

U. S. Move Backed In Europe but Some Call it Overreaction

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By ALVIN SHUSTER

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LONDON, May 15—The freeing of the American vessel Mayaguez was generally approved in Western Europe today but viewed as an effort by Washington to compensate for the recent defeats in Indochina.

Some critics charged that President Ford overreacted to a relatively minor incident and suggested that the Americans should have allowed more time before sending in the marines. And some newspaper editorials, particularly in France, were critical, describing the exercise as an example of unnecessary "gunboat politics."

Many of those interviewed by correspondents of The New York Times, however, reflected understanding of the American action and said that Washington appeared to have no other choice.

While governments withheld any formal comment, several officials said privately that they were relieved that the rescue operation had proved successful and that the United States had demonstrated, in even a limited way, that it was not a helpless giant in the aftermath of the loss of Indochina.

The British, of course, engaged in similar acts in the days when they ruled the waves. They call it the "Nelson touch" after the exploits of their favorite sailor, Admiral Lord Nelson.

"The reaction of the United States appears on present evidence to have been both right and effectively executed," said The Times of London. It said the rescue operation demonstrated that the United States had not lost the will to fight or the ability to mount a quick and effective operation far from its shores.

Some political analysts said that whatever the arguments over the issue of "overreaction," the swift action would serve to reassure those in Europe worried over whether the Americans would become gun-shy in view of the Indochina defeats.