

# The Phnom Penh Post

**S-21 called worst prison**  
**Cheang Sokha**  
**May 29, 2009**

*Expert tells court 'techniques' more brutal than other centres.*

American specialist Craig Etcheson sought to dispute defence arguments that Duch was a scapegoat for the wrongs of the Khmer Rouge regime, telling the UN-backed war crimes court Thursday that the torture techniques used at S-21 were more horrendous than those at other security offices throughout the country.

Speaking at the trial of former S-21 chief Kaing Guek Eav, Etcheson, who is currently an investigator with the co-prosecutors, said that at zone-level security offices and the security offices situated in the regime's lower echelons, the main torture techniques were "whipping, suffocation with a plastic bag and electrocution".

However at S-21, methods such as "burning, removing fingernails and toenails, putting salt or saltwater on wounds, tormenting people with poisonous insects", were used.

"There was a difference in the torture practices at S-21 and the torture practices at other security offices," Craig Etcheson told the chamber.

Etcheson, who is the author of *The Rise and Demise of Democratic Kampuchea*, was called on to provide expert testimony on the implementation of regime policy at S-21 prison.

Answering questions put by civil party lawyer Alain Werner about the policy of "smashing" cadres, Etcheson emphasised that the policy meant more than just a bullet to the head.

"Smash means something more than killing," Etcheson explained. "It was to smash into little pieces."

He said that starvation could also be considered a form of smashing.

"Starvation of prisoners in the security offices appeared to be a very widespread policy throughout Democratic Kampuchea."

Cambodian defence lawyer Kar Savuth disputed claims made by Etcheson that the S-21 prison was the regime's largest torture facility.