



## **Nixon, U.S. blamed for Cambodia genocide**

**UPI**

**April 6, 2009**

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia, April 6 (UPI) -- A notorious former Khmer Rouge prison commander on trial for war crimes says U.S. backing for Cambodia's right-wing government set the stage for genocide.

Kaing Guek Eav, also known as Duch, testified during his trial on charges that he oversaw the torture and execution of 17,000 victims at the S-21 prison camp that Pol Pot's communist Khmer Rouge movement would have died off in 1970 had not U.S. President Richard Nixon backed right wing military strongman Lon Nol, The Times of London reported.

When the autocratic Prince Norodom Sihanouk was deposed in a 1970 coup the leftist Khmer Rouge was in disarray but the overt backing of Lon Nol by Nixon and U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger as the Vietnam War raged nearby generated a backlash against the government and rescued Pol Pot's movement from oblivion, Duch reportedly testified.

"I think the Khmer Rouge would already have been demolished," The Times quoted him saying. "But Mr. Kissinger and Richard Nixon were quick (to back Lon Nol) and then the Khmer Rouge noted the golden opportunity."

The reign of the Khmer Rouge from 1975-79 saw the deaths of 1.7 million Cambodians through execution, starvation and overwork, historians say.