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Japanese Firmly Support U.S. in Freeing of Mayaguez

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TOKYO, May 15 — Senior Japanese officials said today that their Government thought the American military action to free the cargo vessel Mayaguez from the Cambodians was justified.

The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Fumihiko Togo, told Japanese newsmen that "judging from the reports, we think the action by the United States forces was to rescue her people from the piracy of the Cambodian side."

The statements from America's major ally in Asia were more forthright than usual, the Japanese having shied away from international disputes for years, especially those involving Indochina.

But Japan is also a major maritime nation whose oil and shipping lifelines run through or near the waters in which the American vessel and a Panamanian ship were seized. The Panamanian vessel was reportedly detained only two hours.

Actions Termed Justified

Mr. Togo, in response to a question about the Thai protest against the United States for sending marines to bases in Thailand, said that "maybe the United States did not have enough time to think about Thailand in order to rescue the Americans."

In a separate news conference, the senior spokesman for the ministry, Mizuo Kuroda, told foreign newsmen that the American actions "seemed to

be justified." He said that "a container ship in open waters must not be subject to seizure, particularly when transporting commercial cargo."

The leftist Opposition parties and pacifist groups were critical of the American action. The Socialist party charged that the action violated international law and the United Nations charter and the Communist party called it another case of American imperialism.

It appeared possible that the issue might become a subject of debate in Parliament, where a committee has asked for the Government's views on the incident and whether the Government was consulted before the movement of United States marines from their bases on the Japanese island of Okinawa.

Mr. Kuroda told newsmen that there had been conversations with American officials but no formal consultations. The mutual security treaty requires the United States to consult

with the Japanese before sending forces into combat from bases in Japan.

Elsewhere, it seemed likely that the American action was receiving the closest scrutiny in North Korea, although no immediate reaction was reported here. The North Koreans, who have recently resumed an openly hostile attitude toward South Korea, seized the American intelligence ship Pueblo in international waters in 1968 and shot down an EC-121 electronic-reconnaissance plane over international waters in 1969. In neither case did the United States take military action.

The American response to an aggressive act by the North Koreans is considered in South Korea to be critical to security there. The United States has 38,000 troops stationed in South Korea, including a combat division close to the demilitarized zone that divides the peninsula.

According to a report from

Peking, a Deputy Premier of China, Li Hsien-nien, denounced the United States for "apparent piracy" and charged that the United States had still not learned the lesson of its failure in Indochina.

He told guests at a banquet to celebrate the Communist victory in South Vietnam that the American action "shall be denounced by world opinion." In Hong Kong, a pro-Communist newspaper, The New Evening Post, said in an editorial that "the American military threat does not scare anybody."

From Hanoi, the North Vietnamese termed the attack "a flagrant act of piracy," saying that the United States has "still not learned from its defeats in Vietnam and Cambodia." A commentary said that "the United States still apparently wants to interfere in the internal affairs of the Cambodian people even though it has been defeated."