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May 19, 1975

CASUALTY FIGURES

Current casualty figures indicate 5 KIA, 16 MIA, and between 70 and 80 WIA. These figures are not final; indeed they are constantly changing according to Defense. Refer any questions on casualty figures to Defense.

THE MAYAGUEZ

Q: Ieng Sary, the Cambodian representative at the UN, recently stated that the Cambodian Government did not order the capture of the Mayaguez. Further, Cambodian authorities ordered the release of the ship and crew, as soon as they learned the details of the incident. Your decision to use force to liberate the Mayaguez thus seems a hasty one. Perhaps we also could have avoided the deaths of our servicemen. Would you comment?

A: From the beginning of the Mayaguez crisis, we made every effort to communicate with the authorities in Phnom Penh -- through direct diplomatic correspondence, through third parties, and through the UN. By the afternoon of May 14, when our efforts failed to produce any response, I decided the safety of the crew required that we take definite steps to affect their release.

We carefully considered our actions throughout this crisis.

We did not commit American troops until we tried all other avenues.