

US Senators Urge FBI to Reopen Probe

BY LUKE REYNOLDS
THE CAMBODIA DAILY

A group of US senators have appealed to the US Federal Bureau of Investigation to resume its investigation of the 1997 grenade attack on peaceful protesters in Phnom Penh, according to a report by Agence-France Presse.

The senators sent a letter last week to FBI Director Robert Mueller, attacking Prime Minister Hun Sen for allowing "an ideal environment for Asian gangsters and terrorists, as well as sexual predators who destroy the lives of innocent Cambodian girls and women," the report stated on Friday.

Targeting an anti-corruption rally led by opposition leader Sam Rainsy, the grenade attack on March 30, 1997, killed at least 13 and injured more than 120 others, including a US democracy worker.

The FBI interviewed several witnesses to the attack and a number of Hun Sen's bodyguards before it effectively suspended its investigation. A Washington Post article a few months after the attack cited a classified FBI report that blamed Hun Sen and his bodyguard unit.

On Sunday, Interior Ministry spokesman Khieu Sopheak said the CPP-led government would welcome any FBI involvement,

Continued on page 17

FBI...

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

despite claims in the past by many in the US that authorities here were largely uncooperative with the investigation.

"That is not true.... We did not obstruct any interviews or authorities, even Hing Bunheang," he said, referring to one of Hun Sen's top bodyguards. "We welcome them to come again.... This case is not closed," he said.

Some of the letter's signatories have only rarely spoken out on Cambodia. Senators Tom Daschle and Zell Miller, both from the Democratic Party, joined consistent Hun Sen opponents such as John McCain and Mitch McConnell in urging FBI involvement.

Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist also targeted Hun Sen in separate public remarks he made last week about the peril faced by democracy activists in Cambodia.

"Caretaker Prime Minister Hun Sen and the Cambodian People's Party have failed to uphold the rule of law or to create conditions conducive to the growth of democracy and prosperity," he said. "I want to add my voice to those calling for new leadership in Cambodia."

Opposition spokesman Ung Bun-Ang said the appeals in Washington were testament to growing concern over the human rights situation here, following the high-profile killing in January of union leader and government critic Chea Vichea. "It's getting to the point where more people are paying attention and getting involved every day," he said.