



Khmer Rouge Court Hears of Mass Killing
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In late April of 1975, victorious commanders from the guerrilla group that would come to be known as the Khmer Rouge summoned Pursat province military officials from the defeated regime to the provincial headquarters.

Wearing uniforms of the crushed Khmer Republic, which Lon Nol led after staging a coup in 1970, the assembled numbered up to 3,000.

Via a loudspeaker, the new Khmer Rouge overlords told them they had nothing to worry about, and that they would be re-integrated into the army. Some, they vowed, would even be given higher ranks.

“They left the meeting happy and undisturbed,” a court officer said yesterday, reading a description of the event that was added on Monday to the case load of the first mini-trial of Case 002.

What happened to the officials next, of course, had nothing to do with promises made.

They were, according to the document read out in court, brought in caravans of 30 to 40 people to a killing site called Tuol Po Chrey, on an elevated piece of ground near the western shores of Tonle Sap.

Their hands were tied behind their backs.

“There were not enough trucks to transport all the victims at once, so a number of round trips had to be made,” the court officer said.

The soldiers were said to have spent the entire day shooting the Khmer Republic officials. They buried them in their uniforms in mass graves with the help of bulldozers. Extra bodies were dumped in a small lake nearby.

The execution site was, according to the allegations, operational from April, 1975 until some time in 1997.

Eliminating former Lon Nol civil servants, soldiers and police was part and parcel of the Khmer Rouge's policy of creating a homogenous society free of the taint of the old regime.

The evidence contained instances when the three senior leaders on trial in Case 002, Nuon Chea, Khieu Samphan and Ieng Sary, showed an understanding of the policy of "targeting of specific groups".

It also called attention to a party document released in September, 1975 that specified the only two types of classes — peasants and workers — allowed to exist in the new order.

But that wasn't the last word on the matter. Today, co-accused Nuon Chea is supposed to respond to the allegations in the killing-site report.