

23 Dead in Copter Crash Related to the Mayaguez

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WASHINGTON, May 21—Administration spokesmen said today that 23 American servicemen killed in a helicopter crash in Thailand last week had embarked for possible use in the military operation to rescue the Mayaguez and her crew.

The crash of the helicopter was announced several hours after it happened, but its mission was not disclosed, an Air Force spokesman said, because President Ford had not yet ordered an assault against Tang Island, where the crew of the Mayaguez was believed to have been held.

Ron Nessen, the White House press secretary, said that the 23 were not being included in

the casualty lists for the Mayaguez incident because they did not actually take part in the military operation.

Yesterday the Pentagon released what it said was likely to be its final casualty report and put the number of killed at 15, of missing at 3 and of wounded at 50.

The Mayaguez, an American merchant ship, was recaptured last week in a Marine assault and the 39 members of her crew were released by their Cambodian captors while the attack was still going on.

At the White House, Mr. Nessen said that President Ford

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deeply regretted the loss of life resulting from the Mayaguez affair but had no second thoughts about what he did.

Mr. Ford believes, Mr. Nessen said, that there are risks in any military operation and "likens the risks to that, for instance, that policemen run."

The White House remains convinced, the press secretary continued, that the military operation was necessary. He said it was the Administration's belief that the Cambodians freed the crew of the Mayaguez because of the use of force.

The Defense Department said that the helicopter, which had been carrying 18 Air Force security policemen and a crew of four, had crashed after taking off from Nakhon Phanom Air Base in northeast Thailand bound for U Taphao Air Base near Bangkok. A ground crewman was also killed.

Possible Rescue Force

An Air Force spokesman said that the security policemen, who had been trained for infantry combat, had been considered as a possible rescue force in early planning for the recovery of the Mayaguez and her crew. It was later decided to bring in marines to do the job.

The spokesman said that the servicemen killed in the crash would not be counted among

the casualties of the Mayaguez operation because they had never been committed to action. They would be listed in Air Force records as killed in an accident, he said.

Meanwhile, Senator Thomas F. Eagleton, Democrat of Missouri, introduced three amendments today to the war powers resolution of 1973, amendments that he said were largely in-

spired by the Mayaguez incident.

At the same time, Senator Eagleton said he was asking the General Accounting Office, Congress's watchdog agency, to investigate whether President Ford ordered the bombing of airport, refinery and port facilities on the Cambodian mainland last week "for punitive rather than defensive purposes."

Senator Eagleton helped originate the legislation restricting the powers of a President to order military operations, but did not support the measure as passed because he believed it was not strong enough.

The first amendment introduced by Senator Eagleton today would add the rescue of American nationals to the situations cited as reasons for the President to commit United States forces without prior approval of Congress.

However, the amendment would also require the President to determine that the Americans were being held involuntarily with the consent of the foreign government, that there was a real threat to their lives, that the foreign government would not protect them and that minimum force would be used.

The second amendment would require the President to seek "the advice and counsel of

Congress" before committing military forces instead of just "consulting" with Congress. Senator Eagleton said that in the Mayaguez incident little real consultation took place before the President acted.

The third amendment would bring American civilian combatants, such as Central Intelligence Agency agents, under the provision of the resolution, which now applies only to the use of uniformed troops.

Ship's Safe Reported Looted

SINGAPORE, May 21 (UPI)—A spokesman for Sea-Land Services, owner of the Mayaguez, said today that Cambodian communist soldiers who boarded the vessel last week looted the ship's safe of \$5,000 in cash.

"In addition to the ship's funds members of the Mayaguez crew lost watches, cameras, some money, and one man's wedding ring was stolen," the Sea-Land official said.