

**MODUS OPERANDI**  
**FOR**  
**A WEAPONS DESTRUCTION CEREMONY**



**Phnom Penh, September 2002**

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## INTRODUCTION

In 1999 in Cambodia, small arms – despite the Royal Government's efforts beginning in 1998 to collect illegally-held weapons – posed a major threat to public order and human security. After thirty years of war Cambodia's peace and stability was still undermined by the continued availability and circulation of large quantities of weapons – legal and illegal. It is estimated that hundreds of thousands of small arms and light weapons were in use or stored by the army and police, probably far beyond what was needed for legitimate defense and the maintenance of law and order. In 1999 the military had no idea of the number of weapons they possessed as no weapons registration records were in existence.

On November 15, 1999, the Council of Ministers of the European Union decided to support the Royal Government of Cambodia in its effort to combat the potentially destabilizing accumulation and spread of small arms and light weapons throughout the country and to contribute to promoting the control, collection and destruction of weapons in Cambodia.

The EU Council of Ministers stated that the excessive and uncontrolled accumulation of small arms and light weapons poses a threat to peace and security and reduces the prospects for sustainable development.



Field research has revealed that weapons and ammunition are stored under deplorable conditions. Weapons are often piled up inside wooden depots, which are mostly unguarded and easily accessible for unauthorized persons. Other weapons were hidden years ago in forest caches, painful relics of the war period.

### **EU ASAC Programme.**

The EU ASAC assistance in curbing small arms and light weapons in Cambodia has developed into a comprehensive, multi faceted integrated approach to limiting the severe problems caused by small arms and light weapons in the country. It is part of the European Union's Action Plan on Small Arms and Light Weapons.

The major elements of the EU ASAC programme are:

1. Providing technical assistance to the Cambodian Ministry of National Defense and the Ministry of Interior in drawing up a new Arms Law;
2. A Weapons Registration and Safe Storage Programme for the military and the police;

3. Voluntary hand-over of illegally-held weapons by civilians through “ Weapons for Development” projects;
4. Public Awareness campaigns on the dangers of illegally-held small arms;
5. Weapons Destruction through Flames of Peace Ceremonies.

Weapons destruction ceremonies can be held in each of the 24 Provinces of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

Weapons to be destroyed can come from:

- Military surplus weapons as a result of the registration of the legally held weapons in the military regions.
- Weapons confiscated by the police
- Weapons voluntarily handed in by the civilian population.
- Weapons found in weapons caches

There are a number of ways in which weapons can be destroyed:<sup>1</sup>

- Burning
- Cutting: oxy – acetylene torch and plasma cutter
- Cutting / Crushing: hydraulic shears
- Shredding
- Crushing / bending with vehicles
- Dumping at sea
- Other methods

EU ASAC prefers to destroy the weapons by burning them in a symbolic Flame of Peace.



These guidelines for holding a Flame of Peace destruction ceremony have been drawn up using the experience EU ASAC has gained organizing a dozen large ceremonies between April 2001 and September 2002

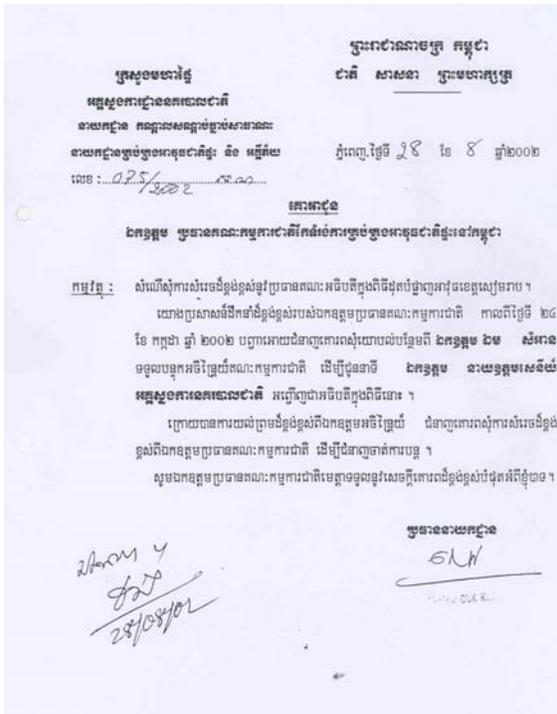
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<sup>1</sup> Bonn International Center for Conversion, Report 13: Destroying Small Arms and Light Weapons, April 1999, pages 20 to 25

## GENERAL PREPARATIONS FOR A WEAPONS DESTRUCTION CEREMONY

To facilitate the execution of a weapons destruction ceremony the following should be agreed upon:

- Initial discussions with the Governor of the Province should take place establishing the number of weapons collected and the condition of these weapons.
- At these discussions a representative from the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defense should be present. Photos should be taken of the weapons and the storage conditions of these weapons. This is to ensure that not only old and un-serviceable weapons are offered for destruction.



After the number of weapons are agreed the Governor of the Province should ask permission of the National Commission for Weapons Management and Reform, to destroy the weapons collected by the military, the police and the gendarmerie. Often these documents are prepared by the representative of the Ministry of Interior.

- A date should be set to organize a Flame of Peace Ceremony.

To organize the Flame of Peace Ceremony the Governor of the Province will be financially and technically assisted by EU ASAC.

To obtain financial support the Governor has to provide to EU ASAC a budget plan. This budget plan should also include the necessary means to destroy the weapons. EU

ASAC will provide details of these means. During a meeting between the Governor and the Project Manager EU ASAC this budget plan will be discussed and the final amount of money will be agreed upon.<sup>2</sup>

EU ASAC has to prepare an **AGREEMENT** that will be signed by both the Governor and the Project Manager EU ASAC stating the maximum amount of financial support for the destruction ceremony<sup>3</sup>. The budget plan for the ceremony will be attached to the Agreement.

### **Invitations**

It should be agreed upon who will invite who. It is suggested that:

The Royal Cambodian Government invites: Ambassadors,

The Ministry of the Interior invites: Government Officials and the Cambodian Press,

The Governor invites: local Authorities, Monks, local NGO's and a representation of the population,

EU ASAC invites International Organizations, International Press and NGO's.



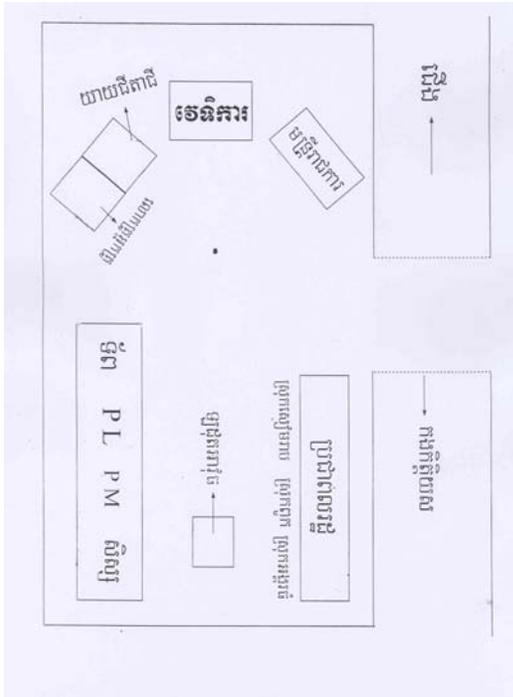
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<sup>2</sup> See Annex 1: Draft budget plan

<sup>3</sup> See Annex 2: Draft Agreement

## A STEP BY STEP GUIDE FOR A FLAME OF PEACE

During the initial meeting with the Governor a suitable site for the destruction should be surveyed and agreed upon. In most cases the local “stadium” can be used.



Also a schematic drawing should be made of the ceremony site which indicates where the pyre should be.



Next tape should be used to outline the destruction pyre on the ground.



After the site has been determined and taped off, a demining organization will check for mines and explosives buried under the destruction site.

Demining organizations in Cambodia are:

1. CMAC
2. HALO Trust
3. NPA
4. MAG

Local workers should fill the sandbags.



These sandbags are placed on the outside of the tape to ensure a minimum working area.

A plastic sheet is placed on the ground to prevent diesel oil to drain into the ground. Wooden poles are placed as shown in this picture and secured with steel wire.



The spaces between the wooden poles are filled with charcoal.



On top of the charcoal, chopped wood is placed.



**Cleaning and checking of the weapons.**



The representative from the Ministry of Interior or, in case of military weapons, the representative of the Ministry of National Defense, is responsible for the cleaning and checking operation of the weapons to ensure that no live ammunition is left inside the weapons.



After checking and cleaning the weapons are transported to the destruction site.

Military / police personnel should place the weapons on the pyre.  
All weapons should be directed towards a safe area.



After the first layer of weapons a new layer of wooden poles is placed in the same manner as the original layers.

On top of the last layer of weapons a symbolic monument of the different types of weapons to be destroyed is placed.





After the speeches diesel oil is poured over the weapons.



Representatives of the Royal Government, Embassies and International Organizations should be invited to light the fire. These fires burn for a period between 36 and 48 hours

