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Subject: DEATH OF RAN MEMBER ASHORE IN CAMBODIA – UPDATE ONE (325/11)

Comment: Action Area DNMC

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326-11

HOT ISSUE BRIEF

ISSUE: Death of RAN Member Ashore in Cambodia – Update One (325/11)

SENSITIVITY: HIGH. Incident involves death of an RAN member ashore in Cambodia.

KEY ISSUES:

- An article on the member has appeared in Koh Santepheap Daily (online publication written in Khmer) [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

- The sailor was subsequently transferred to hospital and died;

- Police and medical experts quoted as saying cause of death was a combination of fatigue and

[REDACTED]

- Police have been unable to locate [REDACTED]

- The locations, details and timings are accurate enough to indicate some form of information flow from Cambodian authorities.
- There is a photo of the body at the morgue, however it is difficult to make out any details. It is believed that the photo was taken prior to CO Warramunga attending to identify the body.
- Online comments indicate that the article has been forwarded to the Age and that 'Defence will try to cover this up'.
- The body of the sailor will be returned to Australia (Perth) on 16 November 2011 and will be handed over to the Western Australian Coroner.

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BACKGROUND:

An article on the death has appeared in the Koh Santepheap Daily (online publication written in Khmer). A blog that includes an English translation is linked to the website. A transcript of this blog has been passed to HMAS *Warramunga* by local shipping agent. Online translation on Khmer440.com (which is blocked by DRN) states that:

“According to a statement from police a 32 yr old Australian sailor on shore leave from a navy vessel... [REDACTED]

[REDACTED], the sailor suddenly collapses from a heart attack. He is taken to Banana Grove Provincial Hospital, but dies a little later. The prevailing theory of the police and medical experts at this juncture is that fatigue combined with [REDACTED] brought on the heart stoppage. But the police are still actively seeking additional information from the [REDACTED] who disappeared before the police could question her”.

The main article also has a photo of the body at the morgue, however it is difficult to make out any details. This photo was taken prior to arrival of CO and Medical Officer as the body was in different location.

Online comments associated with this article indicate that this information has been forwarded to the Age and that ‘the defence department won’t be happy with the truth and will try to cover this up’ Additional reporting in the Brisbane Times states that distressed families of Warramunga’s crew had reported that the crew’s emails had been stopped for three days (in reality from 6:00pm on 10 November to (approx) 10:00am on 11 November 2011 pending notification of next of kin and formal Defence media release.)

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TALKING POINTS

- Speculation regarding the death of the Navy sailor in Cambodia is inappropriate.
- The incident is currently under investigation by the Australian Defence Force Investigative Service.

- The sailor's body will be transferred to the Coroner in Western Australia when his remains are returned to Australia.

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