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DECLASSIFIED

AUTHORITY DDO Directive 5200.30
BY let _____ NLF, DATE 2/22/00

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VERBAL ORDERS RELATING TO RESCUE OF THE
SS MAYAGUEZ AND ITS CREW

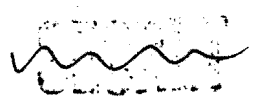
FROM SECDEF

14 May

- 0005 Telecon OSD and OJCS: Authority given to sink four boats at island and also another patrol boat which previously fled island and now moored at another island.
- 1645 NSC Meeting to JCS: Directed forces to begin operations to board MAYAGUEZ and make a helicopter assault on Kaoh Tang Island, but excluded air attacks on the mainland of Cambodia.
- 1654 SECDEF to ACJCS: Approved ultimatum to be used in connection with the operation.
- 1710 NSC Meeting to JCS: Directed cyclic strike operations from the USS CORAL SEA against targets in the Kompong Som Complex with first time-on target specified at 2045. Details of operational authorities and principal targets were included.
- 2344 SECDEF to CJCS: Third wave from CORAL SEA should strike as planned.

15 May

- 0010 SECDEF on recommendation of CJCS: Devote efforts to extracting Marines without further casualties.
- 0038 SECDEF on recommendation of CJCS: Fourth wave from CORAL SEA should not be sent against mainland targets.
- 0050 SECDEF on recommendation of the CJCS: Directed cessation of all offensive operations and to completely disengage all forces.



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B

VERBAL ORDERS RELATING TO THE RESCUE OF THE
MAYAGUEZ AND ITS CREW

FROM JCS

14 May

0004 EDT to CINCPAC:

- JCS approved attack on small boats near island and ship, use caution around ship and carefully observe for presence of Americans on boats. X

0048 to CINCPAC:

- ACJCS debriefed CINCPAC and major subordinate commanders on the NSC meeting and provided planning guidance for military operations to recover the ship and crew.

a. At first light 15 May, US Forces will be prepared to secure Koh Tang Island and simultaneously board the MAYAGUEZ.

b. Decision will be forthcoming whether to put Marines aboard the HOLT or have the crew of the HOLT handle it.

c. Helicopter cycles will be maximized.

d. Plan limited use of Guam-based B-52s and their related tankers for strikes against Kompong Som. Priority of targets will be the harbor area and military shipping.

e. Plan for TACAIR using CORAL SEA assets on multiple targets, particularly patrol boats not suitable for attack by B-52s.

f. Plan to use US air assets based in Thailand; however, Thailand-based assets will not be used to strike Cambodia proper.

g. Deny Cambodian naval vessels the entry into or exit from the areas around the island and in the vicinity of the ship.



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h. The primary objective is to get into the area as quickly as possible, and extract the Americans, recover the ship and withdraw US Forces promptly. Above all, the operation must be professionally conducted.

0143 to CINCPAC:

- JCS provided planning guidance on use of CORAL SEA as helo/fixed wing platform if carrier close enough to participate in operations.

1652 to CINCPAC:

- White House relayed original execution order calling for boarding of ship and helo assault of Koh Tang Island but excluded attacks on the Mainland by either B-52s and naval TACAIR from the CORAL SEA.

1710 to CINCPAC:

- Commence cycling strike from CORAL SEA against Kompong Som target complex to coincide with seizure time of ship. First flight to be armed recce against aircraft and military watercraft. Subsequent flights to use precision guided munitions against targets of military significance in Kompong Som complex.

1735 to CINCPAC:

- In view of indications that the MAYAGUEZ appeared to be making preparations to get underway, instructions were passed that the ship was not to be allowed to move.

1935 to CINCPAC:

- Continuous post strike recce coverage after every mission.



VERBAL ORDERS FROM JCS (Continued)

14 May (continued)

2029 to CINCPAC:

- Do not release Navy TACAIR for strikes on Kompong Som Harbor.

2032 to CINCPAC:

- Island landing and boarding of ship may continue.

2034 to CINCPAC:

- Use all possible communications to divert and cancel CORAL SEA TACAIR. May operate in accordance with Thailand based ROE.

2044 to CINCPAC:

- JCS directed cessation of all cyclic strike operations from CORAL SEA immediately.

2048 to CINCPAC:

- Correction to previous order: First wave of TACAIR from CORAL SEA to strike Mainland targets. BDA is to be made and reported to NMCC.

2052

- NMCC passed on that General Scowcroft directed operations proceed with all CORAL SEA assets as planned.

2202

- DDO indicated White House directed information be provided as to estimate of next insertion of Marines.



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VERBAL ORDERS FROM JCS (Continued)

14 May (continued)

2235 to CINCPAC:

- Direct HOLT to send Marines to island as soon as possible.

2344 to CINCPAC:

- Allow CORAL SEA strike currently inbound to proceed to POL depot. All subsequent CORAL SEA efforts to be close air support missions in support of ground security forces on island.

15 May

0007 EDT to CINCPAC:

- Request situation island - Situation as below:
USMC - no imminent danger, opposition forced back,
Jolly Green fully resisting (mortars) MG/minefields -
USMC ashore consolidating.

³⁶⁵
0012 to CINCPAC:

- Concentrate efforts on withdrawal of Marines from the island.

³⁶⁵
0020 to CINCPAC:

- Informed CINCPAC that there was no commitment to keep the Marines on the island or to capture it. Also, that there was interest in keeping pressure on the mainland and asked for an opinion regarding useful targets remaining in the Kompong Som complex.

³⁶⁵
0039 to CINCPAC/CINCPACFLT/USSAG/7AF (GEN BROWN to ADM GAYLER):

- Stand B-52s down - Use TACAIR for Marines on island -
Question needs of Marine C.O. for reinforcements. Use TACAIR as needed.



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VERBAL ORDERS FROM JCS (Continued)

15 May

0049 to CINCPAC:

- Directed CINCPAC to devote total effort to extracting Marines from the island without additional casualties if possible. Informed him that no further consideration was being given to additional strikes on the Mainland.

0158 to CINCPAC:

- Discussing ADM Gayler/Weisner exchange - agree on chopper use. Directed to "paste the place."

0326 to CINCPAC:

- When is extraction from Koh Tang due to start?

0408 to CINCPAC:

- On extraction of K-23 personnel, assume support will be SPECTRE gunships plus WILSON, plus CORAL SEA gunboats. Is that correct? Answer: Yes.

0610 to CINCPAC:

- Any info on TACAIR? Answer: 2 OV-10 for FAC, A7, F-4, AC-130.

0733 Conference Call CINCPAC/BLUE CHIP/JCS:

- Can't get GSF out tonight, going to talk to ground commander, COL Johnson, to make plans. Will keep SPECTRE overhead all night. Should have large reinforcements of Marine and helo from HANCOCK. Keep SPECTRE overhead all night. Might consider using boats tonight under cover of darkness.

- FROM CHAIRMAN: Present concept is to bring Marines and helos from HANCOCK to CORAL SEA and plan for tomorrow.



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VERBAL ORDERS FROM JCS (Continued)

15 May (continued)

0748 to CINCPAC:

- Directed CINCPAC to discuss with USSAG/7AF the advisability of continuing the liftout during the night by boat or helicopters under cover of darkness as compared to major helicopter reinforcements and troop reinforcements if necessary in the morning.

0748-0915 - Continuous monitoring, discussion, and coordination until the extraction was completed.

1002 FROM NMCC to CINCPAC:

- Break down the conference circuit.

NOTE: The above orders were taken from logs and interviews. During the course of the planning and execution of the operation many specific details were discussed among the principals without the conversations being recorded. Many of the ideas which later were a part of the operation, such as including the EOD team with the SS MAYAGUEZ boarding party, were evolved in just such a manner.

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VERBAL ORDERS RELATING TO THE RESCUE OF THE
MAYAGUEZ AND ITS CREW

FROM CINCPAC

13 May

2308 EDT to USSAG:

- Ordered acceleration of information on count of boats around island.

14 May

0132 EDT to USSAG:

- Confirms telecon between CINCPAC and JCS. Reiterated: need to get Marines on USS HOLT; take island by helo assault; maybe B-52 strikes against harbor/airfield, Kompong Som and Ream; should happen within next 18 hours; work with SAC Liaison; need for constant recce from now till execution; no boats in or out of island - can sink to sterilize area; minimize reliance on Thailand-based TACAIR; B-52s will come from Guam.

0238 (Admiral Gayler at JCS) to CINCPAC:

- Make transfers of Marines to USS HOLT at first light. CINC will get OK at Washington end.

0246 to ALCON:

- No execution today (1346 GOLF). Plan for first light tomorrow; put Marines aboard USS HOLT at first light.

0327 (Admiral Gayler at JCS) to CINCPAC J3:

- USS HOLT should be loading 50 calibers aboard; should be making up firebase location; also fabricating shields; put ASROCs in secure area; incoming helos should have flak jackets for sailors on USS HOLT; see no alternate except for Marines to go from helos while they hover, rapel down rope; don't hurry so much; be sure we have RCS on choppers (all acknowledged by USSAG/PACFLT in follow-on conversation.)



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VERBAL ORDERS FROM CINCPAC (Continued)

14 May (continued)

0400 to USSAG:

- Request update RF-4C coverage, soonest today, of Ream, airfield and port facility; Sihanoukville, from JCS; USSAG/Fleet acknowledged. JCS noted decision will be made this afternoon in Washington (now 1000 DC time) this afternoon we will be advised.

0544 to USSAG:

- (In response to USSAG report RF-4Cs did not get airborne due to nonavailability of aircraft and they plan coverage for first light tomorrow); Hold off on missions until we say OK.

0940 to USSAG:

- What is status of plan (not yet received) due at 1300Z.

1110 TO USSAG, PACFLT, PACAF on conference line:

- Following points made: Regarding any targeting done, replacing B-52 strikes, should stay with only military targets; on Swedish ship, P-3s should pursue looking for it--recce area--see what we can do. Will help internationalize situation. Noted that fleet not to interfere with primary mission, per JCS comment.

1831 to COMUSSAG:

- Keep the info coming. MAYAGUEZ is not to be permitted to depart.

1858 TO USSAG:

- SITREPS from the USS HOLT are to be read over the secure conference when received.

CinCPAC
1905 to USSAG:

- Give landing times of helos as soon as they land. Provide count of TACAIR over target. *X*

CinCPAC
1910 to USSAG:

- Directed put BLU-82s on launch alert. *X*



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VERBAL ORDERS FROM CINCPAC (Continued)

14 May (continued)

1920 to USSAG:

- Directs launch BLU-82s and hold.

1936 to USSAG:

- Directs USS WILSON to render fire support. X

1938 to USSAG:

- Authorizes ground commander to use BLU-82s if he desires. X

1947 to USSAG:

- Directs KNIFE 43, 42 to land on island.

2002 to USSAG:

- Directs use USS WILSON for fire support.

2058 TO USSAG:

- Proceed with strikes as planned. Still need position ID on Merships as Cambodian before hitting. Have authority to use CORAL SEA TACAIR to support GSF. Can preempt Cambodia strikes if required.

2100 to USSAG:

- Request latest info from GSF.

2106 to USSAG:

- We just got a report that KNIFE 31 in the water with 10 survivors. Tell GSF commander not to hazard his force. Do not take offensive actions without waiting for reinforcements.

2124 to ACJCS:

- Need to get word out that we seized ship vice it was surrendered (ACJCS noted White House had done that).



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VERBAL ORDERS FROM CINCPAC (Continued)

14 May (continued)

2130 to USSAG (in response to question):

- Mission of GSF on island is to secure island and make search.

2204 to CJCS:

- Contemplate insertion (buildup) of force into night hours. Plan to get some Marines from MAYAGUEZ/HOLT to help GSF (CJCS concurred).

2213 to USSAG:

- GSF under heavy fire; provide fire support from the WILSON.

2223 to PACFLT:

- Investigate possibility of using CORAL SEA ASW choppers to move Marines from MAYAGUEZ to beach; reinforcing the beach has priority.

2232 to USSAG;

- Move MACTHAI tugs (about 60 miles away) down to MAYAGUEZ.

CinCPac
2332 to USSAG:

- Authorized to hold up the helo flow. Pull back the GSF, so can provide suppressive TACAIR support. X

CinCPac
2342 to CJCS:

- If needed, will use CORAL SEA TACAIR to support GSF. CJCS acknowledges this is within CINCPAC authority/JCS guidance. X

15 May

0010 EDT to USSAG:

- Like to put in heavy air strikes before bringing in more GSF. X

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VERBAL ORDERS FROM CINCPAC (Continued)

15 May (continued)

0012 to USSAG:

- Get the Marines in position for extraction. Suppress (resistance) with fire.

0046 to USSAG:

- Present intent to move CORAL SEA closer to island, use deck as shuttle for extraction. CORAL SEA now 85-90 NM south of island. GSF commander not able to join up. Needs 100 more men - cannot secure LZ.

0052 to USSAG:

- Insure GSF commander understands we want to extract him now. Ask if he has secure LZ to put reinforcements on ground.

0054 to USSAG:

- Passed on CJCS concern about evacuating casualties from chopper on beach.

0130 to USSAG:

- Strike barge/boat (between Koh Tang and Mainland)

0146 to USSAG:

- Get TACAN reading on CORAL SEA.

0150 to Fleet:

- Can you move CORAL SEA closer? Send "BINGO" aircraft to U-Tapao.

0153 to USSAG:

- Expend TACAIR ordnance.

0155 to USSAG:

- Directs helos are priority one for cyclic air operations from CORAL SEA. Insure helos are unimpeded. X

0235 to USSAG:

- Keep helos in area of the operation for extraction purposes.



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VERBAL ORDERS FROM CINCPAC (Continued)

15 May(continued)

0400 to USSAG:

- Continue to muster maximum helos. Continue to move CORAL SEA closer. Evaluate situation with view of extraction tonight. Maximum TACAIR support.

0412 to Fleet:

- Want CORAL SEA close ASAP. Request estimate when within 10 NM (estimate 1015Z).

0514 to USSAG:

- After consultation with Fleet, extract crew with boat from HOLT/WILSON about an hour from now.

0520 to USSAG:

- Cautioned not to precede downed chopper operation too much with GSF extraction, lest forces have not enough protection.

0522 to USSAG:

- Recapped concept: Two ships go in as close as possible. Send in boats. Marines swim/push wounded few feet to boats. Use fire support as needed. Assume 4 big choppers and 2 ASW (confirmed by USSAG).

0528 to USSAG:

- Keep 2 OV 10s up and over area.



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VERBAL ORDERS FROM CINCPAC (Continued)

15 May (continued)

0532 to USSAG:

- Go at 1730G (1030Z) with helo evacuation; soonest with GSF.

0543 to PACFLT:

- Have HANCOCK test long-range tanks tonight in case needed tomorrow.

0546 to Fleet:

- Reaffirm with "skippers," they are to go as close as possible.

0554 to Fleet:

- Expedite (closing of USS HOLT) as fast as possible.

0607 to USEAC:

- Hold operation until both ships (WILSON/HOLT) ready to go--but in daylight. Move to beach with fire as necessary. Give me the time. If it gets too hot, authorized to move off and we'll try it under cover of darkness.

0609 to CJCS:

- Recapped decisions made; chopper evacuation at 1030Z; other operation in daylight; both ships in use; alternative is to wait for daylight tomorrow. I have directed execution--in about 20 minutes. CJCS acknowledged.

0625 to USSAG:

- Authorized to expend one (1) BLU-82 on island. Insure caution. Stay clear of Marines and choppers.

0634 to USSAG:

- Plan BLU drop in large part of island. Be sure clear of LZ and Marines.



VERBAL ORDERS FROM CINCPAC (Continued)

15 May (continued)

0638 to USSAG:

- Proceed with pickup of downed helicopter crew ASAP.

0640 to USSAG:

- In reading message from USS WILSON on "possible" evacuation, it is directed, they have the go - WILSON seems to be in doubt.

0658 to Fleet:

- Be prepared to launch maximum HANCOCK helos with Marine complement, to arrive at first light.

0747 to USSAG:

- Be sure to get GSF commander's view on coming out by boat tonight--as compared to bringing them out in daylight tomorrow with major reinforcements.

0750

- CINCPAC concurred with COMUSSAG request (GSF commander recommendation) to continue operation tonight by helo (primarily) and/or boat, as long as feasible.

0837 to USSAG:

- Report confirmation of all personnel out. X

0925 to JCS:

- Debrief of CAPT Davies states he is "relatively certain" no more Marines on island. I (CINCPAC) will wind down. X

0926 to ALCON:

- Magnificent performance by all hands, under difficult circumstances. Well done.

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VERBAL ORDERS FROM CINCPAC (Continued)

NOTE: The above orders were taken from logs and interviews. During the course of the planning and execution of the operation many specific details were discussed among the principals without the conversations being recorded. Many of the ideas which later were a part of the operation, such as including the EOD team with the SS MAYAGUEZ boarding party, were evolved in just such a manner.



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WRITTEN ORDERS RELATING TO THE RESCUE
OF THE SS MAYAGEUZ AND ITS CREW

FROM JCS

1. JCS 140455Z May 75 to CINCPAC:
(140055 EDT)

- Confirms authority passed by voice 140406Z to sink small craft identified in vicinity of Koh Tang.

2. JCS 140523Z May 75 to CINCPAC:
(140123Z EDT)

- Suggests EOD team capability accompany boarding forces.

3. JCS 140645Z May 75 to CINCPAC/CINCSAC/COMUSSAG/7AF/COMSEVENTHFLT/
(140245 EDT) CINCPACAF/CINCPACFLT

- Direct planning for potential execution early 15 May to seize the MAYAGUEZ, occupy Koh Tang Island, conduct B-52 strikes against mainland targets, and sink all Cambodian small craft in the target areas.

4. JCS 042000Z May 75 to CINCPAC:
(141600 EDT)

- Request reconnaissance assets on board CVAs be placed in highest state of readiness.

5. JCS 142059Z May 75 to CINCPAC:
(141659 EDT)

- Planning message concerning possible ultimatum which might be given to Cambodians.

6. JCS 142142Z May 75 to CINCPAC:
(141742 EDT)

- Directs US Marines aboard USS HOLT to seize and secure SS MAYAGUEZ; directs Marine helicopter assault on Koh Tang Island; authorizes use of TACAIR and naval gunfire support for operations directed above; directs withdrawal of Marines from island as soon as possible upon completion of mission.

7. JCS 142203Z May 75 to CINCPAC:
(141803 EDT)

- Directs execution of cyclic operation from CORAL SEA against targets in Kompong Som complex.



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WRITTEN ORDERS - FROM JCS (continued)

8. JCS 142321Z May 75 to CINCSAC:
(141921 EDT)

- Message confirms telecon placing B-52s on 1-hour alert effective 142155Z May.

9. JCS 142344Z May 75 to CINCPAC:
(141944 EDT)

- Approved PACFLT request to overfly Cambodian Islands and Kompong Som area.

10. JCS 150044Z May 75 to CINCPAC:
(142044 EDT)

- Cease strike operations against Kompong Som complex. (Rescinds previous direction - see item 7.)

11. JCS 150118Z May 75 to CINCPAC.
(142118 EDT)

- Rescinds previous direction to cease strikes against Kompong Som complex (see item 10). Directs operations proceed as previously approved against Kompong Som (see item 7).

12. JCS 150204Z May 75 to all Military Activities:
(142204 EDT)

- Directs minimize on all communications to Southeast Asia.

13. JCS 150455Z May 75 to CINCPAC/CINCSAC:
(150055 EDT)

- Directs terminate all offensive operations; disengage and withdraw/report when accomplished. CINCSAC resume normal readiness.



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