

Fight for Control of Islands

Cambodian and Viet Reds Clash

Cambodian and Vietnamese forces have exchanged fire in a series of small-scale battles during the past month, according to recent U.S. intelligence reports [official post mortem intelligence analysis after the Mayaguez incident].

Some of these clashes are believed to involve elements of the regular North Vietnamese army seeking to establish control over the same group of islands in the Gulf of Siam where the American container ship Mayaguez was seized by the Khmer Rouge May 12.

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The Mayaguez seizure is regarded, in retrospect, by intelligence sources as an accidental byproduct of the Khmer Rouge effort to establish de facto armed control over the disputed island groups and the sea lanes nearby.

Perhaps by coincidence, the sharpest fighting reported so far took place on Poulo Wai, the tiny island 60 miles offshore near which the Mayaguez was seized.

According to this account, which is believed to have originated with Thai fishermen evidently operating as U.S. agents, as many as 200 North Vietnamese regulars landed on the island....