

Cambodia rejects US request for troops

Reuters

April 21, 2006

Cambodia has turned down a US approach on sending troops to Iraq and Afghanistan, Prime Minister Hun Sen said on Friday. "We will not send our armed forces to Iraq because the issue there is not in the hands of the United Nations," Hun Sen told reporters. But even if the UN were in command, Cambodia would still not send troops to Iraq or Afghanistan, he said following a meeting last week with US Ambassador Joseph A. Mursomeli, who asked him to consider sending troops.

"Every day we have seen people get killed and taken hostage" in Iraq, Hun Sen said.

"So I will not let my people, who went through 30 years of suffering from war, see more horrible days of separation and suffering from the continued terrorist activities of decapitating hostages in Iraq," he said.

Cambodia, heavily mined itself and still emerging from three decades of bloody civil war and the Khmer Rouge "Killing Fields" in which an estimated 1.7 million people died, is sending soldiers to Sudan to help clear mines.