

The CAMBODIA DAILY

Thursday, January 20, 2005

Court Drops Grenade Attack Case Against PM

BY LEE BERTHAUME
AND PHANN ANA
THE CAMBODIA DAILY

Opposition leader Sam Rainsy's lawsuit implicating Prime Minister Hun Sen in the notorious 1997 grenade attack that killed at least 16 people and wounded more than 120 has been dismissed by the Phnom Penh Municipal Court.

In court documents dated Jan 12 and obtained Wednesday, Deputy Prosecutor Yet Chakriya wrote: "After scrutinizing and seeing the case, there is no suspicion that Mr Hun Sen...had committed the crime of being an accomplice to premeditated murder on March 30, 1997."

Yet Chakriya went on to write that he would not be taking any

more action.

Sam Rainsy submitted the lawsuit with the court on Feb 2, 2004, and has also launched a lawsuit in a French court over the attack in which assailants lobbed grenades that ripped through a crowd of opposition supporters as they gathered near the National Assembly for an anti-corruption rally.

The opposition leader expressed dismay with Yet Chakriya's decision Wednesday. He questioned how the deputy prosecutor had reached his decision without possessing what he felt was all the information available.

"It is an insult to the victims," Sam Rainsy said. "If they remain quiet, it is as if they accept such a conclusion," he said.

"It is not a final conclusion, not at all," he said, adding that he had not yet decided whether he would appeal the decision.

But Sam Rainsy said he hoped the decision would spur the US Federal Bureau of Investigation to conclude its still-open but long-dormant investigation into the attack and release a report purported to blame the prime minister's bodyguard unit for the attack.

Yet Chakriya and government spokesman Khieu Kanharith could not be reached for comment. Om Yentieng, Hun Sen's advisor and head of the government's human rights committee, hung up the phone when asked for comment.