



## **KRouge prison chief denies waterboarding**

**AFP**

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The former Khmer Rouge prison chief has denied he waterboarded or suffocated detainees as he detailed his torture techniques to Cambodia's UN-backed war crimes trial.

Duch -- whose real name is Kaing Guek Eav -- apologised at the start of his trial last month for the torture and extermination of 15,000 people who passed through the regime's Tuol Sleng prison, also known as S-21.

But he said he had not used the simulated drowning technique called waterboarding, and had not put plastic bags over prisoners' heads because of the danger they could suffocate to death.

"The kind of waterboarding technique was not employed and the plastic bag was also not a kind of technique," Duch said.

Duch said he discussed interrogation tactics with Khmer Rouge cadres soon after he began working at the prison.

"There were two techniques. The normal beating technique and the electrocution technique with use of a telephone (line)... which was connected to an electric current to electrocute prisoners. That was true," Duch said.

The United States has been heavily criticised for using waterboarding to interrogate suspected Al-Qaeda prisoners, with many commentators citing it as a brutal method of the Khmer Rouge.

Duch is charged with crimes against humanity, war crimes, torture and premeditated murder over the extermination of thousands of people between 1975 and 1979 at Tuol Sleng and the nearby "Killing Fields."

However, he has denied prosecutors' claims that he played a central role in the Khmer Rouge's iron-fisted rule, and maintains he never personally executed anyone. He faces life in jail but the court does not have the power to impose the death penalty.

Four other senior leaders from the regime are scheduled to be tried within the next year.

Many believe the UN-sponsored tribunal is the last chance to find justice for victims of the regime, which killed up to two million people through starvation, overwork, torture and execution.

The Khmer Rouge were ousted in 1979 by Hanoi-backed forces who discovered Tuol Sleng and established the facility as a museum to display the regime's crimes.