

CSI REPORT NO. 15

**UN PEACEKEEPER IN CAMBODIA,
1991-1992: AN INTERVIEW WITH
MAJOR GEORGE STEUBER**

Interview conducted by Dr. Jerold E. Brown



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FOREWORD

In the wake of the cold war, peacekeeping—or, more appropriately, peace enforcing—is becoming an increasingly important role for military forces around the world. Because of the many other missions it has been responsible for, the U.S. Army has not participated significantly in United Nations peacekeeping missions in the past. That situation will almost certainly change in the future. Indeed, President George Bush's December 1992 decision to commit U.S. forces to a humanitarian peacekeeping role in Somalia may be indicative of the future use of our military forces.

In 1991, two U.S. Army officers, Major George Steuber and Major James Faust, and a U.S. Marine, Major John Dill, were sent on a dual mission as liaison officers with the United Nations Advanced Mission to Cambodia and as part of the United Nations Transition Authority in Cambodia. The experiences of these officers offer a number of valuable lessons on the pitfalls and frustrations of being part of an international peacekeeping force.

In this interview, Major Steuber shares with us a number insights he gained during his tour in Cambodia. Officers who are themselves preparing to join peacekeeping missions will find Major Steuber's experiences and ideas particularly interesting. And those officers who perhaps never expect to participate in such missions will find much in Steuber's words to reflect upon.

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Dr. Brown: I am Dr. Jerold Brown, and this is the 25th of September 1992. I am interviewing this afternoon Major George Steuber on a list of questions that we have presented him on his experience in the peacekeeping mission in Cambodia. I'm going to ask Major Steuber a series of questions and allow him to answer them to his own satisfaction, and we will go through this list of questions until we are finished. The first question, Major Steuber, is why were you selected for this assignment?

Major Steuber: I was selected for this assignment based on a requirement that was developed by the Department of the Army for sending foreign area officers to Cambodia. The initial requirement was for three U.S. Army officers, and that was modified to two U.S. Army officers and a Marine officer. Both of the U.S. Army officers are Southeast Asia foreign area officers. My compatriot, Major James Faust, was trained in the Indonesian Staff College as his regional training, and I went to the Thai Staff College.

Dr. Brown: Would you tell us what your mission was specifically and how your stated mission compared to what you actually did when you arrived in Cambodia?

Major Steuber: Our mission was actually in two parts. The first part was as liaison officers assigned to the United Nations Advanced Mission in Cambodia. We use the acronym UNAMIC for that. UNAMIC was authorized by the comprehensive political agreement for a resolution to the conflict in Cambodia. It was authorized under the broad heading of the secretary general providing good offices to the four Cambodia factions in resolving the conflict. UNAMIC itself was not mentioned in the treaty, and that was a sticking point. One of the factions, the National Army of Democratic Kampuchea, otherwise known as the Khmer Rouge, refused in many instances to recognize UNAMIC as a legitimate agency in country. Under UNAMIC, we were brought in, and the mission was to establish liaison with the four fighting factions in Cambodia. Those four factions are the Cambodian People's Armed Forces for the state of Cambodia, the National Army of Democratic Kampuchea (the Khmer Rouge), the Khmer People's National Liberation Armed Forces (the Lon Nol faction), and the National Army of Independent Kampuchea,

which is the Sihanouk faction. We were supposed to establish liaison with those four factions so they could resolve issues. We were also supposed to establish a mixed military working group, which goes by the acronym MMWG. That working group was established with the senior UN military officer at its head and the four chiefs of the general staff or comparable officers from the four factions acting as the senior officers.

We were to carry out a comprehensive mine-awareness program throughout Cambodia because of the presence of some 3 to 4 million mines within the country and because they take about 300 casualties per month due to mine-related incidents. Finally, an implied mission for UNAMIC was to prepare for the United Nations Transition Authority in Cambodia or UNTAC. And the unit's missions eventually expanded because of the problems with mines in country, to include a mine-clearing portion and also to commence training mine-clearing training teams. These teams were to be drawn from the four military factions within Cambodia, receive training for mine clearing, and then set about clearing the 3 to 4 million mines in country.

Finally, the last part of our mission was with the United Nations Transition Authority in Cambodia. UNTAC's primary mission was to regroup, disarm, and canton 100 percent of the regular military forces of the four fighting factions. In addition to that, they were supposed to regroup and disarm all the militia forces of the factions and then demobilize 100 percent of the militia and 70 percent of the regular armed forces of the four factions. That was the primary mission. UNTAC was also supposed to provide security for repatriation for approximately 370,000 displaced Cambodians within the border areas of Thailand. It was supposed to ensure that all foreign forces had left the country and would ensure that they did not return. Other missions were to maintain the sovereignty of the state of Cambodia, investigate any violations of the cease-fire agreement, and rebuild the infrastructure of a country which was literally destroyed by the last two decades of war.

Let's go back to UNAMIC. Our stated mission was to establish liaison with the four factions, and we, in fact, did that. We also prepared the way for UNTAC, and eventually, once UNTAC was established on the 15th of March, UNAMIC then rolled into and became UNTAC. When I left

on the 1st of June, we were in the process of deploying the military peacekeeping forces, eleven battalions, into the outlying areas.

Dr. Brown: How did the briefing that you received prior to going to Cambodia compare to what you actually found?

Major Steuber: The only briefing that I received prior to departing for Cambodia was a briefing from United States Pacific Command headquarters intel personnel and also the people from the J5 policy branch within CINCPAC. I received no briefing from either Department of the Army, DCSOPS, ODO, which is the executive agency for the mission, or from anyone in the United Nations. I went into this, as did my two compatriots, a Marine major, John Dill, and Major Faust, blind with really no idea of what we were supposed to do aside from what we learned from the intel group.

Dr. Brown: How was your force structured?

Major Steuber: The force structure, first off, was a multinational force, and when I got into Cambodia, the only military portion of the force that had arrived was the headquarters elements and some supporting national contingents. One national contingent was the French contingent that provided air transportation, C160 fixed-wing aircraft and Puma helicopters. The Australians provided a communications contingent for internal headquarters communications, and they also provided communications to the team sites. New Zealanders came in as a country contingent with personnel trained in mine training teams and also conducted the initial public information campaign about the mines. There was also a German contingent that provided medical support.

On the structure of the headquarters, senior officers were designated by the UN. The commander was a French brigadier general, Loridon; the second in command was an Indonesian lieutenant colonel, Tinggagoy; and the chief of staff position was originally filled by a Polish lieutenant colonel. The rest of the personnel that came in were put into their positions based on decisions made in New York, and then once the advance party was in place on 9 November, decisions were made in Cambodia. The structure as such did not have any noncommissioned

officers or warrant officers to do the work in the headquarters. All we had were liaison officers brought in at that point from twenty-three different countries. So all the administrative support was provided by United Nations civilians. That support, even from my coming into country in December was inadequate to the mission, and I will discuss that problem.

Once we had gotten into country, we were broken up into teams, liaison teams to establish liaison with the four factions and also support teams. Those teams were located at Battambang and Siem Reap. Battambang is a major headquarters for the state of Cambodia forces. Siem Reap was also a major headquarters, and both of those locations had airfields that were in working order. They received both civilian and military flights of the state of Cambodia. There were three remote team sites that were established, one remote site with each one of the other three factions. Those were for the ANKI or National Army of Independent Kampuchea—that was at Phum Ku on the Thai border in the northwestern portion of Cambodia; the Khmer People's National Liberation Armed Forces, or the KPNLAF headquarters, that was Team Delta at Banteay Meanrith, again on the Thai border; and the last remote site was at Pailin with the NADK or Khmer Rouge. That was our Team Echo, again, very close to the Thai border. In addition, there was a small liaison cell, initially two officers, that was in Pnom Penh and that did direct liaison with the armed forces of the state of Cambodia. There was one liaison officer in Bangkok whose job was to receive UN military personnel coming through Bangkok and into Cambodia. In February, we established another team site at Kampong Thom that became Team Gulf because of the fighting going on in that province.

Once the UNAMIC mission expanded to include training for mine clearing, training team personnel, and also to do some initial mine clearing, a Thai engineer battalion was brought into country under the auspices of the UN. That engineer battalion started to clear portions of Route 5, which is the major road that runs from the Thai-Cambodian border at Poipet all the way to Pnom Penh. That engineer battalion was also augmented by another Thai engineer battalion that came into country under a bilateral agreement between the state of Cambodia and Thailand. Again, that battalion started in Thailand and proceeded to

clear the road between Poipet, right on the border, and Sisaphon. The UN battalion worked from Sisaphon to Battambang. All of this is on one route, 5, which is the main supply route.

Finally, under the UNTAC mission, UNTAC has eleven infantry battalions, and these infantry battalions are used to take over cantonment areas within the country. They have established cantonment areas based on one battalion being capable of taking care of five cantonment sites within a battalion's area. UNTAC also has an engineer capability, one engineer regiment with an airfield troop, a rail battalion, a field engineer battalion, and a vertical construction battalion. It has a communications support group, which expands the original Australian communications contingent to provide communications throughout the country for all military operations. There was also a supply regiment brought in to provide logistics support for the units. Those are the main units that would be operating in country.

There were some major problems with the way the force was structured. First off, there were no noncommissioned officers or warrant officers working within the headquarters to provide support for the activities for the headquarters, and this made for some really distinct problems. The civilian UN personnel that were supporting the force only worked five days a week, whereas the military force was deployed working seven days a week. The civilian administrative personnel had never had any sort of interaction with a military force before, had no idea what military terms meant. I think one of the key problems was that by bringing in an ad hoc group of officers as a headquarters, there was absolutely no common doctrine and no common operating system within the headquarters. Without a backbone of noncommissioned officers and warrant officers to do the work, we had some severe problems with officers not knowing how to do the sorts of things that they were being asked to do, having no experience in it. In some cases, because of the way their armed forces worked, these people were literally unwilling to do those sorts of things. There was absolutely no common training as to how to do things, how to write reports, and those sorts of things. In fact, when I left country after six months, neither UNAMIC nor UNTAC had yet published a standard operating procedure for doing anything from an

operational standpoint or a sustainment support standpoint, which you can imagine is a very distinct disadvantage.

Another problem was lack of an intel section or secretariat. The way the force was structured initially, there was one person who was supposed to handle information within the headquarters, information that would be part of the normal intel function. Without an intel capability, there was no way to take reports from the field, collate them, and get them to the people that needed them. The insufficient intel capability gave us immediate problems—the same thing with not having a structured headquarters with a common doctrine. Messages would come into the headquarters but would not be delivered to the right personnel, and no taskings were assigned. Again, when I left at the end of six months, there was no secretary that took a message, established who it should be going to, assigned a tasking and a suspense date, and then ensured that the tasking was met. And so those things were not done.

There were also some major language problems. General Loridon, the commander of UNAMIC, did speak some English; he was fairly good at it. However, the mission was established as a dual-language mission, and everyone was supposed to speak both French and English. I would say that easily 75 percent of the people coming into the mission spoke no French at all. Most of them spoke English. Very few of them spoke Cambodian or related languages. That was a problem in Cambodia because of the Khmer Rouge and because of the fighting that's been going on for two decades. The school system has been virtually destroyed, and there are very few interpreters that can work adequately in translating English to Khmer or French to Khmer. And so, immediately, language capability was a large problem. Within my team, Team Delta on the Thai border, my team leader was an Argentinian lieutenant colonel. He spoke Spanish, and he spoke a very limited bit of French. He spoke no English at all. So our immediate problem was the team leader couldn't talk to the team. That's a distinct problem as you might well guess.

There were also some very distinct problems with assigning senior military personnel based on political agreements rather than based on competency. The deputy commander of UNAMIC was absolutely

worthless. He did not know what he was doing and contributed absolutely nothing to the military mission. There were a number of other people who'd fall in the same category. As long as political appointees are in senior positions within a UN headquarters and in other positions within a UN military force, you're going to have some major problems in getting missions done.

There was obviously not enough engineer support. A total of 1,300 engineers of all types were supposed to come into the country, in a country that has 3 to 4 million mines and has a totally destroyed infrastructure. It takes approximately 14 hours to go the 240 kilometers from Pnom Penh to Battambang. Average speed is less than twenty kilometers per hour, and that's without a loaded vehicle. That's in a four-wheel-drive Nissan vehicle. So you can imagine that transportation is a major problem. And that is one of the major roads within country. On Route 6, which is the other major road in country, most of the bridges are blown, and you have to take bypasses. To bring in one engineer battalion to do all the infrastructure repair on a country that has literally disappeared over twenty years is a total impossibility, and that was an immediate problem. Those problems have since been addressed by bringing in other engineer units.

Communications support was inadequate for UNTAC when I left. The Australian communications equipment had not arrived yet. The Australians are good communicators for small units, but they no longer have division-size units. They've gone to all brigades, and they lack the capability to provide adequate communications for a mission this size, a very large structural problem.

Mobility of units varied considerably. Of the infantry units coming in, some of them had organic transportation that they brought with them, others did not. They were assigned in areas where, during the monsoon, you cannot move unless you have at least five-ton trucks with four-wheel-drive capability. Quite a few of them did not have this capability, and therefore, once the monsoon sets in, they don't move.

One of the other problems that we had was medical support. The Germans originally brought in a small medical detachment to provide for

UNAMIC. This was the first deployment by Germans outside Europe to do things of a military nature. There was a debate that went on in Germany over the legality of this, and should they pursue this, and until that was resolved, we literally had no medical support for the UNAMIC mission in Cambodia. When we had a lieutenant colonel wounded by Khmer Rouge gunfire, they shot up a helicopter, he was medevaced. The immediate medical attention provided to him was by Medicine Sans Frontiers, French doctors in Kampong Thom Province, not by UNAMIC personnel. Our aircraft also did not have air-ground communications, so that once they'd taken off from the airfield, they would be out of communications until they got to a team site, which made it a problem.

Dr. Brown: How were you trained? Can you tell us how this training compared to the training that the other peacekeepers with whom you worked were trained?

Major Steuber: My training as a foreign area officer (FAO) was extremely beneficial. I had gone to Naval Postgraduate School and earned a master's degree in national security affairs, and my focus was on U.S.-Indochina relations, so I followed the situation in Indochina in some detail. Experience: I spent thirty-nine months in Vietnam with MACV Studies and Observations Group and so had been in all countries in Indochina. I had a pretty good knowledge of the historical background of the conflict that was currently going on in Cambodia. I'm a graduate of the Thai Command and General Staff College, and I toured throughout Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia during my officer training. I'd just completed four and a half years in the Pacific, two years and three months at United States Western Command—as international military affairs officer with responsibility for Thailand, Indochina, and the Philippines—and an additional two years and three months at United States Pacific Command as a J5 policy officer focused not on Indochina but on areas that were contiguous. So my training as a foreign area officer was very important, particularly the language training, as I will point out later. I was able to use my Thai language training to a great degree a lot of time, and it also helped me in learning Khmer.

The next best-trained group of individuals were the Russians. All three of the Russian officers that came in with UNAMIC were trained as

foreign area specialists. Two of the officers had spent an extended period of time in Cambodia. One Russian captain that was with me at Team Delta had spent three years in Cambodia as the personal adviser to the minister of defense for the state of Cambodia. He knew all the senior officers within the Cambodian People's Armed Forces and had toured through most of the country. One of the other officers had five years in country in similar advisory positions. One officer had not come to Cambodia, but all three spoke Khmer fluently as well as read and wrote in Khmer. They were invaluable as far as establishing relationships, that sort of thing. The other officers that came in who had some training that was applicable were the British and the Austrians. They had all been assigned to other United Nations missions. The Austrians have a school which teaches UN peacekeeping methodology and operations. The Brits have a doctrinal manual which is excellent. It covers peacekeeping missions, reports. It's a how-to manual—how to write reports, what reports are applicable, what's contained in them, how to set up observation posts, and those sorts of things. Very, very good.

The Australians that came in the communications contingent had all received at least some Khmer language training. Some had gone through over a year's worth of training. They were also trained in customs and other things that pertained to Cambodia and Indochina. A group of the communicators were trained as medical specialists in that they could provide immediate medical support not only to the communications teams that were out there but also to the liaison officer and the observer teams. So their training was quite extensive. None of the three Americans that went in received any peacekeeping training prior to going in or even any briefings that were specifically focused on peacekeeping. However, the Marine major, John Dill, had participated in the UNIKOM mission in Kuwait and so was familiar with the United Nations methodology.

Dr. Brown: Did you find a conflict between the training that you had received earlier in your military career and the demands as a peacekeeper?

Major Steuber: I didn't find any conflict between training for war and peacekeeping. As a matter of fact, training for wars is absolutely

essential if you're going to do a good job as a peacekeeper. First off, you have to know your enemy. You have to be able to conduct military operations and all those sorts of things, such as movement, communications, planning, and all the sustainment-type things. All those things that you have to do in a military mission, you still have to do in a peacekeeping mission. The only thing you don't do, at least in theory, is shoot, and that's really the only conflict. People do need specific training in how to control fighting factions and civilian personnel without using force or using an absolute minimum amount of force. That would be the only conflict.

Dr. Brown: You've already addressed the language problem earlier and certainly that presented some problems communicating with the locals. Would you like to comment on how you communicated among the group of peacekeepers?

Major Steuber: On three occasions among the peacekeepers, it was a bit of a problem, especially on my team. What we did was, I had an Australian communicator who was born in Chile, and so his parents had taught him Spanish, so his Spanish got brushed up on very quickly. My Argentinian team leader learned English, taught himself how to speak English. We went into Thailand and got English-as-second-language books and all sorts of things, and at the end of the six months, he had gone from not speaking a word of English to being able to write his own reports in English. So, in that instance, personal motivation of a team leader was absolutely key.

On the other hand, we had Russian engineers that came into the force in the April time frame to help with mine clearing. These gentlemen spoke absolutely no English or French or anything else, and the only way to communicate with them was through the other Russian members of the team. I also had Indonesians. When I was at Kampong Thom, the Indonesian 5th Indonesian Airborne Ranger Battalion was the unit assigned to me, and some of the officers had problems with English. We had to work around that as best we could. Again, I communicated with the local personnel, the Khmer People's National Liberation Armed Forces. Initially, all their senior officers spoke Thai, many of them spoke English, and so I used my Thai almost exclusively in dealing with them

until my Cambodian, my Khmer, got good enough to where I could communicate with them in Khmer. Similarities between Thai and Khmer are such that within six months' time, I could listen to most conversations and translate them for myself without using an interpreter.

I think that communications or the language training is absolutely essential for the personnel going in on an initial mission to an area where English is not normally spoken. The ability to speak with the people without having to use an interpreter is very important. You do not lose as much of the nuance as you lose when an interpreter is translating for you, especially if you do not have military interpreters. Once, we were able to hire a civilian interpreter to help in Kampon Thom, but he did not know any military vocabulary. While he was great for taking some of the other team members down to the market and buying things for them, he was absolutely worthless as a military interpreter.

Dr. Brown: What lessons did you learn from this experience that you think are important to share with us?

Major Steuber: First, there must be a realization of and balance between the objective and the commitment. UNTAC had a very clear objective going into Cambodia. It's well spelled out in the treaty. Unfortunately, the commitment of the four factions to that treaty and to that peace process was negligible, at least on the part of one of the factions. It became clear very quickly that the United Nations would not be able to force a solution on the warring parties as long as the United Nations force there was in a peacekeeping mode. Unless all factions are committed to keeping that peace, there's no way that the United Nations can force them to do that.

And one of the other things that we learned, or that I learned early on, was the factions have got to take responsibility for making a peace agreement, making cease-fires work. When we got there, the orientation of the United Nations senior leadership was that the United Nations was going to make peace work, and it cannot. Unless the four factions are made responsible for taking steps to ensure the peace process works and to implement the peace agreement, there's no way that agreement will work. I think one of the other things that quickly came out was that as

long as the United Nations was going to take responsibility from the factions, the factions would literally do nothing. They made no preparations for regrouping and cantonment of their forces. They expected the United Nations to do all the planning for it. They had made no preparations to support it, and in fact, if you look at it from a mercenary standpoint, the longer the United Nations is in Cambodia pumping money into the economy, there is no incentive for the four factions to do anything.

Next thing is that the United Nations' employment should be stepwise and should be geared to do some concrete progress on the part of whatever factions are fighting or contesting within the country. If you do not have those sorts of steps and do not reward the factions by taking further action, then there's no incentive for them to do anything. One of the other things is that there must be some sort of agreement on the part of the United Nations as to how far the United Nations is willing to go in using the other instruments of power: diplomatic, economic, and information power. The current situation in Cambodia is going to keep on going as long as there's an open Thai border and there's no pressure put upon Thailand to cease providing support to the Khmer, primarily the Khmer Rouge, but also the other factions. As long as the Khmer Rouge are making money, there's no incentive for them to follow any of the stipulations in the peace agreement. So there needs to be a consensus in the United Nations going in as to what force or what instruments of power they're going to use and how far they are committed to using them to keep the peace. I don't think that was ever really agreed upon by the United Nations.

If peacekeeping doesn't work, someone has to make a decision to do one of three things. One is accept a status quo and accept the losses that you're taking at the same time. Or number two, withdraw. And finally, if peacekeeping isn't going to work, is somebody going to then adopt the peacemaking option – that is, go in and use force to bring the contesting factions to some sort of agreement. If you do that, the peacemaking option is really the same as going to war. You're going to have to have the same sort of commitment to make it a peacemaking operation as you would in using the UN to go in and make war against the factions.

One of the other things is that the military plan going in to a situation like Cambodia has got to be realistic. As I said before, there were 1,300 engineers that were supposed to go in and literally rebuild the country, which doesn't make any sense. There were no phones, no roads, no industry, no services, virtually of any sort, in the major population centers within Cambodia, let alone at the village level. There were no police services provided to people in the outlying areas. All these sorts of things are things that are going to be necessary and, quite frankly, things which were not addressed in the United Nations plan. So I think that's key. There needs to be a common doctrine if you're going to go in with a military force; there should be some sort of common doctrine that the people within that force can turn to to look for guidance. There needs to be a common operating system. Now, if you can't get agreement on who the observer should be, or if, in fact, you have observers populating your headquarters, so that all national factions are represented, that's fine. But there should be then a United Nations contingent, one national contingent brought in to provide the basis for that headquarters. That wasn't done and, again, when I left at the six-month point, UNTAC was a nonfunctioning headquarters. There needs to be some sort of overview or oversight of both the plan before it's adopted and then once the United Nations has accepted the mission to go in. The actual functioning of the United Nations mission should be reviewed. There needs to be some sort of accountability. As long as you have officers placed in senior-level positions as a political consideration, there is no accountability.

The deputy commander, as I said, of UNAMIC, was worthless, and the entire mission had problems because of that. We had a major problem with finances. The liaison officers were being paid \$111 per day for subsistence allowance, which is an extraordinary amount of money. When we were sent a report to justify that, the officer in charge of personnel actions came to us and told us that he didn't care what we wrote on those surveys as long as they totaled approximately \$3,000 per month per man required for subsistence. That's waste, fraud, and abuse. Three Americans sat down with their team members and told them that we would not allow that, that we wanted factual accounting of what it was costing liaison officers to live in their areas, and that that's what we would report and not some inflated figure. Once those reports were sent to the

UNAMIC headquarters, the reports from all three of the teams that had Americans on them, and that were factual reports, were lost, were never submitted to the headquarters in New York. I guess that pretty much covers it as far as some of the lessons that I learned.

Dr. Brown: What preparations would you make for other peacekeepers going to these types of missions? Specifically, what would you recommend that they read?

Major Steuber: I think, as I said before, that personnel going in on the initial mission should be, if not a foreign area officer that has the language capability and all the background training that entails, should at the very least be oriented to local cultures, have some orientation to the language and some basic phrases. As a minimum, they should know as much as possible about the political and military history of the area that they're going to and should absolutely be familiar with the military capabilities of the factions that are fighting there in the area: what weapons they have, what their tactics are, what the command and control structures look like, and quite basically just how to recognize them. With four fighting factions in Cambodia, there's some great similarities between three of the factions, and you need to be able to distinguish who's doing what to whom on any given day. I would say that one of the best sources in some of the areas is either the area or country handbook that's prepared by Department of the Army. Those are good sources for Southeast Asia. D. G. E. Hall has an excellent history book that covers those sorts of things, but those are absolutely basic to going in.

As far as UN peacekeeping specific-type things, the British have, as I said before, a handbook on peacekeeping operations. It's excellent. It describes most of the reports that would be necessary and what goes into those reports. That should be studied as much as possible. There are some other handbooks. I know the Nordic countries also have a handbook for UN peacekeeping forces that gives you some idea of what's required.

Finally, the training that should be given. I think that peacekeepers need to be trained in how to handle both factions in a threatening situation and also civilian personnel. We took badly wounded civilians

and faction personnel to the hospitals almost daily because of the mine incidents. If at all possible, the personnel should receive at least a refresher on lifesaving techniques. Of the Australians, at least one person on each of the three-man communications teams had received some major lifesaving training, and they were about the same as one of our combat lifesavers within a maneuver unit.

I think one of the other things is that people need to know how to survive in a strange environment, and that doesn't mean packing away enough MREs to last you through six months. I say that for a couple of reasons. First off, if all you do is eat MREs, you will not have a chance to interact with the local people, and that, at least in a Southeast Asian environment, is essential. Sitting down and breaking bread, having meals with these people, is a very very important part of the culture. You need to do that. In some areas, quite literally if you don't, if you aren't able to eat local foods, then you will not survive. There aren't other sources of supply, and believe me, UN sources of supply for us were woefully inadequate. This can present a problem. One French police officer that was sent out to the Cambodia-Vietnam border broke down and started crying, and three weeks later, they had to evacuate him. He was a psychological mess, just because of being in an extremely strange environment. He could not cope with that at all, and they had to pull him. Those sorts of things, I think, are absolutely necessary. One of the things I think you should orient U.S. peacekeepers to is the fact that if they work with other foreign nationals, they are going to be frustrated about 75 percent of the time, because we have a much different work ethic than many other nations. Where we try to get things done, some of the other people coming in do not have that orientation.

Dr. Brown: Talking about frustrations, you expressed some of these, I believe, when you talked about lessons learned. What were your personal frustrations during your mission?

Major Steuber: I think one of the first ones was the complete lack of preparation that the UN mission displayed when the observers, or rather liaison officers, initially arrived in Cambodia. An advance team went in on 9 November, and we, the liaison officers, arrived in Cambodia on the 9th of December. During that one month, there'd been very little done

to prepare the way for us, and this after a couple of initial fact-finding missions and a reconnaissance had been done by other UN teams. When we got to Pnom Penh, the liaison officers were there from 9 December until we started our deployment to the remote sites on the 20th of December. UN headquarters moved three times within Pnom Penh during that period of time, because the civilians and the military side of the UN mission couldn't agree on where the site should be and who should have what size office space and that sort of thing. That's extremely frustrating. We were deployed to the UN remote sites without ever having been told what our mission was. Aside from deploying, we were supposed to establish liaison with the faction members. We had no SOPs; we had never seen a copy of the Paris agreement that was governing all the things we were supposed to do on our actual mission for UNAMIC-UNTAC. The draft form did not get into country till the 3d of February, so we were kept in the dark, to say the least.

We were deployed to our remote teams sites without maps. I did not have a map, aside from a 1:1,000,000 flight map. I did not have a map that covered my own team location or my area responsibility for the team or for the Khmer People's National Liberation Armed Forces. That also was horribly frustrating. What I did was, I went to the KPNLAF headquarters; I borrowed their 1:50,000 maps, which were about 20 years old; I took them across the border into Thailand and xeroxed off the maps and then glued them together to provide my own maps. Because these were 20 years old and the terrain had changed, roads had disappeared, villages had sprung up, other villages had been vacated and had literally become jungle again, the maps were of not much use. However, we also had, because of the foresight of the Marine officer coming over, he brought one Magellan and one Trimpack global positioning system receiver. I had the Trimpack, and it was absolutely invaluable in going out and locating positions and that sort of thing. So, not having maps was initially frustrating.

We thought that that would be cured soon, when I went from Team Delta's location, the Thai border, down to Pnom Penh. After two months, we still had not received maps of the team location. I got down to UNAMIC headquarters, and because the chief of staff of the headquarters did not speak either French or English, he only spoke

Polish, I couldn't speak to him. So I grabbed hold of the chief of operations and asked him why, in two months time, after repeated requests, both by radio, by satellite communications, and by message, we had not received maps. He could give me absolutely no reason why. I went to the local market and purchased, on the black market, all the maps that I needed after just one visit and, in fact, when I went back and threw them on the chief of ops' desk, I was then given \$1,600, and I went down to the black market and purchased enough maps to supply all the teams with at least two sets. Why I could do that and he couldn't do that in two months period of time, I'm not sure. The market was less than a half mile away from the headquarters.

This points to the UN bureaucracy. It was horribly frustrating. UN civilians and, unfortunately, a lot of the military UN personnel that come from other countries are there to make money. They could give a damn about the UN mission. The UN civilians were more interested in making sure that their subsistence allowance was increased and they had plenty of time off rather than having to accomplish any sort of a mission. They'd get to the headquarters at 9 o'clock and they'd leave at 5 o'clock every day, and you would not see them. We were deployed to our remote locations on the 22d of December. After being deployed, the deputy commander of the UNAMIC went back to Indonesia for the holidays. All of the senior UN civilian personnel went either back to their home countries or Thailand for the holidays. And, in fact, the UNAMIC mission ground to a halt, because there was absolutely nobody in Pnom Penh to make any sorts of operational decisions.

This, in spite of the fact that the team that went into the NADK, or Khmer Rouge site, was literally under house arrest. They could not leave the building without being under armed Khmer Rouge guard. The Khmer Rouge would not allow any helicopters to come in to provide resupply or anything of that nature. The Khmer Rouge refused to allow the United Nations personnel to have any contact with any other Cambodians in their area. The UN personnel were literally forced to do everything, wash clothes, prepare their own food, all those sorts of things, by themselves, in addition to being kept literally under house arrest. That was very frustrating. So just working with a UN organization is frustrating because there is no accountability.

There are many many hidden agendas. In addition to making money, some of the national contingents—specifically the French—the French insisted that the Cambodian mission be a dual-language mission, because they wanted to reinstitute the French language into Indochina, one country at a time. Cambodia first, then Vietnam later, if they could do it. They made no bones about that. The Indonesians had come into the country and were busy looking for land that they could purchase and that they could use to make some money. The Thai came in and provided engineer support up in the northwestern portion of the country, because the Thai were busy looting Cambodia. They're taking as much timber, gold, cattle, rice, gemstones, and anything that isn't nailed down out of Cambodia, and they fully intend to keep doing that as long as possible.

Outside agendas are not just from national contingents within the United Nations. Even though UNTAC is supposed to be the umbrella organization through which all other UN agencies worked, the UN high commissioners for refugees had a very distinct agenda in that they wanted to get rid of all the displaced people on the Thai borders as quickly as possible. Whether that meant sending them into areas that were still mined or not being able to provide support for them over the rainy season, they weren't particularly interested in that. They did not coordinate things well, and in fact, they started the repatriation of refugees before even a single member of the four factions had been regrouped, disarmed, or cantoned, and since that process is not going on and they're still trying to repatriate the displaced people, you can see that there's still a very distinct lack in coordination between the agencies.

Finally, dealing with U.S. agencies, we had to deal—we being the three Americans in UNAMIC missions—with the United States' special representative to the Supreme National Council in Cambodia. These people are State Department individuals, and some of them were very helpful. However, they have their own agenda. They didn't want to send any bad news back to Washington, D.C. Even though my team in Kampong Thom was taken under fire by the NADK on numerous occasions, even though NADK, or Khmer Rouge, refused to coordinate with UNAMIC and has refused to start the cantonment process, the State Department senior representatives were still sending back rosy, well if not rosy at least not as highly pessimistic, reports saying that they

thought, they were unconvinced, that the Khmer Rouge was really trying to block this process. I don't know how much more explicit you could be when the Khmer Rouge's division commander comes up on the radio and tells you that he will kill you, meaning your UN team, if you come into his area. If that isn't blocking the UN mission, I don't know what is. The State Department reports kept going back to Washington, D.C., even after Lieutenant Colonel Russell Stuart from Australia was shot in February, that was a direct attack on a UN helicopter, and my team was taken under fire on numerous occasions. On the 4th of May, the Khmer Rouge launched a major offensive operation in Kampong Thom Province, northeastern Kampong Thom Province, the second major offensive they'd launched in Kampong Thom Province since February. That was really frustrating.

Also, even though I made repeated requests through both the U.S. Special Mission in Cambodia and the U.S. Defense Attaché Office in Thailand for map support, the United States did not release maps to the UN. I was rather frustrated by the lack of U.S. support for a mission that we're paying about a billion dollars to accomplish over the period of the next couple of years.

Dr. Brown: I know that you spoke with the chief of staff when he was here at CGSC a couple of weeks ago. What did the chief of staff ask you about your experiences in Cambodia?

Major Steuber: I think most of your questions have covered what the chief of staff asked. He asked me specifically what my background was and how I was selected. He asked me about the missions and the structure of the UN force there and some of my frustrations. And he asked me to focus on the training, as we've already discussed, for UN personnel going in there. What I think is important is that the United States is probably going to get involved in military peacekeeping operations on a much larger scale in the future, and I very firmly believe that if the U.S. military is going to be involved that we develop a doctrine that will support those peacekeeping operations and that we then devote the necessary assets to personnel that are assigned to those peacekeeping missions.

One of my frustrations that I did not detail: I literally fell off the face of the map or face of the globe once I'd got out to Cambodia. I was not contacted in Cambodia by the Department of the Army the entire time I was out there. I was never contacted, with one exception, by my own headquarters. I was contacted by U.S. Pacific Command headquarters when it looked like the UNTAC mission would completely fall through and we, the USCINCPAC, would be, or could possibly be, tasked with a rescue mission to come and get U.S. personnel out of there—not only U.S. military personnel but also the State Department or the U.S. civilians. I assured them that wasn't going to be, or it would not be necessary. That was the only time I was contacted. We did not receive any support, to include my year group was faced with a reduction of force. I was never notified of that by my headquarters or through the Department of the Army. Had it not been for a personal friend who's at the Center for Low Intensity Conflict and another close friend who's currently on the NSC advisory staff to the vice president, I never would've been brought back to Washington, D.C., to be debriefed by either the intelligence community or by the Center for Low Intensity Conflict or by Department of the Army DCSOPS. So I think there needs to be some focus given to how we set up support for people sent out on peacekeeping operations.

Dr. Brown: Is there anything else that we should have talked about this afternoon that we have omitted?

Major Steuber: I think that pretty much covers the spectrum. There are a lot of anecdotal things that I could tell about actual operations with the Cambodians, and perhaps that needs to be the focus of a different interview. One of the things that I've found in dealing with the Cambodians, specifically, was that going out there was almost a mystical experience in that the Cambodians' outlook on warfare, and just on life in general, is very much influenced by their Buddhist background. There's also a lot of Brahman religious background there and some animism. I think the first time that became a problem was when a large windstorm hit Battambang and there was firing, very intense firing, small-arms fire, automatic weapons, from the northwest corner of town. It proceeded to roll through the town almost like there was a major operation going on, an attack of some sort. The United Nations team

that was in Battambang was literally seconds away from calling for a rescue operation from UN headquarters in Pnom Penh, when all of a sudden, they noticed that in fact nobody was shooting at them and/or anything else. It was the Cambodian soldiers firing in the air to make the wind stop. That happens throughout the country. They use all sorts of talismans, charms, and all sorts of things to avoid being killed. Most of the soldiers that I encountered had distinctive tatoos all over their bodies as charms to keep bullets from penetrating or from killing them, and if they were wounded, to make sure that it wasn't a life-threatening wound.

UN peacekeepers are cast in a much different role from traditional military in Cambodia. One of my KPNLAF colonels came in one day, and we were discussing how difficult it was for eleven infantry battalions to literally take military control of a country. He pointed out that one UN soldier was worth a thousand Khmer, because the UN soldiers brought something that no Khmer soldier had ever brought, and that was peace. Khmer soldiers only brought fighting and death to Cambodia, whereas the United Nations came bearing peace. During operations in northwestern Kampong Thom, we went into the area on a reconnaissance; we went in unarmed. When we went in on that reconnaissance, we literally were met by thousands of Cambodian civilians as well as military personnel from all four factions. The civilians were begging us to stay there, because they felt that if so much as one white vehicle or one blue-bereted military person was there, that the fighting would stop. In fact, once we finished that reconnaissance through there, we went from daily multiple violations of the cease-fire – with artillery, rockets, small arms, automatic weapons, RPGs, and the full gamut of weapons systems available – to no incidents. There are a couple of things that could've contributed to that, but I think it's important to recognize that there really and seriously was another side to the acceptance the Cambodians gave to the United Nations people being there. We were not Cambodian military; we brought peace not war. I think that was important.

I think one other thing that really came out quite vividly was that we must not underestimate the popular support that the Khmer Rouge have within Cambodia. I could not go into a region in Kampong Thom Province where Khmer Rouge were not readily accepted by the civilian

populace. Maybe not all of them, but there was always some support there. In the areas that were absolutely under their control, they had established a very wide base of operations and popular support. They're able to do that because the Khmer Rouge have focused on an ethnic conflict that has existed in Cambodia for over 500 years, and that is the conflict between ethnic Vietnamese and ethnic Cambodians. The NADK, the Khmer Rouge, never make any announcement or say anything unless they preface it with the fact that they are fighting against the Vietnamese or the lackeys of the Vietnamese, the state of Cambodia government, or the Cambodian People's Armed Forces. That has stood them in good stead, and until that can be resolved, the fact that there are no longer any Vietnamese units in Cambodia and that the ethnic Vietnamese in the Cambodian government pose no threat to ethnic Cambodians is irrelevant. The Khmer Rouge will be able to use this fear to maintain the source of power it has.

Dr. Brown: Thank you very much Major Steuber. We appreciate your time this afternoon. We are looking forward to finishing this project and sending the transcript to General Sullivan. I will keep you informed of our progress.

Combat Studies Institute

Missions

The Combat Studies Institute was established on 18 June 1979 as a department-level activity within the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. CSI has the following missions:

- Prepare and present instruction in military history at USACGSC and assist other USACGSC departments in integrating military history into their instruction.
- Publish works in a variety of formats for the Active Army and Reserve Components on historical topics pertinent to the doctrinal concerns of the Army.