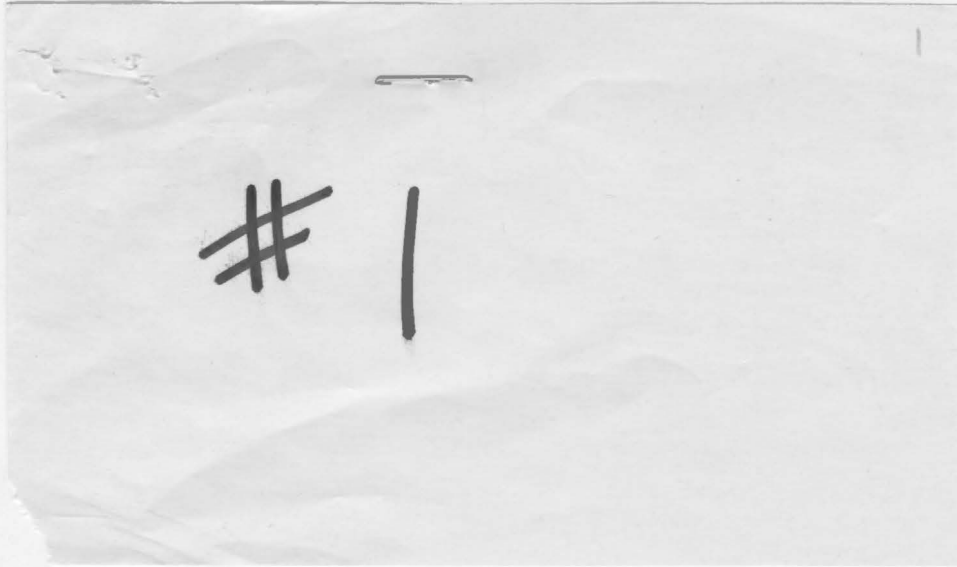


The original documents are located in Box 28, folder “Department of Defense - Joint Chiefs of Staff - General” of the National Security Adviser. NSC East Asian and Pacific Affairs Staff: Files at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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SS MAYAGUEZ/KAOH TANG ISLAND OPERATION

NARRATIVE SUMMARY

The following is a narrative summary of events beginning with report of the capture of the SS MAYAGUEZ by a Cambodian gunboat, and concluding with the extraction of the Marines from Kaoh Tang Island. All times used are Eastern Daylight Time (to convert to Gulf of Thailand time add eleven hours).

The incident became known in Washington at 0512 hours on 12 May 75 when the NMCC received a report from the American Embassy Jakarta that the SS MAYAGUEZ had possibly been boarded. At 0730 hours NMCC requested that a reconnaissance aircraft be launched from Utapao Airfield, Thailand, and at about 1000 hours, a P-3 took off to begin coverage of the area. By mid-afternoon other reconnaissance aircraft had been added and continuous surveillance was maintained until the end of the operation. First battle damage was incurred when a P-3 was hit by one round of small arms fire from a gunboat at 2116 hours. During the afternoon, the destroyer USS HOLT, the support ship USS VEGA, the USS CORAL SEA carrier task group, and the destroyer USS WILSON had been directed to proceed to the vicinity of Kompong Som from various locations in the Western Pacific. All of these ships were to play a significant role in the operations on 14-15 May. By midnight the MAYAGUEZ had moved from the vicinity of Poulo Wai Island to near Kaoh Tang Island.

On 13 May during the early morning hours, JCS directed CINCPAC to maintain fighter/gunship cover over the MAYAGUEZ to effect release of the ship or to prevent her movement into port. At 0619 hours an A-7 reported placing ordnance in the water to signal the ship not to get underway. During the remainder of the morning, several small boats were observed moving to the MAYAGUEZ and between the ship and Kaoh Tang Island. It was concluded that the crew of the MAYAGUEZ was moved to the island during this time.

At 1210 hours, CINCPAC was directed by JCS to move all available USAF helicopters and a detachment of Security Police to Utapao, and to bring two reinforced Marine platoons from Cubi Point, Philippines to Utapao. During movement of the Security Police, a CH-53 crashed due to unknown causes, killing all 23 persons on board. At 1512 hours on 13 May, JCS directed CINCPAC to move a Marine Battalion from Okinawa to Utapao. All the above deployments were completed by 0300 hours on 14 May.



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DECLASSIFIED

E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.5

NSC Memo, 11/24/98, State Dept. Guidelines, DOD Directive 5200-20
By let, NARA, Date 2/2000

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During the remainder of 13 May and into early evening of the 14th, efforts continued to prevent the MAYAGUEZ from getting underway until US forces could be positioned. Also, it was during this period, at 2020 hours, that an A-7 sank the first patrol boat of the operation while attempting to divert the craft. Authority to sink this boat had been given by the President eight minutes earlier. Shortly thereafter, a boat was seen leaving the island proceeding towards Kompong Som with a group of people in the bow. The pilot of the aircraft who made the sighting reported that these people were possibly caucasians. Unsuccessful attempts to turn back this boat including using riot control agents and firing across its bow; however, the boat continued and subsequently entered the harbor. It was not taken under direct attack because of the probability of Americans being aboard. One hour later, at midnight on the 13th, authority was given to attack and sink all small craft in the vicinity of Kaoh Tang.

Just before one o'clock on the morning of 14 May, CINCPAC and USSAG/7AF were tasked by the Acting Chairman, following an NSC meeting, to make preparations to seize the MAYAGUEZ, occupy Kaoh Tang Island, conduct B-52 strikes against the port of Kompong Som and Ream Airfield, sink all Cambodian small craft in target areas, and plan to also use tactical aircraft from the USS CORAL SEA. Preparations were to be completed in time for execution early on 15 May. The USSAG/7AF concept plan to conduct these operations was received in Washington at 1330 hours on 14 May and approved, with minor modification, by CINCPAC. The operational concept is attached at Tab C and subsequent events followed this scenario closely, with tactical air from the USS CORAL SEA being substituted for B-52s in the attacks on the mainland.

The operation to effect the recovery of the SS MAYAGUEZ and crew from Cambodian control began with the military execute order issued after an NSC meeting at 1652 hours on 14 May, following extensive planning and repositioning of forces. The initial order directed CINCPAC to seize and secure the MAYAGUEZ using Marines placed aboard the destroyer USS HOLT, and then to sail or tow the ship to sea as soon as possible. This order also directed a Marine helicopter assault on Kaoh Tang Island. Locations of the ship and island are as shown on Map, Tab C. Tactical air from Thailand and the carrier USS CORAL SEA was authorized to support the operations as required, as was the use of naval gunfire and riot control agents.

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At 1714 hours on 14 May, the first helicopter took off from Utapao Airfield, Thailand, where all available USAF helicopters and the Marine Ground Security Force had been positioned. Tactical air began to launch from Thailand to provide continuous coverage for the operation and the airborne command post, flying over the Gulf of Thailand, assumed overall control at the onset. The first three helicopters carrying 48 Marine Ground Security Force combat troops, six Military Sealift Command personnel, six US Navy explosive ordnance disposal technicians, and a linguist arrived over the USS HOLT at 1858 hours; Personnel transfer to the HOLT was completed by 1922 hours. The HOLT came alongside the MAYAGUEZ at 2045 hours, and 20 minutes later reported in full control of the ship. There were no personnel found on the MAYAGUEZ at the time of the boarding, but food found on the dining table and a warm kettle on the stove were evidence of a recent, hasty departure.

At 1710 hours, based on word passed from an NSC meeting in progress, JCS directed CINCPAC to commence cyclic strike operations from the USS CORAL SEA on the Kompong Som complex, with first time on target specified at 2045 hours to coincide with the estimated time of capture of the MAYAGUEZ. This estimate proved to be exceedingly accurate. The first cycle was to be armed reconnaissance with Cambodian aircraft and military watercraft as principal targets. Subsequent flights were to make maximum use of precision guided munitions to attack targets of military significance. The first cycle did not expend ordnance probably due to some uncertainty because of a temporary divert after becoming airborne and their inability to positively identify principal targets as Cambodian. The second cycle struck the Ream Airfield. The runway was cratered, several aircraft were destroyed or damaged, and the hangars were badly damaged. The third and final cycle struck the naval base at Ream damaging the barracks area and the Kompong Som port and POL refinery. Two warehouses were damaged in the port and a direct hit was scored on a large building in the marshalling yard. This initial bomb damage assessment is preliminary, based on pilot reports and some photography, and may be refined as more information becomes available. Photographs of the target areas are included at Enclosure 4 to Tab D. Operations against the mainland terminated with final time on target of 0010 hours on 15 May.

The assault on Kaoh Tang Island (Photograph with Tab B) began at 1720 hours on 14 May with the take-off from Utapao of the first three of eight total USAF helicopters transporting Marine assault forces. At 1909 hours, one of the first helicopters in the area of the island reported hostile ground fire.

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The flight mechanic was wounded and became the first casualty of the operation. A second helicopter was reported hit and burning in the water six minutes later. The third helicopter from this flight was reported crashed on the beach at 1945 hours. Thirty minutes later insertion of the first assault wave had been completed. Of the eight helicopters in the first wave, three crashed on the beach or in the water and two were disabled, one landing on a Thai island for fuel before proceeding to Utapao and the other returning directly to Utapao. The Marine Ground Force Commander had secured his initial position at the northwestern landing zone by 2147 hours, and was receiving occasional automatic weapon fire and encountering claymore mine detonations. On the eastern landing zone, across the island from the main force, 22 personnel were isolated near the helicopter which had crashed on the beach. For photograph of the landing zones, see Enclosure 1 to Tab B.

At 2223 hours a boat was reported approaching the island flying a white flag. The destroyer USS WILSON picked up the occupants of the boat at 2305 hours. Shortly thereafter, it was reported that the entire crew of the MAYAGUEZ was accounted for aboard the WILSON and that all were in good condition. The five-man Thai crew of the boat which brought the MAYAGUEZ crew to the WILSON from Kaoh Rong San Lem was provided food and fuel. By 0025 hours on 15 May, the MAYAGUEZ crew had been returned to their ship, and the ship was towed away from the island by the USS HOLT.

The initial assault wave had landed approximately 180 Marines on Kaoh Tang. Additional ground security forces had been requested by the commander on the island to provide reinforcement for a successful withdrawal or to continue offensive operations. The second Marine assault wave began to arrive in the area at about 2345 hours on 14 May. The helicopters received ground fire and one of the first two was damaged. At eight minutes past midnight, the Marines were reported in good position with the enemy forced back. At 0049 hours on 15 May the order was given to immediately cease all offensive operations and to disengage and withdraw all forces from the area as soon as possible consistent with safety/self defense. At 0121 hours, a helicopter from the second assault wave was hit at the island, and, along with two other helicopters, returned to Utapao without unloading Marines.

Initial efforts to withdraw forces from the island concentrated on extracting the 22 personnel in the vicinity of the downed helicopter on the beach, as this small force could have been rather easily overrun if left overnight. The helicopter making the attempt



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was hit by ground fire at 0334 hours and recovered on the USS CORAL SEA. The main body of the Marine ground force, with a strength of approximately 213 personnel, had been unable to reach the downed helicopter or the 22-man Marine force, isolated on the opposite side of the island since approximately 1945 hours.

The extraction of the ground force was complicated by the reduction in numbers of helicopters operational (seven total of all types), the amount of enemy ground fire received by each inbound helicopter and the approach of darkness. Small boats from the USS HOLT and USS WILSON began efforts to assist in the withdrawal and approached the beaches at 0615 hours, but aborted due to ground fire. Working with naval gunfire and TACAIR support and with the ground force commander's recommendation that the extraction continue as necessary into darkness, helicopters recovering to the CORAL SEA were finally able to clear all USMC personnel from the island at 0917 hours, 15 May. Two hours earlier the small group near the downed helicopter had been the first extracted.

Latest reports indicate that there were 11 USMC, two USAF, and two USN killed in action, 41 USMC, seven USAF, and two USN wounded in action, and three USMC missing in action. The missing personnel are members of a Marine machine gun crew last seen during the final helicopter extraction from the northwestern landing zone, Kaoh Tang Island. Debriefing and investigation to determine final status of these MIAs are still being conducted.

At the approximate time of the extraction of the last Marines from Kaoh Tang Island, JCS directed that the residual force of 789 Marines at Utapao be retrograded from Thailand by daylight, 16 May (Bangkok time). The first C-141 aircraft with 150 Marines lifted off from the Utapao Airfield at 1156 hours with the last aircraft departing at 1710 hours, 15 May.

With the extraction of the last Marines from Kaoh Tang Island and the retrograde of the Marines from Thailand, the operation was successfully concluded. Reconnaissance sorties were continued until 17 May to provide bomb damage assessment and to search for the missing in action.

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13 MAY 1975

41-75



NMCC OPERATIONAL SUMMARY

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NATIONAL MILITARY COMMAND CENTER
Joint Chiefs of Staff

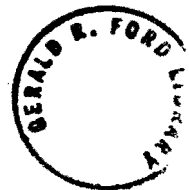
Operational Summary 41-75

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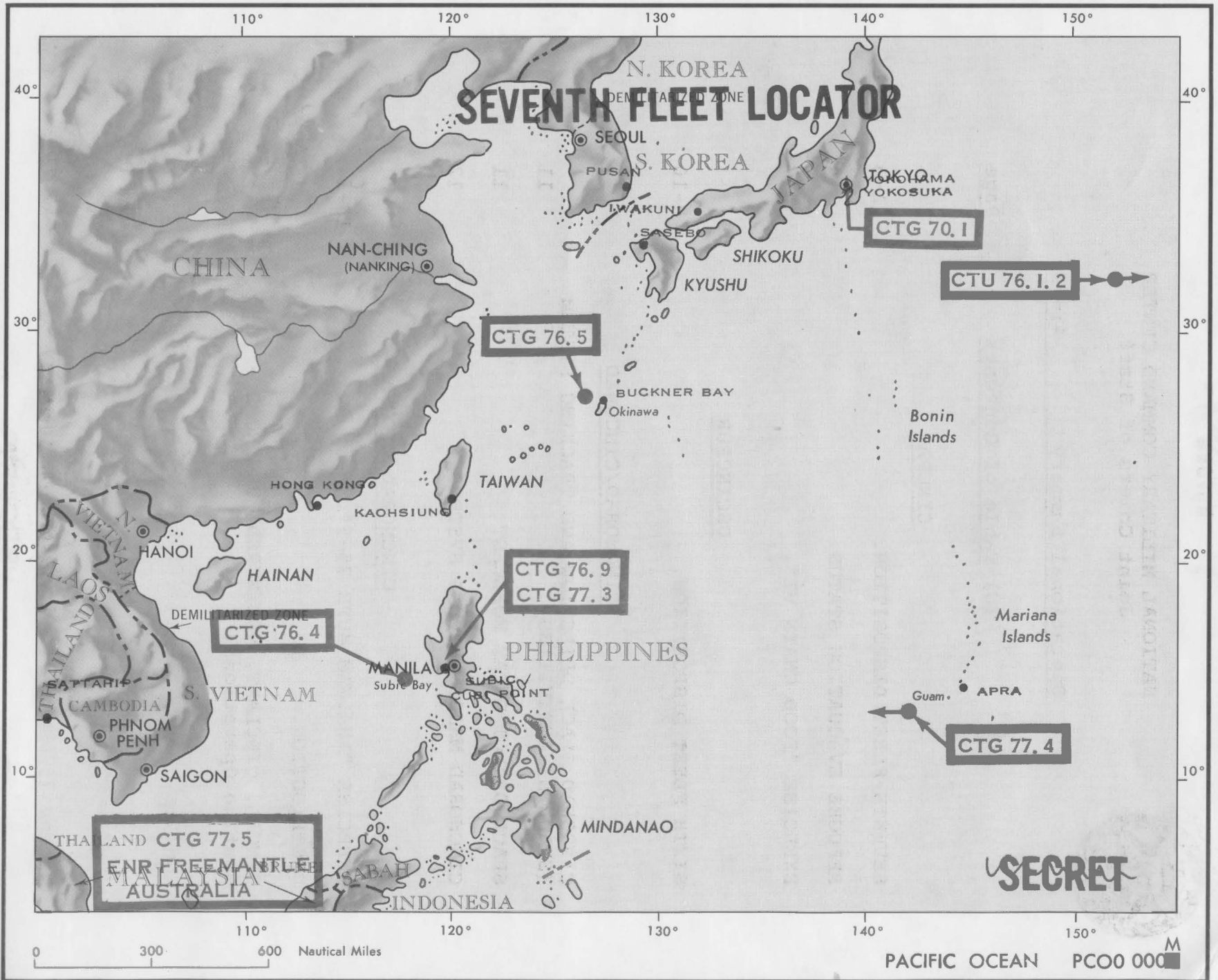
13 May 75

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CINCPAC
(Continued)

CARRIER STRIKE FORCE (TF 77)

<u>UNIT (TG 77.3)</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>UNIT (TG 77.4)</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>
HANCOCK (CVA-19)	Subic Bay	MIDWAY (CVA-41)	At Sea
EDSON (DD-946)	At Sea	BADGER (DE-1071)	At Sea
MEYERKORD (DE-1058)	Subic Bay	WORDEN (DLG-18)	Hong Kong
		R.B. ANDERSON (DD-786)	Hong Kong
		ROWAN (DD-782)	Hong Kong

<u>UNIT (TG 77.5)</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>
CORAL SEA (CVA-43)	At Sea
GRIDLEY (DLG-21)	At Sea
LANG (DE-1060)	At Sea
BAUSELL (DD-845)	At Sea

CRUISER DESTROYER FORCE (TF 75)

<u>UNIT*</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>UNIT*</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>
LONG BEACH (CGN-9)		KIRK (DE-1087)	
(COMCRUDESGRU-3)	At Sea	(COMDESRON-23)	Subic Bay
BRONSTEIN (DE-1037)	At Sea	PARSONS (DDG-33)	Kure, Japan
COCHRANE (DDG-21)		RAMSEY (DEG-2)	At Sea
(COMDESRON-33)	At Sea	RATHBURNE (DE-1057)	At Sea
GURKE (DD-783)	At Sea	SCHOFIELD (DEG-3)	At Sea
H.E. HOLT (DE-1074)	At Sea	B. STODDERT (DDG-22)	At Sea
J.P. JONES (DDG-32)	At Sea	H. B. WILSON (DDG-7)	Kaohsiung

*Assigned to various task groups.

SOURCE: FORSTAT.

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CINCPAC
(Continued)



REFUGEE EVACUATION STATUS

(U) Refugee operations are continuing. As of 120500 EDT May 1975 the following numbers of evacuees were at the locations indicated or in transit:

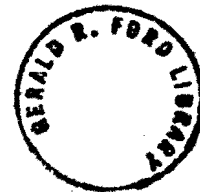
<u>Location</u>	<u># Refugees</u>
Clark AB, PI	298
Subic Bay, PI	2,836
U-Tapao	431
Wake Island	7,796
Guam	37,376
Ft. Chaffee, AR	17,896
Camp Pendleton, CA	18,646
Eglin AFB, FL	2,541
El Toro MCAS, CA	539

At Sea - In Transit

In MSC Ships	10,998
In Other Ships	1,200

In addition, 14,680 refugees have been released from government control.

SOURCE: J-4 LCC

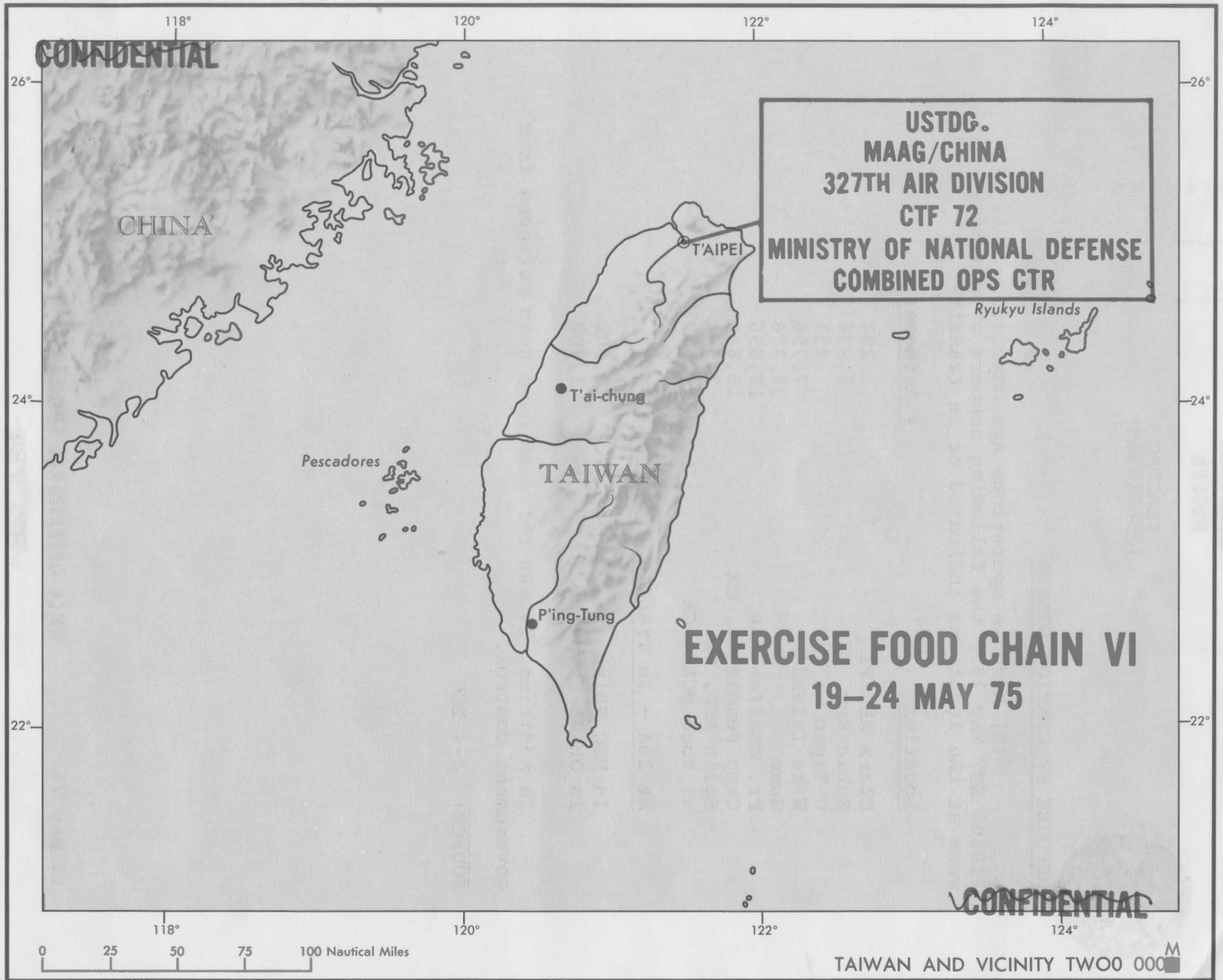


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CINCPAC
(Continued)

EXERCISE "FOOD CHAIN VI"

(C) Exercise FOOD CHAIN VI is a combined US and Republic of China (ROC) Command Post Exercise to be conducted 19-24 May 1975. The exercise will be conducted within the confines of the Combined Operations Center, Air Operations Center, Naval Operations Center and selected sub-headquarters of the ROC military on Taiwan.

(C) Exercise objectives are to:

- Test the adaptability and feasibility of the revised US/ROC OPLAN ROCHESTER-74.
- Test and evaluate command and control procedures during a simulated hostile situation.
- Emphasize the effect of a blockade on the logistics readiness of the ROC armed forces.
- Evaluate COMUSTDC WWMCCS ADP facility.

(C) The exercise scenario includes a naval blockade against Taiwan by PRC surface and submarine assets during the pre-exercise phase. The blockade leads to confrontation at sea, introduction of US forces, followed by air attacks on Taiwan.

(C) Participating Commands, Headquarters, and Forces:

UNITED STATES

US TAIWAN DEFENSE COMMAND
MAAG/CHINA
327th AIR DIVISION
COMMANDER, TASK FORCE 72



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NMCC OPERATIONAL SUMMARY

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CINCPAC
(Continued)

EXERCISE "FOOD CHAIN VI" (Continued)

REPUBLIC OF CHINA

MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEFENSE
GENERAL HQ OF ROC ARMY, NAVY AND AIR FORCE
TAIWAN GARRISON COMMAND
MILITARY POLICE COMMAND
COMBINED SERVICE FORCE

TOTAL PERSONNEL IN EXERCISE: 2,330 (US-130 ROC 2,200)

SOURCE: BRIEF OF A SIGNIFICANT EXERCISE

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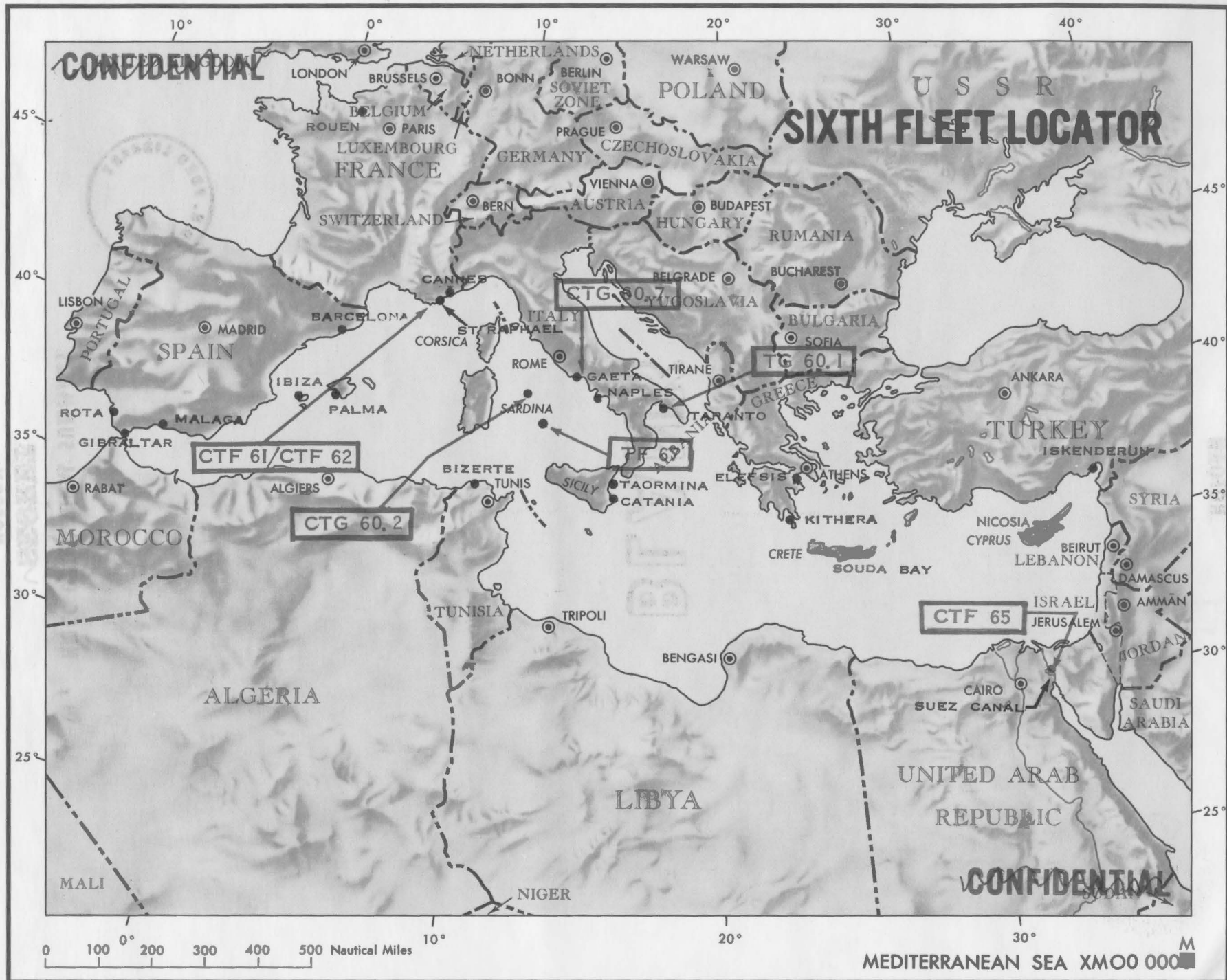
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USCINCEUR

(S) SIXTH FLEET DISPOSITION AS OF 112000 EDT MAY 1975

ATTACK CARRIER FORCE (TF 60)

<u>UNIT (TG 60.1)</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>UNIT (TG 60.2)</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>
FORRESTAL (CVA-59) (COMCARGRU-2)	Taranto	ROOSEVELT (CVA-42) (COMCRUDESGRU-8)	At Sea
BARRY (DD-933)	Naples	BIGELOW (DD-942)	Rouen
MANLEY (DD-940)	Naples	BOWEN (DE-1079)	At Sea
SAMPSON (DDG-10) (COMDESRON-12)	Naples	CAPODANNO (DE-1093)	At Sea
VREELAND (DE-1068)	Elefsis	LUCE (DLG -7) (COMDESRON-26)	At Sea
W. M. WOOD (DD-715)	Elefsis	MCCANDLESS (DE-1084)	At Sea
WAINWRIGHT (DLG-28)	Taormina	STRIBLING (DD-867)	At Sea
MILLER (DE-1091)	Catania		

SPECIAL MOVEMENT GROUP (TG 60.7)

LITTLE ROCK (CLG-4)
(COMSIXTHFLT) Gaeta

AMPHIBIOUS TASK FORCE (TF 61/62)
(34th MAU Embarked)

NASHVILLE (LPD-13)
(COMPHIBRON-6) St Raphael

IWO JIMA (LPH-2) St Raphael

AUSTIN (LPD-4) St Raphael

PENSACOLA (LSD-30) St Raphael

HARLAN COUNTRY
(LST-1196) St Raphael

MINE COUNTERMEASURES FORCE (TF 65)

OPPORTUNE (ARS-41)
(COMMCMFORSIXTHFLT) Suez Canal

SERVICE FORCE (TF 63)

KALAMAZOO (AOR-6) Naples

PIEDMONT (AD-17) Naples

BUTTE (AE-27) Ibiza

SAN DIEGO (AFS-6) Palma

MARIAS (TAO-57) Iskenderun

NEOSHO (AO-143) Naples

SAVANNAH (AOR-4) At Sea

SANTA BARBARA (AE-28) At Sea

PATROL GUNBOAT (TF 67)

GRAHAM COUNTY
(AGP-1176) At Sea

DOUGLAS (PG-100) At Sea

ANTELOPE (PG-86) At Sea

READY (PG-87) At Sea

GRAND RAPIDS (PG-98) At Sea

COMSIXTHFLT - Commander SIXTH Fleet

COMMCMFORSIXTHFLT - Commander Mine Countermeasures Force SIXTH Fleet

SOURCE: USCINCEUR SITREP
SIXTHFLT LOCATORS

13 May 75

NMCC OPERATIONAL SUMMARY

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CINCNORAD/CINCONAD

(U) CINCONAD SPACE DETECTION AND TRACKING SYSTEM (SPADATS)
ACTIVITIES AS OF 110500 EDT MAY 1975

	<u>ESV P/C</u>	<u>SP P/L</u>	<u>ESV DEB</u>	<u>SP DEB</u>	<u>DECAYED P/L</u>	<u>DECAYED DEB</u>
USA	367	25	1,747	34	414	867
USSR	297	23	709	8	600	2,565
PRC	2	0	3	0	0	0
OTHERS	<u>43</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>21</u>
TOTALS	709	49	2,513	42	1,027	3,453

TOTAL OBJECTS - 7,793 (3,313 Orbiting/4,480 Decayed)

(Decayed columns include objects deorbited)

SOURCE: SPACE DEFENSE CENTER, ENT AFB, COLORADO, SATELLITE
BOX SCORE 11 MAY 1975 (U)

(U) SPACE OBJECT DECAY FORECAST 112001-182000 EDT MAY 1975

<u>OBJECT NO.</u>	<u>ORIGIN</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>ESTIMATED DECAY DATE (EDT)</u>
7779	USSR	Debris	142242 May 1975

SOURCE: CINCNORAD SITREP 353, 8 MAY 1975 (U)

13 May 75

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CINCNOAD/CINCONAD
(Continued)

CINCNOAD MAJOR WEAPONS SYSTEMS

(S) INTERCEPTOR AIRCRAFT (REGULAR)

	<u>SQDNS</u>	<u>AIRCRAFT</u>	<u>ACFT COMBAT READY IN 3 HOURS OR LESS</u>
*CF-101	3	**36 (-2)	30 (-1)
F-106	6	100 (+1)	65 (+1)
F-4	<u>0</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>6</u>
	9	142 (-1)	101

(S) INTERCEPTOR AIRCRAFT (ANG)

F-101	6	113	87
F-102	2	22 (-1)	17 (+1)
F-106	<u>6</u>	<u>79 (+3)</u>	<u>57 (+3)</u>
	14	214 (+2)	161 (+4)

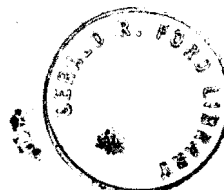
(S) SURFACE-TO-AIR MISSILES (REGULAR)

	<u>MISSILES</u>	<u>READY IN 3 HOURS OR LESS</u>
NIKE HERCULES	133	117 (+8)
HAWK	288	266 (+66)

*Canadian designation for F-101.

**Figures in parentheses indicate changes from previous report dated 29 April 1975

SOURCE: JCS FORSTAT - CINCNOAD MAJOR WEAPONS SYSTEMS SUMMARY 12 MAY 75 (S)

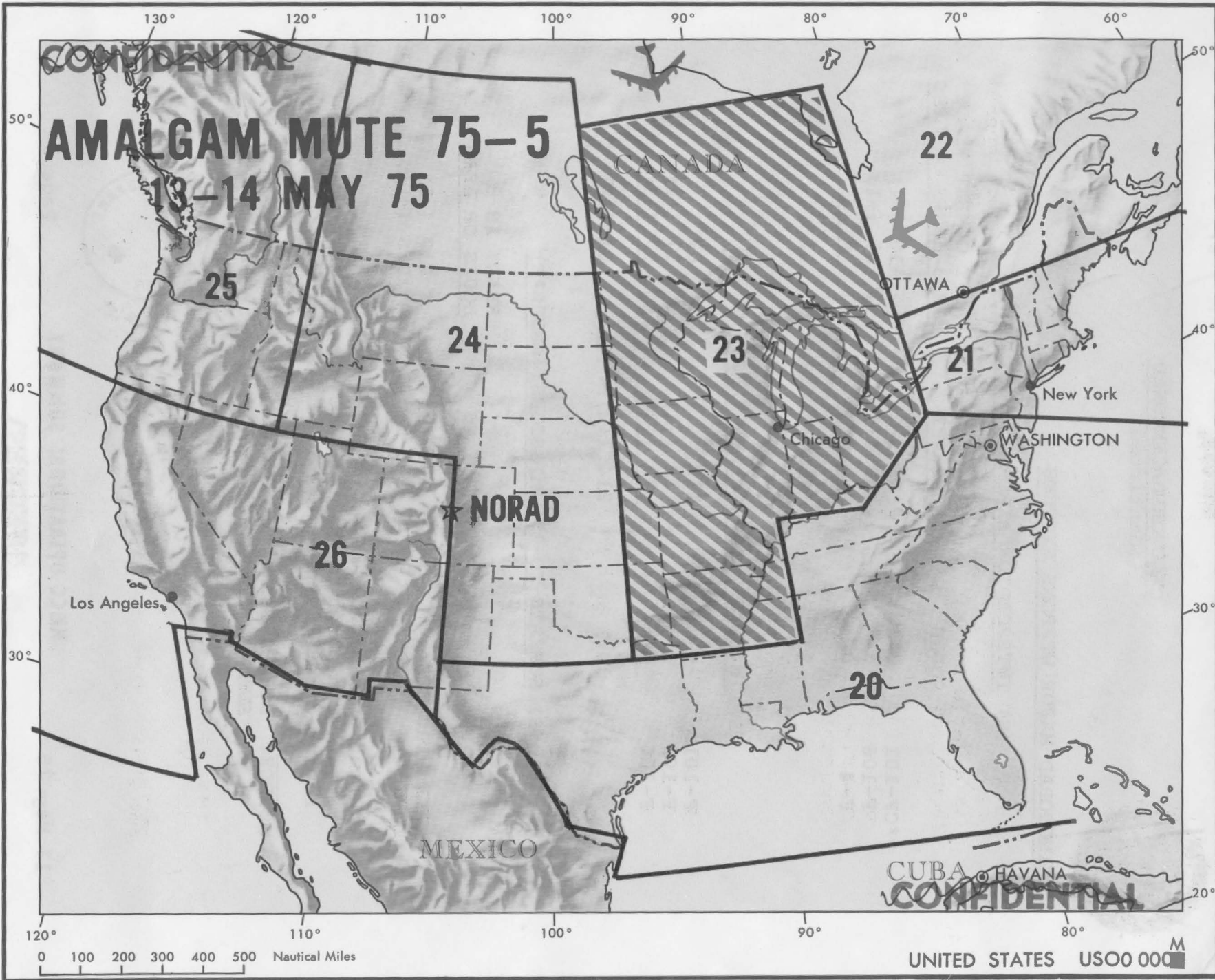


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NMCC OPERATIONAL SUMMARY

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CINCNOAD/CINCSAC



EXERCISE "AMALGAM MUTE 75-5"

(U) AMALGAM MUTE 75-5 is a NORAD "No-Notice" operational evaluation of the 23rd NORAD Region (23NR). It is a large scale, live exercise scheduled for two 24-hour periods on 13 - 14 May 1975.

(U) A faker force, consisting of 27 target aircraft, will simulate an air-breathing threat to the 23NR. The exercise scenario contains no political assumptions or connotations.

(U) Participating Command/Forces:

OFFENSIVE:

Air Defense Command

8 EB-57 Target Aircraft

Strategic Air Command

8 B-52 and two KC-135 Target Aircraft

Canadian Forces Air Defense Command (CF/ADC)

5 CF-100 and four CT-33 Target Aircraft

DEFENSIVE:

23rd NORAD Region

- 1 Region Control Center
- 2 F-106 Fighter Interceptor Squadrons (1 ADC, 1 ANG)
- 1 F-101 Fighter Interceptor Squadron (ANG)
- 14 Long Range Radar Sites

Total personnel participating - approximately 1,750 (1,600 US, 150 Canadian).

SOURCE: BRIEF OF A SIGNIFICANT EXERCISE

13 May 75

NMCC OPERATIONAL SUMMARY

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		NCSC	(4)
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J-6	(2)	HQ TAC	(1)
SJCS	(5)		
SAGA	(3)	Department of Defense Agencies	
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ANMCC	(1)	DCPA	(1)
National War College	(1)	WSEG	(2)
Department of the Army		Unified/Specified Commands	
Sec Army	(1)	CINCLANT	(1)
CSA	(2)	CINCPAC	(1)
ACSI	(1)	CINCSAC	(1)
AOC	(10)		
		Other Agencies	
		NIC	(1)
		CIA	(1)

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GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMCM	AIRBORNE MINE COUNTERMEASURES
ARG	AMPHIBIOUS READY GROUP
COMCARGRU	COMMANDER CARRIER GROUP
COMCRUDESGRU	COMMANDER CRUISER/DESTROYER GROUP
COMDESRON	COMMANDER DESTROYER SQUADRON
COMPHIBRON	COMMANDER AMPHIBIOUS SQUADRON
DAO	DEFENSE ATTACHE OFFICE
DEB	DEBRIS
ENR	EN ROUTE
EOD	EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE DISPOSAL
ESV	EARTH SATELLITE VEHICLE
ETA	ESTIMATED TIME OF ARRIVAL
ETD	ESTIMATED TIME OF DEPARTURE
ETE	ESTIMATED TIME EN ROUTE
ETR	ESTIMATED TIME OF RETURN
FORSTAT	FORCE STATUS AND IDENTITY REPORT SYSTEM
FPJMT	FOUR PARTY JOINT MILITARY TEAM
GCI	GROUND CONTROLLED INTERCEPT
ICCS	INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF CONTROL AND SUPERVISION
I/P	IN PORT
JCRC	JOINT CASUALTY RESOLUTION CENTER
MAU	MARINE AMPHIBIOUS UNIT
MEDTC	MILITARY EQUIPMENT DELIVERY TEAM (CAMBODIA)
MR	MILITARY REGION
P/L	PAY LOAD
SAR	SEARCH AND RESCUE
SCOOT	SUPPORT OF CAMBODIA OUT OF THAILAND
SEADAB	SOUTHEAST ASIA DATA BASE
SP	SPACE
TPJMC	TWO PARTY JOINT MILITARY COMMISSION
USSAG	UNITED STATES SUPPORT ACTIVITIES GROUP

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→KQ

STATION SERIAL NUMBER 262

ADDRESSEE: PLEASE ENTER STATION, TOR, OPERATORS SIGNATURE AND RETURN TO NMCC: ³⁰

TIME PROCESSED AT NMCC
16 MAY 75 10 22

FROM: WHITE HOUSE SITUATION ROOM

NMCC LDX

TOR: '75 MAY 16 AM 10:33

NAME: GE

TO BE FILLED IN BY REQUESTER

FROM: PAC Div / J3 / OJCS OFFICE/DESK: LTC FULLER

PHONE NR: OK 57008

C/Ship

TO:

- WHITE HOUSE COL. CLINT GRANGER
- STATE DEPT _____
- CIA _____
- NSA _____
- ANMCC _____

- DIA (PENT) _____
- DIA (ARL HALL) _____
- DNA _____
- NPIC (NAVY YARD) _____

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS _____

CLASSIFICATION TOP SECRET PAGES 11



NARRATIVE SUMMARY

15 1400 EST MAY
LTC FULLER
OKS7008

The operation to effect the recovery of the SS MAYAGUEZ and crew from Cambodian control began with the military execute order issued at 1645 hours on 14 May, following extensive planning and repositioning of forces. The initial order directed the Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Command (CINCPAC) to conduct the assault using marines placed aboard the destroyer USS H.E. HOLT to seize and secure the USS MAYAGUEZ and sail or tow the ship to sea as soon as possible. This order also directed a Marine helicopter assault on Kaoh Tang Island. Locations of the ship and island are shown at Tab B. Tactical air from Thailand and the carrier USS CORAL SEA was authorized to support the operations as required, as was the use of naval gunfire and riot control agents.

The first helicopter took off from Utapao Airfield, Thailand, where all available USAF helicopters and the Marine Ground Security Force had been positioned at 1714 hours on 14 May. Tactical air began to launch from Thailand to provide continuous coverage for the operation and the airborne command post assumed overall control at the onset. The first three helicopters carrying 48 Marines Ground Security Force combat troops, 6 Military Sealift Command personnel, 6 US Navy explosive ordnance disposal technicians, and a linguist arrived at the USS H.E. HOLT at 1858 hours, and personnel transfer

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had been completed by 1922 hours. The HOLT came alongside the MAYAGUEZ at 2045 hours, and twenty minutes later reported in full control of the ship. There were no personnel onboard the MAYAGUEZ at the time of boarding, but food found on the dining table and a warm kettle on the stove were evidence of a recent, hasty departure.

At 1803 hours CINCPAC was directed to commence cyclic strike operations from the USS CORAL SEA on the Kompong Som complex with first time on target specified at 2045 hours to coincide with the estimated time of capture of the MAYAGUEZ. This estimate proved to be exceedingly accurate. The first cycle was to be armed reconnaissance with aircraft and military watercraft as principal targets. Subsequent flights were to make maximum use of precision guided munitions to attack targets of military significance. The armed reconnaissance naval tactical air cycle expended no ordnance. The second cycle struck the Ream airfield. The runway was cratered, 17 aircraft were destroyed or damaged, and the hangars were badly damaged. The third and final cycle struck the naval base at Ream damaging the barracks area. Kompong Som was also struck, damaging two warehouses in the port and scoring a direct hit on a large building in the marshalling yard. All bomb damage assessment is preliminary, however, and based solely on pilot reports. Photographs of the target areas are included at Tab C. Operations against the mainland terminated about midnight on 14 May.



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The assault on Kaoh Tang Island (Tab D) began with the take-off from Utapao at 1720 hours on 14 May of the first three of eight total USAF helicopters with Marine assault forces. One of the first helicopters in the area of the island reported hostile ground fire at 1909 hours with the flight mechanic wounded and becoming the first casualty of the operation. A second helicopter was reported hit and burning in the water six minutes later. The third helicopter from this flight was reported crashed on the beach at 1945 hours. Thirty minutes later insertion of the first assault wave had been completed. Of the eight helicopters in the first wave, three crashed on the beach or in the water and two were disabled, one landing on a Thai island for fuel before proceeding to Utapao and the other returning directly to Utapao. The Marine Ground Force Commander had consolidated his position by 2147 hours, was receiving occasional automatic weapon fire and encountering claymore mine detonations. Across the island from the main force 22 personnel were isolated near the helicopter which had crashed on the beach.

At 2223 hours a boat was reported approaching the island flying a white flag. The destroyer USS WILSON picked up the occupants of the boat at 2307 hours. Shortly thereafter it was reported that the entire crew of the MAYAGUEZ was



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accounted for aboard the WILSON and that all were in good condition. The five-man Thai crew of the boat which brought the MAYAGUEZ crew to the WILSON from Kompong Som requested food and fuel for their boat. At 0025 hours on 15 May, the MAYAGUEZ crew had been returned to their ship.

The second Marine assault wave began to arrive in the area of Kaoh Tang Island at about 2345 hours on 14 May. The helicopters received ground fire and one of the first two was damaged. At 2316 hours the order was given to cease all offensive operations and begin to withdraw. At that time additional ground security forces were requested by the commander on the island in order that he could provide security for a successful withdrawal. At eight minutes past midnight the Marines were reported in good position with opposition forced back. At 0121 hours on 15 May a second helicopter from the second assault wave was hit at the island, and, along with two other helicopters, it returned to Utapao without unloading marines.

Initial efforts to retrograde forces from the island concentrate on extracting the 22 personnel in the vicinity of the downed helicopter on the beach. The helicopter making the attempt was hit by ground fire at 0334 hours and recovered on the USS CORAL SEA. The main body of the Marine ground force with a strength of approximately 213 personnel was unable to reach the downed helicopter or 22-man Marine force, isolated on the opposite side of the island since approximately 1945 hours.

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The extraction of the ground force was complicated by the reduction in numbers of helicopters operational (seven total of all types), the amount of enemy ground fire received by each inbound helicopter and the approach of darkness. Small boats from the USS HOLT and USS WILSON began efforts to approach the beaches at 0615 hours, but were aborted due to ground fire and other problems. Working with naval gunfire and TACAIR support and with the ground force commander's recommendation that the extraction continue into darkness, helicopters recovering to the CORAL SEA were able to finally clear all USMC personnel from the island at 0917 hours, 15 May.

Due to the multiple recovery sites of the Marine ground assault force, total casualty reports have not been consolidated nor equipment damage/loss confirmed. As of 0800 hours, 15 May, reports indicate that there was one USMC killed in action, 15 wounded in action, and six missing. Final reports may well reflect additional casualties not now known.

At the approximate time of the extraction of the last Marines from Kaoh Tang Island, it was directed that the residual force of 742 Marines at Utapao be extracted from Thailand by daylight of 16 May (Bangkok time). The first C-141 aircraft with 150 Marines lifted off from Utapao at 1156 hours with the last aircraft take-off time estimated at 1445 hours, 15 May. Marine forces aboard the USS CORAL SEA will be taken to Subic Bay by the Naval Task Force. Estimated time of arrival of this force is unknown (Tab E).

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SS MAYAGUEZ/KOH TANG OPERATIONAL SUMMARY

ALL TIMES EDT

141645 JCS AUTHORIZES USSAG/7AF. EXECUTION OF KOH TANG ISLAND LANDING AND BOARDING OF SS MAYAGUEZ.

141922 HELO LIFT TO USS HOLT COMPLETED

142128 BOARDING PARTY FROM HOLT ABOARD MAYAGUEZ. SHIP SECURED AT 2138.

142257 USN TACAIR HIT REAM AIRFIELD.

142314 ENTIRE MAYAGUEZ CREW (40) RECOVERED WITH FIVE TCN.

150041 DIRECTION GIVEN TO USE USS CORAL SEA HELOS FOR EXTRACTION.

150055 JCS DIRECTS CESSATION OF OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS.

150917 ALL GSF EXTRACTED FROM KOH TANG ISLAND.

151711 WITHDRAWAL OF USMC PERSONNEL FROM ~~UTAPAO~~, THAILAND BY C-141 A/C COMPLETED.
UTAPAO

GSF INSERTED ON HOLT: 65

GSF INSERTED KOH TANG ISLAND: 240

GSF EXTRACTED FROM KOH TANG ISLAND: 226 BY HELO, 14 BY SMALL BOAT TO USS WILSON

SOURCE: MSG TRAFFIC/PACOM SPOT REPORTS
14-15 MAY 75

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SS MAYAGUEZ/KOH TANG OPERATIONAL SUMMARY

HELICOPTER OPERATIONS (PRELIMINARY REPORTS)

USAF: 14 HELOS EMPLOYED (7 CH-53, 7 HH-53)

USN: INFO UNAVAILABLE

HELICOPTER SORTIES

USAF: 16 CH-53

GSF INSERTION/EXTRACTION

20 HH-53

GSF INSERTION/EXTRACTION

USN: INFO UNAVAILABLE

AIRCRAFT LOSSES/CASUALTIES (PRELIMINARY REPORT)

USAF AIRCRAFT: 3 CH-53 LOST DUE TO ENEMY GROUND FIRE.

PERSONNEL: 1 MIA, 3 WIA

USN AIRCRAFT: NONE

PERSONNEL: 2 MIA

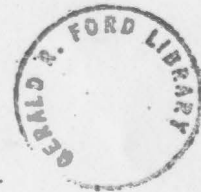
USMC AIRCRAFT: NONE

PERSONNEL: 1 KIA, 10 MIA, 19 WIA.

TOTAL: 1 KIA, 13 MIA, 22 WIA

SOURCE: PACOM SPOT REPORTS

14-16 MAY 75



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SS MAYAGUEZ/KOH TANG OPERATIONAL SUMMARY
TAC AIR/SUPPORT AIRCRAFT SORTIES (PRELIMINARY REPORTS)
TAC AIR SORTIES

USAF

<u>SORTIES</u>	<u>A/C</u>	<u>TARGETS</u>
183	F-4	VIC KOH TANG ISLAND
47	A-7	VIC KOH TANG ISLAND
<u>34</u>	F-111	VIC KOH TANG ISLAND
TOTAL: 264	(115 AGAINST KOH TANG OTHERS WERE SURFACE SURVEILLANCE AND CONTROL)	

USN

5	A-7	REAM/KOMPONG SOM AIRFIELD
2	A-6	REAM/KOMPONG SOM AIRFIELD
6	A-7	REAM PORT/POL STORAGE
2	A-6	REAM PORT/POL STORAGE
18	F-4	CAP/ESCORT
4	A-6	CAS KOH TANG ISLAND
<u>10</u>	A-7	CAS KOH TANG ISLAND
TOTAL: 47	(INCLUDES 15 CONDUCTED AGAINST CAMBODIAN MAINLAND)	



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(CONTINUED)
SUPPORT AIRCRAFT SORTIES

USAF

<u>SORTIES</u>	<u>A/C</u>	<u>MISSION</u>
6	AC-130	CAS
4	OV-10	FAC
15	EC-130	ABCCG
7	HC-130	SAR
<u>49</u>	KC-135	TANKER
TOTAL: 81		

USN

4	E-1	AIRBORNE EARLY WARNING
6	KA-6	TANKER
<u>2</u>	KA-7	TANKER
TOTAL: 12		

SOURCE: PACOM SPOT REPORTS
14-16 MAY.



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RECONNAISSANCE SORTIES

USAF

SORTIES

A/C

MISSION

12

RF-4

PHOTO

6

U-2

PHOTO

35

VARIOUS

ARMED RECCE

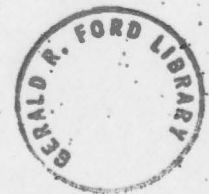
USN

2

RF-8

PHOTO

SOURCE: AFOC SPOT REPORT
16 MAY



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SS MAYAGUEZ/KOH TANG OPERATIONAL SUMMARY
REPORTED BDA ON CAMBODIAN MAINLAND

SIHANOUKVILLE (KAMPONG SOM)

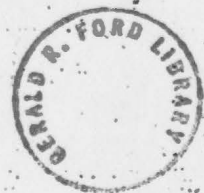
WAREHOUSE IN PORT AREA DAMAGED. FIRES OBSERVED. WALLEYE DIRECT HIT ON LARGE
BLDG IN RAILROAD MARSHALING YARD AND POL REFINERY HIT. NO FIRES OR SECONDARIES
OBSERVED.

REAM NAVAL BASE

BARRACKS AREA DESTROYED. MANY POL FIRES OBSERVED. LIGHT 37 AAA FIRE REPORTED.

REAM AIRFIELD

17 A/C DESTROYED, 5 A/C DAMAGED, HANGERS DAMAGED. RUNWAY CRATERED. LARGE POL
FIRE REPORTED. 37MM AAA SITE DAMAGED. HEAVY 37 MM AAA FIRE REPORTED.



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BY Ut NLF, DATE 2/2008

SOURCE: CTF 77.5
150530 Z

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MILITARY OPERATIONS WHICH RESULTED IN THE SUCCESSFUL RECOVERY
OF THE SS MAYAGUEZ AND CREW

(K) The operation to effect the recovery of the SS MAYAGUEZ and crew from Cambodian control began with the military execute order issued at 1645 hours on 14 May, following extensive planning and repositioning of forces. The initial order directs the Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Command (CINCPAC) to conduct assault by marines aboard the destroyer USS H. E. HOLT to seize and secure SS MAYAGUEZ and sail or tow the ship to sea as soon as possible. This directive also commenced a marine helicopter assault on Kaoh Tang Island. Locations of the ship and island are shown at Tab A. Tactical air from Thailand and the carrier USS CORAL SEA was authorized to support the operations as required, as was the use of naval gunfire and riot control agents.

(A) The first helicopter took off from Utapao Airfield, Thailand, where all available USAF helicopters and the Marine ground security force had been prepositioned, at 1714 hours on 14 May. Tactical air began to launch from Thailand to provide continuous coverage for the operation and the airborne command post assumed overall control at the onset. The first three helicopters with 48 Marines, ¹⁶ ground security force combat troops, 6 Military Sealift Command personnel, 6 US Navy explosive ordnance disposal technicians, and a linguist aboard arrived at the USS H. E. HOLT at 1858 hours and personnel transfer



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(D) had been completed by 1922 hours. The HOLT came alongside the MAYAGUEZ at 2045 hours, and twenty minutes later reported in full control of the ship. There were no personnel onboard the MAYAGUEZ at the time of boarding, but food on the dining table and a warm kettle on the stove were evidence of a recent, hasty departure.

(B) (4) At 1803 hours CINCPAC was directed to commence cyclic strike operations from the USS CORAL SEA on the Kompon Som complex with first time on target specified at 2045 hours to coincide with the estimated time of capture of the MAYAGUEZ. This estimate proved to be exceedingly accurate. The first cycle was to be armed reconnaissance with aircraft and military watercraft as principal targets. Subsequent flights were to make maximum use of precision guided munitions to attack targets of military significance. The armed reconnaissance naval tactical air cycle expended no ordnance. The second cycle struck the Ream airfield. The runway was cratered, 17 aircraft were destroyed or damaged, and the hangars were badly damaged. The third and final cycle struck the naval base at Ream damaging the barracks area and Kompon Som, damaging two warehouses in the port and scoring a direct hit on a large building in the marshalling yard. All bomb damage assessment is preliminary and based solely on pilot reports. Photographs of the target areas are included at Tab B. Operations against the mainland terminated about midnight on 14 May.



WILSON

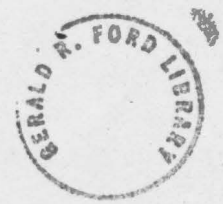
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(6)

(M)

(D)



WILSON
 10.

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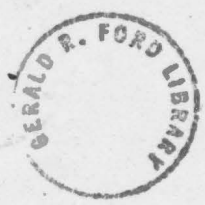
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The second assault wave began to arrive in the area of Kaoh Island at about 2345 hours on 14 May. The helicopter received ground fire and one of the first two was damaged. At 2316 hours the order was given to cease all offensive operations and begin to withdraw. At that time additional ground security forces were requested by the commander on the island in order that he could provide security for a successful withdrawal. At eight minutes past midnight the Marines were reported in good position with opposition forced back. At 0121 hours on 15 May a second helicopter from the second assault wave was hit at the island, and, along with two other helicopters, it returned to Utapao without unloading marines. Initial efforts to retrograde forces from the island concentrated on extracting the 22 personnel in the vicinity of the downed helicopter on the beach. The helicopter making the attempt was hit by ground fire an 0334 hours and recovered on the USS CORAL SEA. The main body of the ground security force has a strength of 160 personnel, and has been unable to reach the downed helicopter.



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At 0500 hours on 15 May efforts are continuing to extract the ground security force. Consideration is being given to attempting rescue of the personnel near the downed helicopter with a boat from the USS WILSON. With approximately 2 hours and 20 minutes of daylight remaining extraction now becomes a race with time. There are insufficient helicopter assets available to lift all personnel prior to darkness. Decision on continuing extraction operations during hours of darkness or stopping temporarily and beginning at first light will be made as events develop. A total of seven helicopters are available, three of which are small. The only firm report of US casualties was received at 2341 hours on 14 May included 1 KIA and 8 WIA (three serious). This is known to be fragmentary, does not include report from helicopter crashes, and actual casualties are believed to be considerably higher.



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ASIAN COASTAL BUFFER ZONE

Phumi Chrouy Svay

CHHAK RAMPONG SAM

REFINERY
ATTACKED BY TACAIR

KAOH RONG
KOMPONG SOM

PORT FACILITY
ATTACKED BY TACAIR

AIRFIELD
ATTACKED BY TACAIR

+100'

NAVAL BASE
ATTACKED BY TACAIR

REAM

MAYAGUEZ
USMC
REGAINED CONTROL

USMC GSF INSERTED

KAOH TANG ISLAND

2 Bn
DUONG DONG

CAMBODIA
VIETNAM

PL
POULO WAI ISLAND

400'

100'

MAYAGUEZ
INTERCEPTED/BOARDED

GULF OF THAIL

07

HON DA BAR
112
HON PANJIANG
151
200
357

+100'



WARNIN
Republic of Vietnam (RV)
zone five kilometers (2)
of Vietnam along the B
odia and ten kilometers
Ben Hai river which ma
line of demarcation bet
the Republic of Vietnam.

PK

QK

120

30

10

50

40

30

20

10

10

104

16

335

HON THOM

315

387

226

HON NA

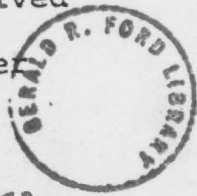
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C/Ship 3b

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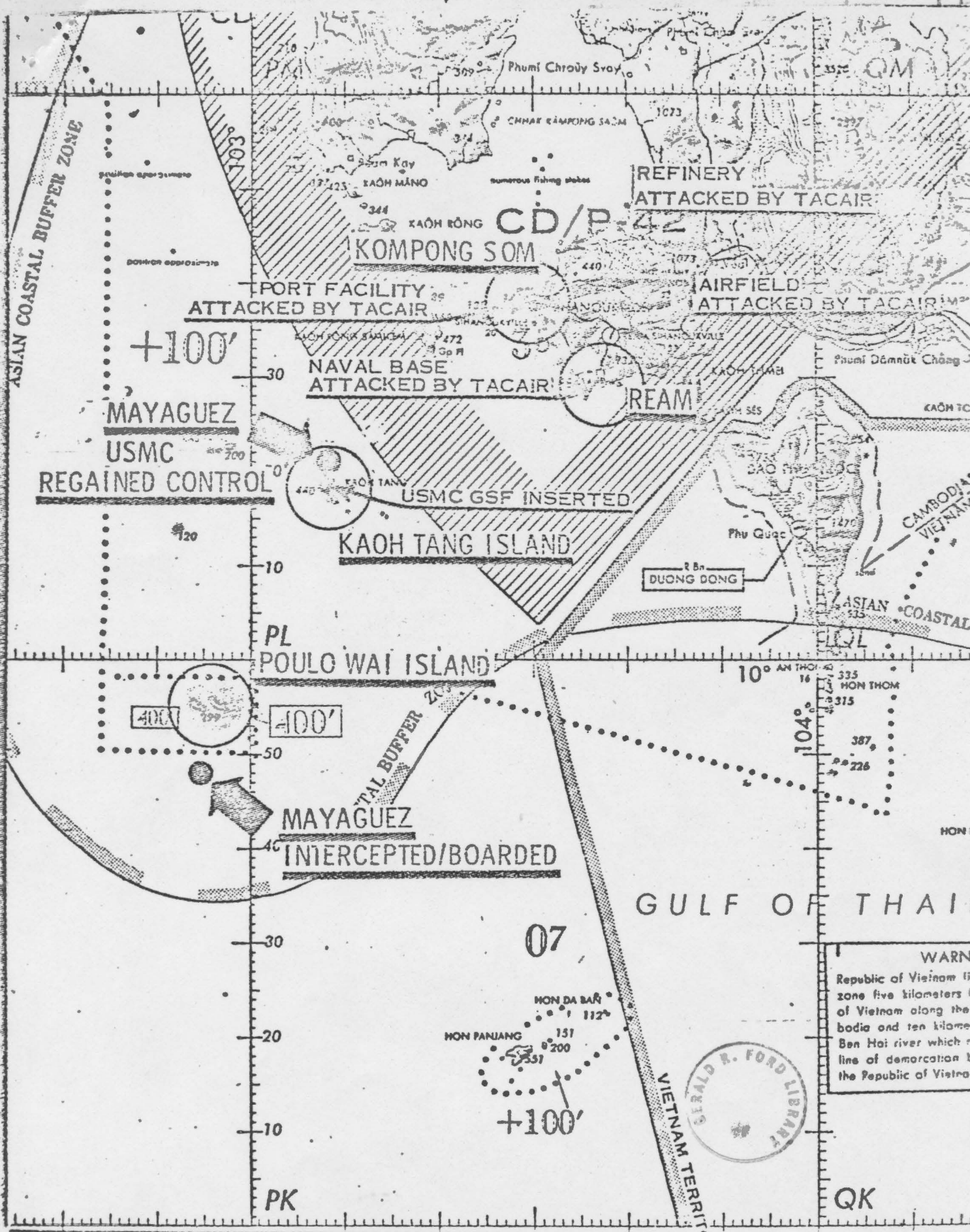
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ASIAN COASTAL BUFFER ZONE



CD/P-42

KOMPONG SOM

REFINERY
ATTACKED BY TACAIR

PORT FACILITY
ATTACKED BY TACAIR

AIRFIELD
ATTACKED BY TACAIR

NAVAL BASE
ATTACKED BY TACAIR

REAM

MAYAGUEZ
USMC
REGAINED CONTROL

USMC GSF INSERTED

KAOH TANG ISLAND

R Bn
DUONG DONG

PL
POULO WAI ISLAND

400' 100'

MAYAGUEZ
INTERCEPTED/BOARDED

GULF OF THAILAND

07

HON DA BAR 112
HON PANJIANG 151 200 331

+100'



WARNIN
Republic of Vietnam (RV)
zone five kilometers (3.1)
of Vietnam along the B
odia and ten kilometers
Ben Hai river which mar
line of demarcation bet
the Republic of Vietnam.

PK

QK



THE JOINT STAFF

THE NATIONAL MILITARY COMMAND CENTER

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

20 May 1975
1500 EDT

C My

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

Subject: MAYAGUEZ Operation Casualty Count

The following is a summary of subject casualties reported by the Service Headquarters as of 1430 EDT 20 May 1975:

	<u>KIA</u>	<u>MIA</u>	<u>WIA</u>
USN	2	0	2
USMC	11	3	41
USAF	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>7</u>
TOTALS	15	3	50

C. D. Roberts Jr.

C. D. ROBERTS JR.
Brigadier General, USMC
Deputy Director for
Operations (NMCC)

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DJS (3)	CSAF:OPSDP	
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THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

5
C/ship

4 June 1975

Honorable Edward W. Brooke
United States Senate
Washington, D. C. 20510

Dear Senator Brooke:

The Department of State has requested that I further respond to your letter of 15 May 1975 with regard to the rescue of the MAYAGUEZ crew.

The following answers are keyed to your questions:

13a. Was there a Cambodian attempt to move the crew or the MAYAGUEZ after the ship had been anchored off Tang Island?

ANSWER: The crew was moved from Kaoh Tang Island where they were initially taken to Kompong Som subsequent to the anchoring of the ship off Kaoh Tang Island. Sensors on reconnaissance aircraft thereafter indicated that a possible effort to move the ship was being prepared. It was later determined that this was an erroneous indication. ||

13b. How many of our reconnaissance craft had been fired upon and hit prior to our resort to force?

ANSWER: Two reconnaissance aircraft were struck by small arms fire prior to the landing of the Marine Force on either the vessel or the island. Other aircraft were fired upon, but we have no exact count as to how many.

13c. Were the Cambodian patrol craft that were destroyed or disabled moving toward the MAYAGUEZ when they were interdicted?

ANSWER: Reports currently available do not clearly indicate whether or not the eight patrol craft and one barge which were sunk had been moving toward MAYAGUEZ at the time.



13d. Had the crew of the MAYAGUEZ been removed from the MAYAGUEZ prior to the time we initiated our use of force?

ANSWER: Yes.

14. What were the targets of our attacks on the mainland? Did our attacks serve any immediate purpose directly related to the rescue of the crew and the ship or were they primarily punitive in nature?

ANSWER: The attacks on the mainland were all related to the rescue of the crew and the ship or protecting the Marine Force on the island. None of them were punitive in nature. Targets included the Ream Airfield and Naval Base and Kompong Som Port Complex and Naval Facility.

15. What are the details regarding the deaths and injuries of members of our armed forces?

ANSWER: Reports now available indicate that of the forces involved in rescue of the MAYAGUEZ and its crew, there were 15 killed in action, 50 wounded in action, and 3 missing in action for whom there is little hope. Final reports are still not available. Most of the fatalities were personnel aboard the CH-53 helicopter that crashed and burned during the initial landing on Kaoh Tang Island.

17. How many combat forces and how many ships were actually involved in the rescue operations?

ANSWER: Approximately 300 Marines and 8 naval vessels were engaged in the rescue operation. They were supported by approximately 340 Air Force sorties.

18. How many combat forces were landed on the MAYAGUEZ and on Tang Island?

ANSWER: There were about 240 Marines inserted on Kaoh Tang and 65 were placed on USS HOLT for transfer to MAYAGUEZ.

20. What was the degree of resistance encountered on Tang Island? How much ammunition was expended by our forces?

ANSWER: Resistance on the island was reported by the Ground Security Force Commander to have been stiff, determined, and professional. The resistance characterized primarily by recoilless rifles, mortars, machine guns, and rifles. We have no exact count of ammunition expended by our forces.




21. What were the number of U.S. and Cambodian casualties?

ANSWER: US casualties were 15 KIA, 50 WIA, and 3 MIA. We believe that hostile casualties inflicted by the Ground Security Force are in the neighborhood of 25-30. No precise estimate of total casualties can be reasonably made although the nature of the mission and the ordnance employed should ensure that civilian casualties on the mainland were minimized.

I hope this information is sufficient to your needs. In the event I may be of further assistance, please advise.

Sincerely,



ZAME E. FINKELSTEIN
Colonel, JAGC, US Army
Legal Adviser & Legislative
Assistant to the Chairman, JCS

