

NYTimes  
**2D CAMBODIA RAID  
DISCLOSED BY U.S.**

**MAY 17 1975**

**Navy Planes Destroyed an  
Oil Depot After Strike at  
a Mainland Airfield**

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WASHINGTON, May 16—The Defense Department said today that United States naval planes had made a second attack against the Cambodian mainland as part of the operation to recover the cargo ship Mayagüez and its crew.

Less than an hour after the first attack, against an airfield at Ream, naval planes destroyed an oil depot closer to the nearby port of Sihanoukville, the department said.

The news that the air attacks had been more extensive than had been previously reported was given by John Laitin, the Pentagon spokesman, in response to a specific question about the recovery operations conducted Thursday morning Cambodian time (Wednesday night Eastern daylight time).

#### Conflicts in Reports

The question arose as a result of conflicting information issued yesterday by the Pentagon and the White House about the efforts to rescue the Mayagüez, a container ship that Cambodian gunboats seized on Monday.

Asked, also, about differing reports of the American casualties suffered during the military operation, Mr. Laitin said there was one known dead, a marine killed by small-arms fire. He said 13 marines and airmen were missing after their battle-damaged CH-53 helicopter crashed in the Gulf of Siam. He said further that 22 men had been wounded, three critically.

It is presumed that the 13 missing drowned. The destroyer Wilson, Mr. Laitin said, rescued 13 other men from the same helicopter.

With the Mayagüez reported on her way to Singapore from the Gulf of Siam during the day, the White House said that a sister ship, the Poncey, was now heading toward Sattahip, Thailand. That was the destination of the Mayagüez at the time of the seizure Monday. But Sea-Land Service, Inc., of Menlo Park, N.J., the owner

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of both ships, said that the Poncey was heading an advisory put out by the Defense Mapping Agency Hydrographic Center after the Mayagüez was seized within eight miles of the Wai Islands, some 60 miles off Cambodia. Both Cambodia and South Vietnam claim those islands.

The advisory warned ships to stay at least 35 miles off Cambodia and more than 20 miles off any island claimed by Cambodia or South Vietnam.

The White House, on being asked about reports first published in The Washington Post, said a second containership was approaching the area.

#### Navy Ships Still There

Ron Nesson, the White House press secretary, told reporters that Navy vessels were still in the vicinity. Asked what they were doing there, he replied, "Just hanging around."

The Pentagon said that there were no special plans to protect American ships in those waters.

The Mayagüez was recovered off Tang Island, some 30 miles from the Cambodian mainland, by marines taken there by helicopter. While some took control of the ship, others were landed on the island.

Mr. Laitin said at the Pentagon today that a C-130 cargo plane had dropped the largest American conventional bomb—weighing 15,000 pounds—on the island while about 200 marines were pinned down there by Cambodian troops.

The bomb was reportedly first used against North Vietnam in April, 1971, as a jungle-clearing device and antipersonnel weapon. It is rolled off the C-130's rear cargo hatch.

#### 3 Different Times Given

There was such confusion about the air action that at one point last night official statements variously gave the time as 10:57 P.M. Wednesday, Eastern Daylight time, 11:09 P.M., and 8:45 P.M.

Taking the blame for the

"errors," Mr. Laitin explained: "The first strike at 10:57 P.M. our time was against Ream airfield, the runways, planes and hangars. The second strike was at 11:50 P.M. It hit at the POL [petroleum and lubricants] depot closer to the port area."

Later a White House spokesman said planes from the carrier Coral Sea had made a sweep over Sihanoukville and Ream airport at 8:45 P.M. Wednesday, Eastern daylight time, "but they did not bomb or strafe."

These statements appeared to shed a little more light on the complex operation. The statements made it clear, for example, that the first air strike came more than 90 minutes after marines boarded the container ship and found it unmanned, and 34 minutes after a Thai fishing boat, carrying the Mayagüez crew, hove in sight of the destroyer Wilson flying a white flag.

It was also made plain that the second air strike hit the petroleum depot of Sihanoukville—Kompong Som, under the defeated Cambodian Government—43 minutes after the captain of the Wilson reported to the White House that the crew of the Mayagüez was safe.

#### For the Marines' Sake

Asked to explain the two air strikes, Secretary of State Kissinger said at a news conference, "They had all the marines pinned down under heavy fire and we didn't want to take any chances."

Mr. Laitin replied to similar questions that "there were almost 200 marines on a nearby island [Tang] under heavy attack. It was part of the battle plan." He added that there were 2,400 Cambodian troops in the Ream-Sihanoukville area.

However, it appears that the second air strike, at 11:50 P.M., took place 34 minutes after President Ford issued an order, as listed in the White House chronology, for termination of "all offensive operations."

Mr. Kissinger, after describing the "punitive effect" of the mainland attacks, said:

"There seems to have been some relationship between the release of the crew and the attacks on the mainland. That is to say, some members of the crew were told that they should tell the Wilson, or the officers of the Wilson, that they were being released on the assumption that this would end the bombing attacks.

"When we received this word around midnight—I mean this additional word, shortly after midnight—than all actions except those that were judged to be immediately necessary for the military operations were stopped."

In response to a further question: "Some attacks occurred after the men had been released. At that point our biggest problem was that we had several hundred marines under very heavy attack. There were also 2,400 Communist forces on the mainland and we wanted to absorb their energies in other things than attempting to intervene with our disengagement efforts."

#### More About Island Action

Mr. Laitin provided some new details of the marine helicopter landings on Tang Island, which originally involved close to 300 men and 11 helicopters. He said five helicopters were damaged by Cambodian machine-gun fire, three so severely that they crashed. One landed on the beach and was able to discharge its crew. A second sank in the surf about 100 feet from shore and its unit swam and waded to the beach. A third turned back and crashed in the sea.

Mr. Laitin said "some planes were damaged by ground fire.

The marines landed in two groups, Mr. Laitin said, the first 26 men on the northern beach, where the heaviest Cambodian fire was concentrated, and the second detachment of 135 men on the northeastern beach, closer to the Cambodian headquarters.