedy expressed doubts about the feasibility of international safety standards and inspections.

See Ruling, page 12