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COURTHOUSE CAPERS

Long Sarey emerged from the Cheam Channy trial as the prosecutor's key witness, claiming he alone had recruited 40,000 members ready to fight against the government. He also seemed to have the best lines in the military court drama, causing shouting matches with lawyers and laughter in the audience. His age and the name of his wife differ on two statements, while the chief of the village Sarey said he lives in claims he's never heard of the man. Below is a translation of his cross-examination in court.

Defense lawyer Mao Sophearith: To clarify, you are a complainant against Cheam Channy in this case and a witness?

Long Sarey: I've just come to tell the truth. Actually I filed the complaint against Khom Piseth [not Cheam Channy] because Khom Piseth directly took my money while Cheam Channy just ordered.

MS: Yeah! I did not ask about Cheam Channy yet.

LS: I answer because you will ask. [Inaudible, as LS and MS talk over each other.]

Judge: Please keep quiet! [MS reads witness the UNTAC law against perjury, and reminds LS that he must tell the truth in his testimony or face 1-2 years in prison.]

MS: You said that Cheam Channy appointed you to be a commander of Division 14 and a chief of staff at [military] Region 5. Do you have any documents to support this claim?

LS: The first time, I was appointed at Division 14. The second time, Khom Piseth cheated me, and said he would make me his assistant [but did not].

MS: So the first time, Cheam Channy appointed you at Division 14 through Khom Piseth, didn't he? And the second time as the chief of staff? [MS shows LS a Committee 14 letter of appointment signed by Cheam Channy.]

LS: Yes, this is the letter of appointment that Khom Piseth brought me. He removed the name and he wrote my name [on the letter instead], and he asked me for money. If you want this clarified, bring Khom Piseth to me.

MS: You had [another] letter of ap-

pointment [to a different position] signed by Cheam Channy making you an assistant. The original was burned?

LS: I have a copy that I did not bring with me.

MS: I ask, how could you have it, you said you already burned it? [MS and LS argue in raised voices.]

Judge: Long Sarey!

MS: You said you selected 40,000 soldiers, didn't you?

[Judge stops MS's questioning, saying that this is not the time for this kind of question.]

Judge: You can ask later.

[MS sits down. Second defense lawyer, Ket Khy, rises to ask questions.]

KK: [Reminds LS that he is under oath and can be prosecuted for perjury if he lies.]

LS: I did everything with the prosecutor. I am not educated, I only know about fighting. I don't remember my confession. I was deceived. I have a mental problem.

KK: On July 7, 2005, did you answer [questions] in front of the [investigating] judge Poak Pon?

LS: Yes I did, but I could not remember all.

KK: On August 17, 2004, you answered again, didn't you?

LS: I had to answer to Poak Pon when he asked about my background, about my job. I spoke [but] sometimes without details and then I lay down and thought [about my answers] again, so I could be reminded. [I am] like a person who has been cheated [so I am] stupid and crazy.

Judge: Please stop questioning. Long Sarey go to [your place]

KK: What is the real name of your wife?

LS: My real wife that I married is named Veak Neakny. If you saw my mistake, I might as well tell you. I have three wives, to tell you the truth.

KK: What are your wives' names? Real names?

LS: About the names, you need not ask anymore; talk only about the exact work that I was cheated [inaudible words as LS walked away] and try to help the guilty.

Judge: I decide to stop here.

[Judge calls the next witness.]