

## ALASKA NATIVE NEWS

### **Former top Khmer Rouge figure denies charges before Tribunal in Cambodia December 7, 2011**

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia-Viet Nam, not the Khmer Rouge, is responsible for the genocide that led to the deaths of as many as two million Cambodians during the late 1970s, the former second-in-command of the notorious regime told a United Nations-backed war crimes tribunal Monday.

Nuon Chea, 85, the former deputy secretary of the Communist Party of Kampuchea and “Brother Number Two,” told the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) in Phnom Penh that Viet Nam “controlled everything” during the period that led to the rule of the Khmer Rouge between 1975 and 1979.

“These war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide were not committed by the Cambodian people,” he said on the opening day of testimony in his trial. “It was the Vietnamese who killed Cambodians. The charges against me are not right.”

Mr. Nuon and two other former senior Khmer Rouge figures, Ieng Sary and Khieu Samphan, are facing trial at the ECCC on charges of genocide, crimes against humanity and grave breaches of the 1949 Geneva Convention.

Prosecutors have alleged that Mr. Nuon, Mr. Ieng and Mr. Khieu carried out a series of crimes, including killings, enslavement, the use of violence to “smash” enemies, forced marriage, religious persecution and the forced movements of people from urban to rural areas.

Today Mr. Nuon said he joined the local leftist resistance movement during the French colonial era with the hope of building an independent nation based on social justice.

He said neighbouring Viet Nam had dominated the Communist movement throughout the region, sponsored a resistance movement within Cambodia and installed a client regime in 1979 after the fall of the Khmer Rouge.

“I don’t want the next generation to misunderstand history. I don’t want them to believe the Khmer Rouge are bad people, are criminal. Nothing is true about that.”

The ECCC is a mixed court set up under a 2003 agreement between the UN and the Cambodian Government with the aim of trying those accused of the worst crimes during the genocide.