

Charges against Khmer Rouge chiefs dropped

Lindsay Murdoch

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THE Khmer Rouge commander who sent two Australian yachtsmen to Cambodia's notorious Tuol Sleng interrogation centre where they were tortured and killed in 1978 will escape justice at a United Nations tribunal in Phnom Penh.

Meas Muth, now in his 70s, was chief of the Khmer Rouge navy when his men captured Ronald Keith Dean and David Lloyd Scott after their yacht had strayed into Cambodian waters at a time the world was still unaware of a reign of terror under fanatical Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot.

The UN tribunal is set to drop charges against Meas Muth and Sou Met, the Khmer Rouge's air force chief, despite evidence of their crimes against humanity following the intervention of Cambodian strongman Hun Sen, a former Khmer Rouge cadre.

Prime Minister Hun Sen has told the UN he will not allow any further trials at the tribunal after the conclusion of hearings against five ageing Khmer Rouge leaders.

The trials, officially called the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, are in chaos following bitter internal disagreements and staff resignations.

The proceedings have cost almost \$150 million since they were established in 2006.

Mr Meas Muth, who rose to the rank of general in Cambodia's military after defecting from the Khmer Rouge, is believed to be a high-level adviser to Mr Hun Sen's Defence Ministry.

UN and other investigators have established that Mr Meas Muth was responsible for the murders of many captured Vietnamese and Thai fishermen as well as a number of Western yachtsmen.