

Montgomery benefits can also be used on active duty after 24 months of service are completed.

There have been changes to the Montgomery program in recent years:

○ Airmen with VEAP balances were eligible to switch to Montgom-

ery from Oct. 9, 1996 to Oct. 8, 1997

○ Flight training was added in 1990

○ Involuntarily separating airmen may now enroll before separation

○ ROTC scholarship recipients

whose scholarship was less than \$2,000 a year and who entered active duty on or after Oct. 1, 1996, may now enroll.

For more information on the Montgomery GI Bill, contact your base education office. ■

AIA 50th Anniversary

Gerald Ford and the "Mayaguez"

The 1975 rescue produced mixed results in American public opinion when 41 lives were sacrificed to save 40

by Dr. Dennis F. Casey

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In May 1975, Gerald Ford faced one of the many challenges of his presidency. He had only been in office for nine months when a Cambodian gunboat halted the passage of the "Mayaguez."

The worn forty-year-old freighter owned by the Sea-Land Corporation, recently repleated as a container ship, was making a familiar run from Hong Kong by way of Sattahip, Thailand, to Singapore and back.

On the first leg of that journey, the ship's decks were loaded down with crates of food, clothing, chemicals, paint, hospital stores and mail. The cargo did not contain arms.

Some 60 miles off the mainland coast of Southeast Asia and eight miles from Poulo Wai island in the Gulf of Siam, the ship's captain ordered all engines stopped in the early afternoon of May 12.

News of the seizure hit Washington hard. Just a few weeks earlier America had played out her final scene in Vietnam. In violation of a truce, North Vietnamese forces had surrounded Saigon, forcing the last remaining Americans in the country

to flee by helicopter. The proceedings had been captured in significant detail by the mass media.

By May 1975, all of Vietnam had fallen to Communist forces. The North American giant seemed to be slipping and to lack resolution.

President Ford and his chief advisers saw the seizure of the "Mayaguez" as certainly a challenge but also an opportunity. A bold and decisive response from the White House would go far in changing the view that America had become a reluctant superpower.

Both General David Jones, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger saw the Cambodian action as a direct challenge to American power and to the principle of freedom of the seas.

Henry Kissinger saw the "Mayaguez" incident as possibly a last chance for America to regain lost credibility.

President Ford and his advisers quickly agreed upon the objectives to be pursued. The "Mayaguez" and its crew needed to be freed.

While preparations were underway, the State Department would send a sharp note of protest to the Cambodian government through Peking. Additionally, reconnaissance aircraft would track the ship. Military action, everyone agreed, would be necessary at the appropriate time.

Once the precise location of the "Mayaguez" was determined, President Ford opted to take aggressive action to resolve the crisis.

A naval boarding action would free the ship itself and Marine landings on the island where the ship was tied up would free the captive crew.

Kissinger, who had been arguing for strong military action, had recommended massive B-52 raids on the Cambodian mainland.

President Ford agreed to naval strikes on the mainland only as a means of keeping Cambodian reinforcements from beefing up their troop strength on Kong Tang island, a small five-mile long island 35 miles off the coast of Cambodia and southwest of Sihanoukville.

In the afternoon of May 14th,

early morning in Cambodia, President Ford decided to move ahead with a rescue operation. Disregarding Thai objections, aircraft and marines moved through U-Tapao.

Tragically, one helicopter crashed on takeoff enroute from Nakhon Phanom to U-Tapao in Thailand killing all 23 men aboard. The 23 fatalities included four crewmembers and heavily armed members of the 56th Security Police Squadron.

Heroic efforts by firefighters risking the danger of exploding ammunition could not save anyone aboard the downed craft.

Despite this tragic crash and armed with the go ahead from President Ford, the destroyer USS "Holt" steamed alongside the "Mayaguez" to carry out the first naval boarding operation since 1826.

Meanwhile, 500 Marines landed on Koh Tang and an aircraft from the carrier USS "Coral Sea" bombed Kompong Som and other mainland targets. The ship was easily taken but had aboard only a few Cambodian guards. At Koh Tang the 1,100 Ma-

rines in the landing party encountered heavy resistance from nearly 200 heavily armed Khmer Rouge regulars.

Before the island was secured, 18 more Americans were dead along with over 50 wounded. At that juncture not a single "Mayaguez" crewman had been rescued.

Unexpectedly, about the time the Marines began landing, the Cambodian government had decided to release the "Mayaguez" crew without demanding a ransom or engaging in some protracted political maneuvering for advantage.

The destroyer USS "Wilson" picked up the crew of the "Mayaguez" and within three days they were headed for home.

The "Mayaguez" rescue produced mixed results in American public opinion. During the first few days after the event, President Ford's favorable approval rating climbed from 39 to 51 percent.

Eight out of every nine calls coming into the White House enthusiastically praised the President's actions.

Members of Congress and press reporters soon noted publicly that the rescue attempt sacrificed 41 lives to save 40, counting the 23 who had died in the helicopter crash.

Others charged that the bombing of shore installations on Cambodian soil had been unnecessary. Yet others criticized the administration for going ahead with an operation that had not been carefully planned.

Given the general political climate in the United States in 1975, President Ford did about as well as one could expect. Secretary of State Schlesinger, Henry Kissinger and President Ford did not bask in the sunshine after the "Mayaguez" rescue. They instead felt the barbs of a critical and unconvinced public.

The 18 servicemen killed in the rescue operation are listed among the missing from the Vietnam War.

While there still may be American prisoners alive in Southeast Asia, U.S. authorities remain pessimistic about the fates of those captured by the Khmer Rouge. ■

salutes

NIC member wins award for developing technology for DIA

by 1st Lt. Matthew Mayberry
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Stephen Burch, a special information operations staff officer at for the National Intelligence Council, was recently awarded the Computerworld Smithsonian Bronze Medal for developing the Defense Intelligence Agency's Community On-Line Intelligence System for End Users and Managers.

The award was established in 1989 by the National Museum of American History and Computerworld Magazine to recognize the innovative use of information technology to benefit society.

"During the Gulf War operations, it became clear that an interpretative and consistent method to understand intelligence requirements, production and fulfillment was needed. We had to have a way to provide the best or most



timely information to support ongoing operations. This reward is really just recognition of a team effort to address those demands," said Burch.

The nation's 100 top technology companies support the award and a committee consisting of chief executive officers from these companies makes award selections.

"The award recognizes the achievements of new 'IT Heroes' who take needs and make them a reality," said Corneluis O'Leary, vice deputy director for intelligence production for DIA.

"Mr. Burch aggressively investigated and resolved design incompatibilities to ensure that the COLISEUM had the support of all users in the national and Department of Defense Communities," said O'Leary. ■