

NYTimes MAY 16 1975
A Chronology of the Mayaguez Episode

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WASHINGTON, May 15—*Following is a chronology of the events involving the seizure and subsequent freeing of the Mayaguez. The hours are given in Eastern daylight time; Cambodian time is 11 hours later.*

MONDAY, MAY 12

5:03 A.M.—State Department gets a message from the ship, received in Indonesia in the offices of the Delta Exploration Company, relayed to the United States Embassy in Jakarta and then to Washington: "Have been fired upon and boarded by Cambodian armed forces. Ship being towed to unknown Cambodian port." She was then in the Gulf of Siam.

7:40 A.M.—Maj. Gen. Brent Scowcroft, deputy director of the National Security Council, informs President Ford in the Oval Office.

Noon—President meets with the National Security Council.

2 P.M.—Press Secretary Ron Nessen announces the incident, and quotes the President as having described it as "an act of piracy."

Afternoon—The United States begins working through third countries, primarily China, to try to effect the release of the container ship and its 39-member crew.

TUESDAY, MAY 13

Morning—American reconnaissance planes locate the Mayaguez near Tang Island, 34 miles off the Cambodian coast, under the surveillance of two Cambodian patrol boats.

Kukrit Pramoj, the Thai Premier, warns that he will not permit the use of Thai air bases for American operations against Cambodia.

Secretary of State Kissinger, in Missouri, says that the United States will "wait a bit" before acting with force.

Afternoon — Mr. Ford

meets with the National Security Council for 56 minutes, then orders that about 1,100 marines be flown from Okinawa to U Taphao air base in Thailand and that the aircraft carrier Coral Sea and destroyers head for the Gulf of Siam. These movements are not publicly announced.

United States planes flying reconnaissance missions over the Mayaguez are hit by gunfire.

8:30 P.M. — The White House reports that the Cambodians are apparently attempting to move the crewmen to the mainland.

10:20 P.M.—The National Security Council meets again, this time for about two hours.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 14

1 A.M.—American warplanes sink three Cambodian gunboats, which, Defense Department officials said, were to be used to move the crew members. This attack is not announced in Washington for 11 hours.

Late morning—the destroyer escort Holt reaches the scene, the first American naval vessel to do so.

Afternoon — the United States asks the United Nations to help obtain the release of the Mayaguez, and Secretary General Waldheim asks the United States and Cambodia to refrain from further acts of force."

3:52 P.M.—The National Security Council meets again with the President. Orders for the beginning of the military operation off Cambodia are issued, according to the White House, at 4:45 P.M. and the meeting lasted until 5:40 P.M.

5:14 P.M.—Assault forces begin moving out.

6:40 P.M.—The President begins a meeting with the bipartisan Congressional leadership in the Cabinet room.

7:07 P.M.—Phnom Penh radio begins broadcast offering to release the Mayaguez.

7:20 P.M. (according to the Pentagon, the White House puts the time at 7:09 P.M.)—Assault force lands under fire at Tang Island in the Gulf of Siam, near the Mayaguez.

8:15 P.M.—Foreign broadcast information service report of Cambodia broadcast is received by Secretary Kissinger, who then informs President.

8:30 P.M.—Marines board the Mayaguez from the Holt and find no one there. Later they hoist an American flag.

9:15 P.M.—Mr. Nessen issues text of American statement demanding release of the crew and promising to cease military operations as soon as the crew has been freed.

10:45 P.M.—Destroyer Wilson reports small boat approaching, flying white flag.

10:53 P.M.—Wilson flashes word to Pentagon that at least 30 Caucasians — the crewmen — are aboard the boat.

10:57 P.M. (or, according to a slightly different account also given at the Pentagon, 11:09 P.M.) — first strike by carrier planes based on the Coral Sea begins at Ream, an airfield near the port of Sihanoukville on the mainland.*

11:14 P.M.—Defense Secretary James R. Schlesinger informs President that the Wilson has found the crewmen.

11:16 P.M.—President gives order to cease all offensive operations and to begin to withdraw from Tang Island.

THURSDAY, MAY 15

12:31 A.M.—President appears on television to announce that rescue is complete and that disengagement will begin soon. He praises valor of military forces involved.

7:13 A.M.—First lift of marines from Tang Island begins, again under fire.

9:20 A.M.—Last helicopter reaches the Coral Sea.