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**Cambodia:
 Didn't Order
 Ship Seized**

By Elizabeth Becker
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The Cambodian government did not order the capture of the American merchant ship Mayaguez and first learned that its forces had seized it from an American radio broadcast monitored in Phnom Penh, according to a high Cambodian official.

Ieng Sary, deputy premier and foreign minister, said in a speech Saturday night in New York that after Cambodian leaders learned of the May 12 incident they ordered the leader of the local troops who seized the ship to travel to Phnom Penh to explain the seizure. He was then told to return to the area where the ship had been captured and release it.

Before these orders could be carried out, Ieng Sary said, American forces began their attack to recover the ship.

A State Department spokesman declined to comment on Ieng Sary's remarks.

According to official American reports, the capture of the ship occurred early the morn-

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ing of May 12, and more than 50 hours elapsed before U.S. troops landed, after numerous warnings, on Tang Island on May 14. The boat and crew were recovered later. The incident occurred shortly after the American withdrawal from Cambodia and South Vietnam.

Ieng Sary's remarks are believed to be the first detailed public explanation of the Mayaguez incident by a Cambodian official.

Speaking before a friendly audience of peace group members, the Cambodian official said that he personally handled the Cambodian side of the affair.

The foreign minister, who was in New York to attend a special session of the U.N. General Assembly, defended the capture of the ship, saying: "The armed forces are workers. They saw the ship within six kilometers (3 miles) of the island and captured it without the leaders knowing it."

Ieng Sary did not deviate from the initial claim by the Cambodian government on May 14 that the ship was in his country's territorial waters when it was captured. He did say, however, that Cambodia did not want "to have any difficulty with the U.S. government."

Referring to the radio report, he said, "The American



IENG SARY
 ... troops 'are workers'

technology enabled them to bring us the information much faster than our own armed forces could."

About 130 representatives of various American and foreign anti-war groups attended the speech and reception given by the Group of Khmer Residents in America.

Ieng Sary said that, after hearing the broadcast, the leaders "got in touch" with the armed forces on the island and then called the head of the coastal naval base at Sihanoukville port, ordering him to come to Phnom Penh at once.

"He arrived at 2 p.m.," the foreign minister said. But he did not give the date. "He informed us of this affair and

around 5 p.m. we ordered him back with the order to release the Mayaguez ship immediately."

Ieng Sary then said that the "bombs came down" and American troops attacked the island before the order could be carried out. He also added that "a lot of peasants" were wounded in the American bombing of Ream harbor.

In his considerably compressed version of the Cambodian strategy, Ieng Sary did not mention any of the numerous American attempts to contact the Phnom Penh leadership.

On May 12, when President Ford first heard of the capture, which he branded as "an act of piracy," he convened the National Security Council for a 45-minute session. Diplomatic efforts were then made to secure the release of the ship, according to official reports, but the new government, in power for less than one month, did not respond.

A spokesman for the Voice of America said that news of the ship's capture was broadcast shortly after it occurred.

It was more than 48 hours later, at 7:07 p.m., Washington time May 14, that American officials said they heard the first Cambodian announcement, read over radio by Information Minister Hu Nim, saying the ship would be released. The American assault began at 6:30 p.m. Washington time, according to U.S. officials.