

The original documents are located in Box 29, folder “Department of Defense - Joint Chiefs of Staff - Report to the President, May 20, 1975 (2)” of the National Security Adviser. NSC East Asian and Pacific Affairs Staff: Files at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

TO: W. R. SMYSER

FROM: KEN QUINN

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

SECRET/SENSITIVE

May 20, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: GENERAL SCOWCROFT

FROM: R. C. McFARLANE *RM*

SUBJECT: Defense Report on the Mayaguez
Operation

The Defense response to the President's directive is presented in two parts. The manila folder contains copies of all orders, written and verbal, categorized by originator. The two glossy binders translate the manila folder compilation into a chronological narrative with supporting documentation also presented chronologically. It appears that an honest effort has been made to assemble all available documentation. The information assembled, however, raises many questions.

From the information available there appear to have been serious deficiencies in the planning and execution of the fire support plan (tac-air and naval gunfire) for ground force operations ashore. For example:

- Apparently no pre-H hour preparation strikes were planned. While this may reflect concern over the possibility of hitting the Mayaguez crew if on the island, it would appear prudent to have had an airborne forward air controller (FAC) on station for directing strikes against AAA and other observed hostile targets.
- There are frequent examples in the log (see Tab A - 1) of unpreparedness within the ground force to communicate with ships or aircraft in order to get fire support.
- The plan apparently did not include arrangements for tacair to be continuously on call to the ground force throughout the operation.

Apart from the above, there appear to have been breakdowns in command and control over mainland air strikes. Specifically, the temporary

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DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.5
NSC Memo, 11/24/98, State Dept. Guidelines
By *lit*, NARA, Date *3/6/2000*



suspension of the first wave against Kompong Som resulted in the issuance of a halt to "all launches off the CORAL SEA" by General Brown at 2044 EDT. Subsequently, Admiral Holloway at 2046 EDT confirmed to Admiral Gayler authority to use the first wave from the CORAL SEA in the island operation. At 2048 EDT the report acknowledges receipt of authority by the NMCC duty officer from the White House to go ahead with the first wave strike against Kompong Som. The report further acknowledges your reconfirmation of this authority at 2052 EDT. Subsequent to the order Admiral Gayler reviewed the rules of engagement for mainland strikes with General Burns, USSAG Commander. General Burns clearly understood (see page 4 of narrative) that the strike was to proceed as originally planned. Mysteriously, however, no ordnance was delivered by the first wave.

Several other questions come to mind which are unanswered by the documentation provided. For example:

- Why was the number of aircraft so small in the waves directed against Kompong Som?
- Why was there such a separation in time between launching of the first wave and second wave?
- Why was there no plan in advance for recovering the ground security force to the CORAL SEA or to the HOLT?

Answers to these questions should not be expected in the kind of documentation provided. It is possible that answers could be obtained from a review of the basic plan itself. They are important questions however and if, following review of the final submission, they remain unanswered, it is recommended that the basic plan for the operation be requested.

Attachments



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THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

CM-417-75
20 May 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Subject: Mainland Air Strikes During the Mayaguez Operation

Within the two binders forwarded by this memorandum is the report requested dealing with the specifics of the air operations conducted against mainland Cambodia during the recent military operations by PACOM forces to recover the SS MAYAGUEZ and her crew. The report consists of a narrative summary of related events supported by various annexes containing appropriate, available back-up documentation.

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, reading "George S. Brown".

GEORGE S. BROWN, General, USAF
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

2 Enclosures
a/s



Regraded Unclassified
when separated from
Classified enclosure

~~SECRET~~ let 2/2000

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STRIKE OPERATIONS
AGAINST
MAINLAND TARGETS
DURING
OPERATIONS TO RECOVER
SS MAYAGUEZ
AND CREW

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NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION
Presidential Libraries Withdrawal Sheet

WITHDRAWAL ID 012157

REASON FOR WITHDRAWAL National security restriction

TYPE OF MATERIAL Report

CREATOR'S NAME Ray Sitton

CREATOR'S TITLE Director for Operations

TITLE Report by the OJCS on Strike Operations
Against Mainland Targets During
Operations to Recover SS Mayaguez and
Crew

CREATION DATE 05/19/1975

VOLUME 10 pages

COLLECTION/SERIES/FOLDER ID . 033700174

COLLECTION TITLE NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER. NSC STAFF
FOR EAST ASIAN AND PACIFIC AFFAIRS:
CONVENIENCE FILES

BOX NUMBER 29

FOLDER TITLE Department of Defense - Joint Chiefs of
Staff - Report to the President, May
20, 1975 (2)

DATE WITHDRAWN 02/29/2000

WITHDRAWING ARCHIVIST LET

GLOSSARY

<u>PAGE</u>	<u>TERM</u>	<u>DEFINITION</u>
1	EDT	Eastern Daylight Time
	NSC	National Security Council
	Kaoh Tang Island	Also spelled Koh Tang Island
	NMCC	National Military Command Center
	B-52	US Air Force Bomber Aircraft
	TACAIR	Tactical Aircraft (Fighters, Attack Aircraft)
	CORAL SEA	USS CORAL SEA Aircraft Carrier
	CINCPAC	Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Command
	ACJCS	Acting Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff
	DTG	Date Time Group
	Armed Reconnaissance	Mission with primary purpose of locating and attacking targets of opportunity.
	USS HOLT	US Navy Destroyer
2	TOT	Time on Target
	Landing Zones	A specified zone within an objective area used for the landing of aircraft (helicopters).
	Wave	A formation of forces
	FBIS	Foreign Broadcast Information Service
	DDO	Deputy Director for Operations
	ROE	Rules of Engagement
	WH SITROOM	White House Situation Room
	Ordnance	Bombs, rockets, bullets, etc.

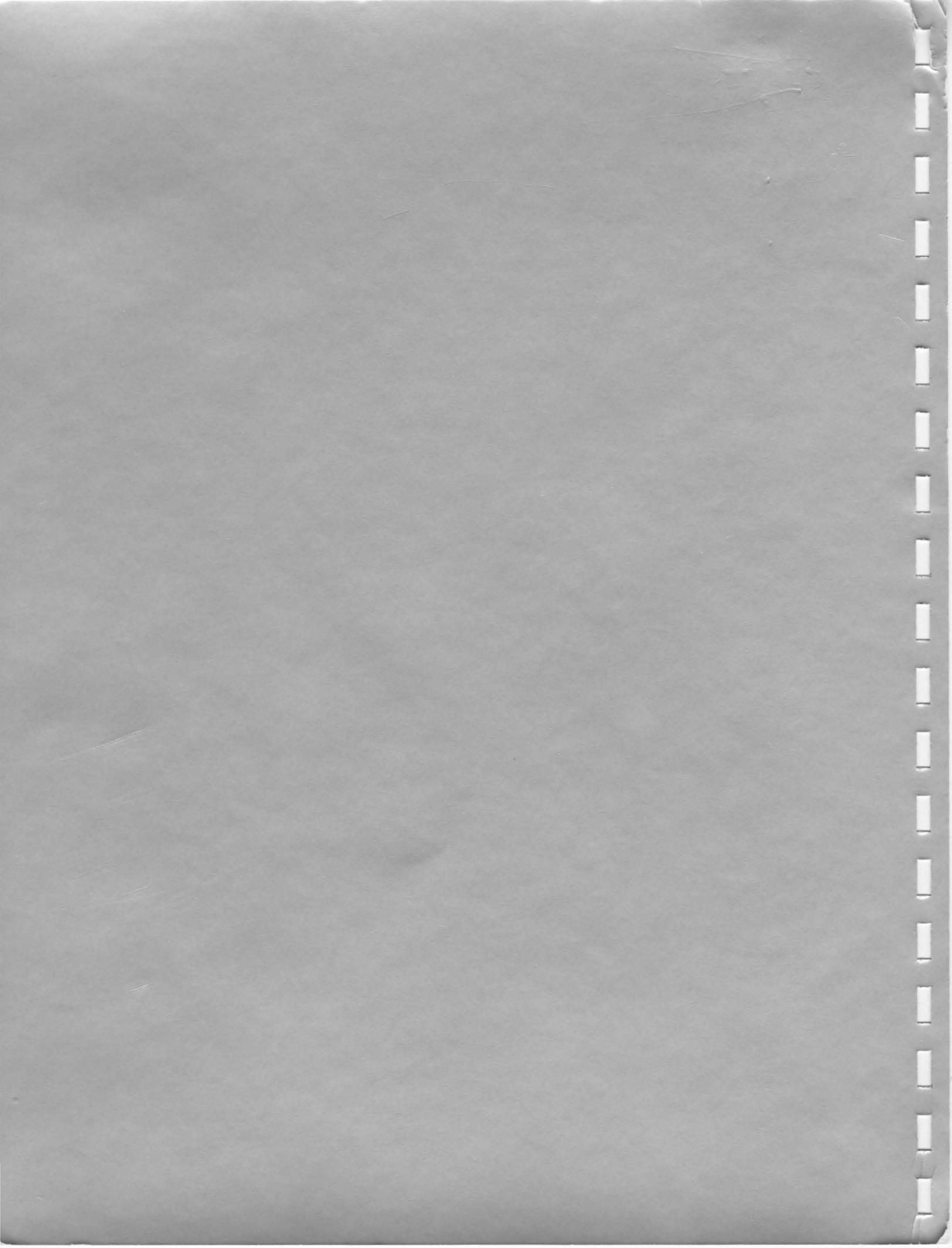


<u>PAGE</u>	<u>TERM</u>	<u>DEFINITION</u>
	USSAG	United States Support Activities Group
	Blue Chip	Radio Call Sign of USSAG
3	Cricket	Radio Call Sign of USSAG Airborne Command Post
	Rogered	Radio telephone procedure meaning "I understand"
	USAF	United States Air Force
	Lift	Transport by helicopter
	Red Phone	Telephone for transmission of classified information by secure means
	PACOM	Pacific Command
	PACFLT	Pacific Fleet (Euphemism for Commander in Chief of)
4	BDA	Bomb damage assessment
	Sortie	An operational flight by one aircraft
	Ground Security Forces	Adhoc military unit of variable size created for specific military missions requiring protection of certain areas, equipment, and/or personnel.
5	A-7	Attack aircraft
	A-6	Attack aircraft
	Runs	Attacks against targets
	USS WILSON	US Navy Destroyer
	Chairman	Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
	POL	Petroleum, Oils, and Lubricants



<u>PAGE</u>	<u>TERM</u>	<u>DEFINITION</u>
6	SECDEF	Secretary of Defense
7	SAR	Search and Rescue
	CJCS	Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff





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STRIKE OPERATIONS
AGAINST
MAINLAND TARGETS
DURING
OPERATIONS TO RECOVER
SS MAYAGUEZ
AND CREW

ANNEXES

~~SECRET~~

DECLASSIFIED DOCUMENT

Please use the declassification photocopy strip and make sure that the declassification information on the first page accompanies any other page that you might copy from this document.

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TAB 6 - JCS 150455Z MAY

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NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION
Presidential Libraries Withdrawal Sheet

WITHDRAWAL ID 012158

REASON FOR WITHDRAWAL National security restriction

TYPE OF MATERIAL Log

CREATOR'S NAME JCS

TITLE Significant Events Log, 5/14 1550 until
5/15 0041

CREATION DATE 05/15/1975

VOLUME 12 pages

COLLECTION/SERIES/FOLDER ID . 033700174

COLLECTION TITLE NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER. NSC STAFF
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