

NYTimes
Text of President Ford's Report to Congress on Ship

MAY 16 1975

WASHINGTON, May 15 (Reuters)—Following is the text of a letter sent early today by President Ford formally notifying Congress in text of a letter sent early to compliance with the War Powers Resolution of 1973, of his actions in ordering the rescue of crew members aboard the freighter *Mayagüez*. The letter was addressed to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Carl Albert.

Dear Mr. Speaker:

On 12 May 1975, I was advised that the S.S. *Mayagüez*, a merchant vessel of United States registry on route from Hong Kong to Thailand with a U.S. citizen crew, was fired upon, stopped, boarded and seized by Cambodian naval patrol boats of the armed forces of Cambodia in international waters, in the vicinity of Popoulo Wai Island.

The seized vessel was then forced to proceed to Koh Tang Island, where it was required to anchor. This hostile act was in clear violation of international law.

In view of this illegal and dangerous act, I ordered, as you have been previously

advised, United States military forces to conduct the necessary reconnaissance and to be ready to respond if diplomatic efforts to secure the return of the vessel and its personnel were not successful. Two United States reconnaissance aircraft in the course of locating the *Mayagüez* sustained minimal damage from small firearms. Appropriate demands for the return of the *Mayagüez* and its crew were made, both publicly and privately, without success.

'I Wish to Report'

In accordance with my desire that the Congress be informed on this matter and taking note of Section 4 (A) (1) of the War Powers Resolution, I wish to report to you that at about 6:20 A.M., 13 May, pursuant to my instructions to prevent the movement of the *Mayagüez* into a mainland port, U.S. aircraft fired warning shots across the bow of the ship and gave visual signals to small craft approaching the ship.

Subsequently, in order to stabilize the situation and in an attempt to preclude removal of the American crew of the *Mayagüez* to

the mainland, where their rescue would be more difficult, I directed the United States armed forces to isolate the island and interdict any movement between the ship or the island and the mainland, and to prevent movement of the ship itself, while still taking all possible care to prevent loss of life or injury to the U.S. captives.

During the evening of 13 May, a Cambodian patrol boat attempting to leave the island disregarded aircraft warnings and was sunk. Thereafter, two other Cambodian patrol craft were destroyed and four others were damaged and immobilized.

One boat, suspected of having some U.S. captives aboard, succeeded in reaching Kompong Som after efforts to turn it around without injury to the passengers failed.

'Continued Objective'

Our continued objective in this operation was the rescue of the captured American crew along with the retaking of the ship *Mayagüez*. For that I ordered late this afternoon ~~purpose,~~ an assault by United States marines on the Koh Tang to search out and rescue such Americans

as might still be there, and I ordered retaking of the *Mayagüez* by other marines boarding from the destroyer escort *Holt*. In addition to continued fighter and gunship coverage of the Koh Tang area, these Marine activities were supported by tactical aircraft from the Coral Sea, striking the military airfield at Ream and other military targets in the Kompong Som area in order to prevent reinforcement or support from the mainland of the Cambodian forces detaining the American vessel and crew.

At approximately 9 P.M. E.S.T. on 14 May, the *Mayagüez* was retaken by United States forces. At approximately 11:30 P.M. the entire crew of the *Mayagüez* was taken aboard the *Wilson*. U.S. forces had begun the process of disengagement and withdrawal.

This operation was ordered and conducted pursuant to the President's constitutional executive power and his authority as Commander in Chief of the United States armed forces.

Sincerely,
GERALD R. FORD