

What's Next for Vietnam-Cambodia Border Cooperation?

Border collaboration continues to be an important area for both sides to manage in the context of their respective domestic and foreign policies.

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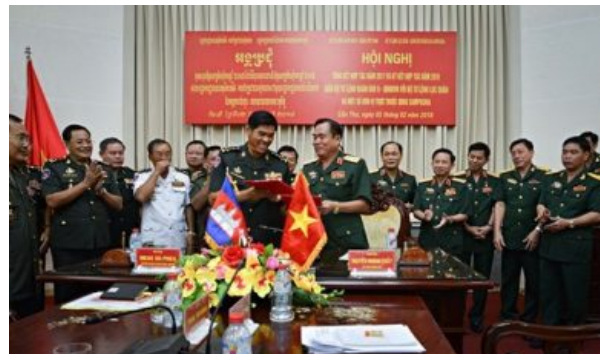


Image Credit: People's Army Newspaper

Last week, Vietnamese and Cambodian military officials held another interaction focused around border issues.

Though the engagement was just the latest in a series that continue to occur into 2018, it nonetheless reinforced the significance of border collaboration between the two neighboring Southeast Asian states within the context of their respective domestic and foreign policies.

As I have noted before, Vietnam and Cambodia share an important defense relationship as part of their wider diplomatic ties. For instance, Vietnam provides the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (RCAF) with equipment, training and aid, while both countries have also looked to manage more sensitive areas of the relationship such as outstanding issues over their shared 700-mile long border, which is not only a prickly issue for bilateral ties but also still sees an array of transnational crimes and threats of concern to both sides (See: [“What's Next for Vietnam-Cambodia Military Ties in 2018?”](#)).

Border cooperation has continued to feature as part of ongoing collaboration in 2018, with Cambodia in a sensitive period ahead of elections in July and continued concerns in Vietnam about China's deepening influence in Cambodia, where Hanoi has long been a major actor as well. In late March, both sides held another iteration of their meeting of the Joint Committee on Land Border Demarcation and Border Planting, where they reviewed existing cooperation and agreed on further plans and measures to carry out in the future. Other engagements, including cross-border exchanges involving security commands, have continued even though they rarely make international headlines.

Last week, another interaction once again put border cooperation in the spotlight when General Siek Socheat, the head of border affairs of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (RCAF), paid a visit to Vietnam. During his visit, he met with several officials and a reception was hosted for him led by Senior Lieutenant General Phan Van Giang, deputy defense minister and chief of the general staff of the Vietnam People's Army (VPA).

During the meeting, as expected, both sides discussed various aspects of their border cooperation, including the sharing of information and experience, carrying out joint patrols, furthering border demarcation and marker planting, and strengthening other people-to-people activities as well. According to the Vietnamese military, Giang also suggested several areas for further development, including raising local awareness about border security, improving information sharing still further, and maintaining delegation exchanges.

Unsurprisingly, few additional specifics were released about the engagement or the visit more generally, many of which are typically worked out at the working level. Yet as the year progresses, border cooperation can expect to continue to be an area of concern for both sides amid the long list of security concerns they both have on their own as well as share between them.
