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## Military Blood Program Helps Open Transfusion Center In Cambodia

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By Jessica Pellegrini, ASBP Staff Writer



Navy Lt. Cmdr. Frederick Matheu (right), U.S. Pacific Command joint blood program officer, accepts the Government Tibbden Medal from Cambodia Minister of Health Dr. Mam Bunheng (left), at the Feb. 16 ribbon-cutting ceremony of the new Provincial Blood Transfusion Center located in Kampong Cham, Cambodia. (Photo courtesy of Navy Lt. Cmdr. Frederick Matheu, U.S. Pacific Command joint blood program officer)



The Armed Services Blood Program traveled to Cambodia Feb. 16 to help open the Kampong Cham Provincial Blood Transfusion Center.

"Partnerships like this are a vital part of the military blood program's global engagement mission," said Navy Capt. Roland Fahie, ASBP director. "The work done in Cambodia will help ensure the country is producing a safe, potent and quality blood supply, as well as enhance U.S. partnerships in that region. As the president rebalances the Pacific, these partnerships and exchanges contribute to the success of U.S. global initiatives."

"I am happy for my province and the people of Cambodia," said Ly Sovith, director of the Kampong Cham Provincial Blood Transfusion Center. "(I am) committed to put all the past knowledge received from the Armed Services Blood Program (to use) to improve the blood safety in Kampong Cham province and Cambodia."

According to Army Lt. Col. Teresa Terry, regional blood manager and the officer-in-charge of the Tripler Army Medical Center Transfusion Medicine Services in Hawaii, the ASBP's assistance in Cambodia was part of the U.S. Pacific Command Theater Security Cooperation Plan and the ASBP's contributions towards global health engagements.

"The goal is to develop and increase blood safety capabilities and provide technical assistance to civilian and military medical personnel in Cambodia," Terry said. "It's a way to help spread the Department of Defense goodwill mission while building and maintaining regional partnerships."

Terry said the military blood program helped design the new building with cooperation from the World Health Organization, the Australian Red Cross and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The ASBP also helped train doctors, nurses and laboratory technicians on proper blood safety techniques and principles.

"We help get the military and civilian agencies in the same room, talking and working together in terms of blood and transfusion medicine," Terry said.

This is a new kind of relationship for the military and civilian transfusion services in Cambodia, Terry said. The civilian blood centers provide blood products to the military, however with the ASBP's help the Cambodia military will be able to store and issue their own blood products.

"We are teaching them how to work together towards the same goal," Terry said.

"The Armed Services Blood Program provides a unique set of skills," said Navy Lt. Cmdr. Frederick, Matheu, U.S. Pacific Command joint blood program officer. "We are the only U.S. government organization that provides and processes the skills needed to improve blood safety in partner nations."

Indeed, the new transfusion center is a step forward for blood safety in Cambodia.

"The blood donor center will provide infrastructure necessary to safely collect, test, manufacture and issue blood products for Kampong Cham province," Matheu said.

Representatives from all over the world attended the ceremony to open the new center. Among the distinguished guests were Cambodia Minister of Health Dr. Mam Bunheng, U.S. Ambassador to Cambodia William Heidt and Army Maj. Gen. Todd McCaffrey, U.S. Army Pacific deputy commanding general.

The ceremony consisted of a blessing from Cambodia monks, guest speakers, award recognitions, and a tour of the new facility. After that, it was open for business.

"I was very happy to see the turnout from the government, civilian agencies and the community in support of the new blood center," Terry said.

The Kampong Cham Provincial Blood Transfusion Center was the first to open under the Pacific Theater Cooperation Plan in Cambodia, but it won't be the last. Over the next five years, the Blood Safety Program will help the country open four other centers.

A second center was opened March 3 in Siem Reap, Cambodia, and Terry and representatives from the TAMC TMS will travel back to Cambodia in June to open the country's National Blood Transfusion Center.

#### **About the Armed Services Blood Program**

Since 1962, the Armed Services Blood Program has served as the sole provider of blood for the United States military. As a tri-service organization, the ASBP collects, processes, stores and distributes blood and blood products to Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines and their families worldwide. As one of four national blood collection organizations trusted to ensure the nation has a safe, potent blood supply, the ASBP works closely with our civilian counterparts by sharing donors on military installations where there are no military blood collection centers and by sharing blood products in times of need to maximize availability of this national treasure. To find out more about the ASBP or to schedule an appointment to donate, please visit [www.militaryblood.dod.mil](http://www.militaryblood.dod.mil). To interact directly with ASBP staff members, see more photos or get the latest news, follow @militaryblood on Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube and Pinterest. Find the drop. Donate.

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