The White House,  

Hon. Carl Albert,  
Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Speaker: As you and other members of Congress were advised, in view of circumstances in Cambodia, the United States had certain contingency plans to utilize United States Armed Forces to assure the safe evacuation of U.S. Nationals from that country. On Friday, 11 April 1975, the Khmer Communists forces had ruptured Government of the Khmer Republic (GKR) defense lines to the north, northwest and east of Phnom Penh and were within mortar range of Pochentong Airfield and the outskirts of Phnom Penh. In view of this deteriorating military situation, and on the recommendations of the American Ambassador there, I ordered U.S. military forces to proceed with the planned evacuation out of consideration for the safety of U.S. citizens.

In accordance with my desire that the Congress be fully informed on this matter, and taking note of Section 4 of the War Powers Resolution (P.L. 93-148), I wish to report to you that the first elements of the U.S. forces entered Cambodian airspace at 8:34 P.M. EDT on 11 April. Military forces included 350 ground combat troops of the U.S. Marines, 36 helicopters, and supporting tactical air and command and control elements. The Marines were deployed from helicopters to assure the security of helicopter landing zone within the city of Phnom Penh. The first helicopter landed at approximately 10:00 P.M. EDT 11 April 1975, and the last evacuees and ground security force Marines departed the Cambodian landing zone at approximately 12:20 A.M. on 12 April 1975. The last elements of the force to leave received hostile recoilless rifle fire. There was no firing by U.S. forces at any time during the operation. No U.S. Armed Forces personnel were killed, wounded or missing, and there were no casualties among the American evacuees.

Although these forces were equipped for combat within the meaning of Section 4(a)(2) of Public Law 93-148, their mission was to effect the evacuation of U.S. Nationals. Present information indicates that a total of 82 U.S. citizens were evacuated and that the task force was also able to accommodate 35 third country nationals and 159 Cambodians including employees of the U.S. Government.

The operation was ordered and conducted pursuant to the President's Constitutional executive power and authority as Commander-in-Chief of U.S. Armed Forces.

I am sure you share with me my pride in the Armed Forces of the United States and my thankfulness that the operation was conducted without incident.

Sincerely,

Gerald R. Ford.
The Honorable the Speaker,
U.S. House of Representatives,
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Speaker: On April 4, 1975, I reported that U.S. naval vessels had been ordered to participate in an international humanitarian relief effort to transport refugees and U.S. nationals to safety from Danang and other seaports in South Vietnam. This effort was undertaken in response to urgent appeals from the Government of South Vietnam and in recognition of the large-scale violations by the North Vietnamese of the Agreement Ending the War and restoring the Peace in Vietnam.

In the days and weeks that followed, the massive North Vietnamese attacks continued. As the forces of the Government of South Vietnam were pushed further back toward Saigon, we began a progressive withdrawal of U.S. citizens and their dependents in South Vietnam, together with foreign nationals whose lives were in jeopardy.

On April 28, the defensive lines to the northwest and south of Saigon were breached. Tan Son Nhut Airfield and Saigon came under increased rocket attack and for the first time received artillery fire. NVA forces were approaching within mortar and anti-aircraft missile range. The situation at Tan Son Nhut Airfield deteriorated to the extent that it became unusable. Crowd control on the airfield was breaking down and the collapse of the Government forces within Saigon appeared imminent. The situation presented a direct and imminent threat to the remaining U.S. citizens and their dependents in and around Saigon.

On the recommendation of the American Ambassador there, I ordered U.S. military forces to proceed by means of rotary wing aircraft with an emergency final evacuation out of consideration for the safety of U.S. citizens.

In accordance with my desire to keep the Congress fully informed on this matter, and taking note of the provision of section 4 of the War Powers Resolution (Public Law 93-148), I wish to report to you that at about 1:00 A.M. EDT, April 29, 1975, U.S. forces entered South Vietnam airspace. A force of 70 evacuation helicopters and 865 Marines evacuated about 1400 U.S. citizens, together with approximately 5500 third country nationals and South Vietnamese from landing zones in the vicinity of the U.S. Embassy, Saigon, and the Defense Attache Office at Tan Son Nhut Airfield. The last elements of the ground security force departed Saigon at 7:45 P.M. EDT
April 29, 1975. Two crew members of a Navy search and rescue helicopter are missing at sea. There are no other known U.S. casualties from this operation, although two U.S. Marines on regular duty in the compound of the Defense Attache Office at Tan Son Nhat Airfield had been killed on the afternoon (EDT) of April 28, 1975, by rocket attacks into a refugee staging area. U.S. fighter aircraft provided protective air cover for this operation, and for the withdrawal by water of a few Americans from Can Tho, and in one instance suppressed North Vietnamese anti-aircraft artillery firing upon evacuation helicopters as they departed. The ground security forces on occasion returned fire during the course of the evacuation operation.

The operation was ordered and conducted pursuant to the President's Constitutional executive power and his authority as Commander-in-Chief of U.S. Armed Forces.

The United States Armed Forces performed a very difficult mission most successfully. Their exemplary courage and discipline are deserving of the nation's highest gratitude.

Sincerely,

GERALD R. FORD.
The Honorable the Speaker,
U.S. House of Representatives,

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: On 12 May 1975, I was advised that the SS Mayaguez, a merchant vessel of United States registry enroute from Hong Kong to Thailand with a U.S. citizen crew, was fired upon, stopped, boarded, and seized by Cambodian naval patrol boats of the Armed Forces of Cambodia in international waters in the vicinity of Poulo Wai Island. The seized vessel was then forced to proceed to Koh Tang Island where it was required to anchor. This hostile act was in clear violation of international law.

In view of this illegal and dangerous act, I ordered, as you have been previously advised, United States military forces to conduct the necessary reconnaissance and to be ready to respond if diplomatic efforts to secure the return of the vessel and its personnel were not successful. Two United States reconnaissance aircraft in the course of locating the Mayaguez sustained minimal damage from small firearms. Appropriate demands for the return of the Mayaguez and its crew were made, both publicly and privately, without success.

In accordance with my desire that the Congress be informed on this matter and taking note of Section 4(a)(1) of the War Powers Resolution, I wish to report to you that at about 6:20 A.M., 13 May, pursuant to my instructions to prevent the movement of the Mayaguez into a mainland port, U.S. aircraft fired warning shots across the bow of the ship and gave visual signals to small craft approaching the ship. Subsequently, in order to stabilize the situation and in an attempt to preclude removal of the American crew of the Mayaguez to the mainland, where their rescue would be more difficult, I directed the United States Armed Forces to isolate the island and interdict any movement between the ship or the island and the mainland, and to prevent movement of the ship itself, while still taking all possible care to prevent loss of life or injury to the U.S. captives. During the evening of 13 May, a Cambodian patrol boat attempting to leave the island disregarded aircraft warnings and was sunk. Thereafter, two other Cambodian patrol craft were destroyed and four others were damaged and immobilized. One boat, suspected of having some U.S. captives aboard, succeeded in reaching Kompung Som after efforts to turn it around without injury to the passengers failed.

Our continued objective in this operation was the rescue of the captured American crew along with the retaking of the ship Mayaguez. For that purpose, I ordered late this afternoon an assault by United States Marines on the island of Koh Tang to search out and rescue
such Americans as might still be held there, and I ordered retaking of the *Mayaguez* by other marines boarding from the destroyer escort *Holt*. In addition to continued fighter and gunship coverage of the Koh Tang area, these marine activities were supported by tactical aircraft from the *Coral Sea*, striking the military airfield at Ream and other military targets in the area of Kompong Som in order to prevent reinforcement or support from the mainland of the Cambodian forces detaining the American vessel and crew.

At approximately 9:00 P.M. EDT on 14 May, the *Mayaguez* was retaken by United States forces. At approximately 11:30 P.M., the entire crew of the *Mayaguez* was taken aboard the *Wilson*. U.S. forces have begun the process of disengagement and withdrawal.

This operation was ordered and conducted pursuant to the President’s constitutional Executive power and his authority as Commander-in-Chief of the United States Armed Forces.

Sincerely,

Gerald R. Ford