

SFChronicle MAY 20 1975

# Bizarre Mutiny In Khmer Navy

Washington

The crew of the Cambodian patrol boat that seized the U.S. merchant ship Mayaguez later overwhelmed the patrol boat's Khmer Communist officer, threw him overboard, and sailed to Thailand seeking asylum.

The unexpected arrival of the Cambodian boat in the Thai port of Sattahip late last week has become a source of acute political embarrassment and nervousness for the Thai government, which quickly painted over the Cambodian insignia

and hung a Thai flag on the vessel.

According to reports from U.S. military officials and from the U.S. embassy in Thailand, the Cambodian sailors who showed up in Thailand said they were members of the Cambodian navy under the former government, and that when the Khmer Rouge took over Cambodia, they and their patrol boat were forced into service by the new government.

The sailors told Thai offi-

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cials, U.S. sources report, that their craft—a 170-foot-long boat with the markings E-311 on the hull—had been pressed into service to intercept a num-

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ber of vessels sailing near Cambodia in the past several weeks. One of these they said was the Mayaguez.

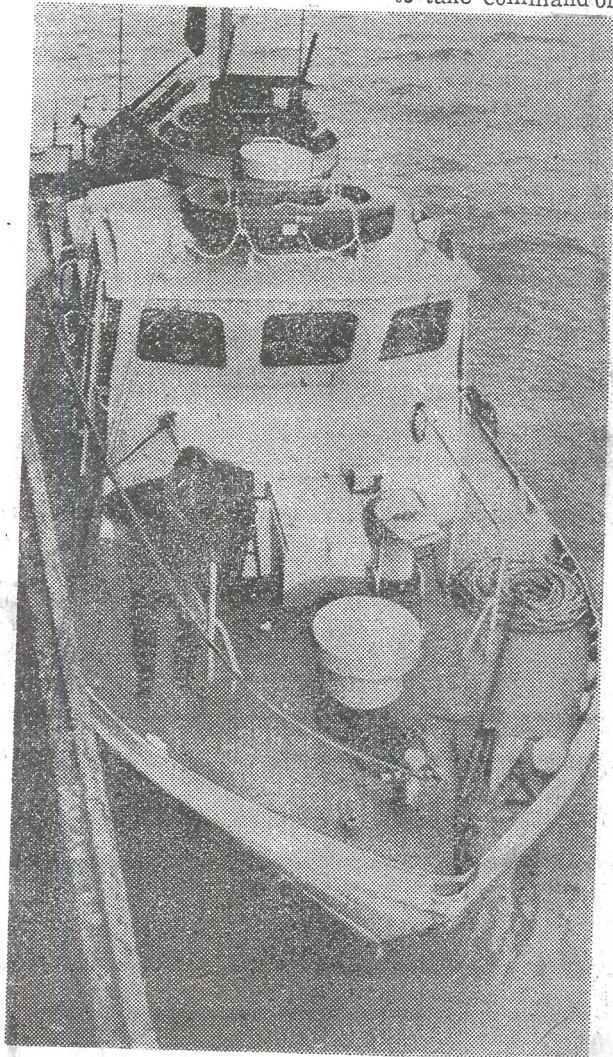
The Khmer Communists had put a number of their own officers and soldiers aboard the patrol craft and, according to the defecting sailors' account, each time they seized another vessel some of the Communist officers and soldiers would go aboard the captured vessel to take command of it.

When the Communist force aboard the patrol craft was reduced to one officer, and possibly one or two soldiers, the ten sailors from the original crew mutinied, threw the officer over the side, set sail for Thailand, and asked for political asylum there.

The issue has largely been kept quiet since Thailand is extremely nervous about its relations with the new government in neighboring Cambodia. Thai officials, who first passed on this information to the Americans, are now likely to deny that the patrol boat was involved in the Mayaguez affair.

A State Department spokesman said there would be no immediate comment and a Pentagon spokesman said the story "caught us by surprise."

Washington Post



AP Wirephoto

A seaman on the Mayaguez photographed this Cambodian gunboat as its crew took over the ship