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LETTER DATED 14 MAY 1975 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF  
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED  
TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

My Government has instructed me to inform you and the members of the Security Council of the grave and dangerous situation brought about by the illegal and unprovoked seizure by Cambodian authorities of a United States merchant vessel, the S.S. Mayaguez, in international waters in the Gulf of Siam.

The S.S. Mayaguez, an unarmed commercial vessel owned by the Sea-Land Corporation of Menlo Park, New Jersey, was fired upon and halted by Cambodian gunboats and forcibly boarded at 9.16 p.m. (Eastern Daylight Time) on 12 May. The boarding took place at 09 degrees, 48 minutes north latitude, 102 degrees, 53 minutes east longitude. The vessel has a crew of about 40, all of whom are United States citizens. At the time of seizure, the S.S. Mayaguez was en route from Hong Kong to Thailand and was some 52 nautical miles from the Cambodian coast. It was some 7 nautical miles from the islands of Poulo Wai which, my Government understands, are claimed by both Cambodia and South Viet-Nam.

The vessel was on the high seas, in international shipping lanes commonly used by ships calling at the various ports of South-East Asia. Even if, in the view of others, the ship were considered to be within Cambodian territorial waters, it would clearly have been engaged in innocent passage to the port of another country. Hence, its seizure was unlawful and involved a clear-cut illegal use of force.

The United States Government understands that at present the S.S. Mayaguez is being held by Cambodian naval forces at Koh Tong Island approximately 15 nautical miles off the Cambodian coast.

The United States Government immediately took steps through diplomatic channels to recover the vessel and arrange the return of the crew. It earnestly sought the urgent co-operation of all concerned to this end, but no response has been forthcoming. In the circumstances the United States Government has taken certain appropriate measures under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter whose purpose it is to achieve the release of the vessel and its crew.

I request that this letter be circulated as an official document of the Security Council.

(Signed) John SCALI