

Are Denied

Manila

Captain Charles T. Miller of the freighter Mayaguez yesterday denied a crewman's charges that his ship was not seaworthy and that he disregarded United States government warnings against sailing too close to Cambodia.

"It is not true we were warned by U.S. authorities," said Miller, 63, of Fountain Valley, Calif.

He spoke at a news conference here aboard the freighter, which is owned by Sea-Land, Inc.

The suit was filed Friday in San Francisco by Albert Minichiello, the ship's assistant engineer. Clifford Harrington, chief engineer of the ship, said Minichiello "is not speaking for the members of the crew. We are not joining the suit."

Miller said Minichiello had "been on board the ship only six days, and I don't think he got to know the members of the ship."

The captain said the Mayaguez was declared "in first-class condition by the U.S. Coast Guard" three weeks before the Cambodians seized it.

The Cambodians seized the ship because they suspected it was carrying "bombs, arms and ammunition into Thailand, but not because the ship was in Cambodian territory," he said. "We were taking a route considered a normal traffic route for all commercial ships. We were 61 miles off the coast of Cambodia, and I did not feel we were cruising in dangerous waters."

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