

## **Vietnam Relationship Back in KRT**

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Former Khmer Rouge Brother No 2 Nuon Chea testified yesterday that he was “concerned” for the future of his country because of what he claimed were territorial ambitions of Vietnam, echoing earlier testimony in describing the situation as “a snake which tries to suffocate a rabbit”.

Under questioning from his co-defence counsel, Michiel Pestman, about his early life, Nuon Chea said he did not know “what the future will hold” for Cambodia.

The 85-year-old defendant said that while in the past the two countries had cooperated, the “Vietnamese were regarded as enemies because they had the ambition to swallow Kampuchean territory”, Nuon Chea said.

“They were just ready and prepared to swallow us, even at present.”

Trial Chamber president Nil Nonn asked that Nuon Chea respond only to questions that were asked of him and stay within the confines of the first “mini-trial” of Case 002.

During evidence hearings in December last year, Nuon Chea testified that Vietnam had attempted to “swallow” Cambodia, in comments that prompted criticisms from civil parties and court observers.

Student Chhoeun Vathana, 17, who attended yesterday’s hearing, said he had been told that people from Cambodia and Vietnam had never liked each other.

“I heard from my grandfather that Khmer and Vietnam never liked each other,” he said.

“They always had arguments and sometimes they fought.”

Nuon Chea also testified that he had been in contact with current National Assembly President Heng Samrin and Senate President Chea Sim – both former Khmer Rouge cadre before fleeing to Vietnam to join the resistance against the regime – after he returned to Cambodia in the pre-1975 period.

Under earlier questioning from civil party lawyer Barnabé Nékuie, Nuon Chea said people who lived and worked in cooperatives in the countryside were not permitted to leave.

“If they were to live in the cooperatives they could not go anywhere, they would stay and live and work in the cooperatives,” he said.

Nuon Chea testified on Monday that he was not responsible for cooperatives organised by the Khmer Rouge.