



GERALD R. FORD

May 13, 2006

To the Mayaguez and Koh Tang Island Veterans:

I was extremely pleased to hear that you are gathering this weekend in Washington, D.C., to remember the events surrounding the seizure of the U.S.-flag containership Mayaguez and the illegal detention of her crew in the Cambodian jungle.

Thirty-one years ago this week, you fought bravely to defend America's honor and protect American lives in a remote and dangerous part of the world. For those of you gathered tonight to commemorate that battle, I say, as I have many times before, "Thank you." The forty Americans who were freed as a result of your heroic actions have thanked you through the years as well. Captain Charles Miller, Master of the Mayaguez at the time, told me on several occasions that without the quick and determined action of U.S. military forces, he and his crew would likely have met a far different fate at the hands of the Khmer Rouge.

To the families and friends of your comrades who gave their lives during this brief but critical conflict, we again express our deep sadness for their loss. You who returned and those who died sent a powerful message to the world at a critical time - that the United States will defend and protect its citizens under threat wherever they may be.

I wish you all well as you remember this short but important chapter in our country's military history.

With continuing gratitude,

*Gerald R. Ford*