

VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL, MAYAGUEZ INCIDENT, 1975
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
56TH SECURITY POLICE SQUADRON, 21ST SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQUADRON

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED. RETURN OF CREW AND SHIP TO AMERICAN CONTROL ENDED THE MAYAGUEZ INCIDENT, FIRST NAVAL SHIP TO SHIP BOARDING SINCE THE CIVIL WAR, THE LAST JOINT OPERATION OF U.S. FORCES—AND, THE LAST BATTLE OF THE VIETNAM WAR.

<p>DEDICATED TO ALL WHO FOUGHT THE LAST BATTLE OF THE VIETNAM WAR, THE MAYAGUEZ INCIDENT AND RESCUE OPERATION, AS PART OF A MARINE ASSAULT FORCE. PRESIDENT GERALD R. FORD ORDERED U.S. MILITARY TO RETURN THE CAPTURED CREW AND SS MAYAGUEZ TO AMERICAN CONTROL. THE FLAGGED</p>	<p>U.S. SHIP CAPTURED IN INTERNATIONAL WATERS BY KHMER ROUGE CAMBODIAN INSURGENTS, WAS BELIEVED HELD AT KOH TANG ISLAND, CAMBODIA. EIGHTEEN USMC 21ST SECURITY POLICE (SPS) AND FIVE AIR CREW OF THE 21ST SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQUADRON (SOA) WERE KILLED IN LINE OF DUTY, 15 MAY 1975, WHEN KNIE 13, FELL OUT A</p>	<p>FORMATION OF A SECURITY POLICE COMMAND HELICOPTER AND THREE CHINESE SEA WALLONS CARRYING 25 SECURITY POLICE KNIE 13 CRASHED IN THE JUNGLE AFTER ABUFTING FROM NARHON PHNOM REATH, EN ROUTE TO U-TAPAO REAR, TO JOIN THE MARINE ASSAULT FORCE'S FORWARD TO ATTACK KOH TANG ISLAND, CAMBODIA.</p>
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VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL, SS MAYAGUEZ INCIDENT, 12-15 MAY 1975
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS— KNIFE 31, KNIFE 21, KNIFE 53

DEDICATED TO U.S. VETERANS WHO SERVED DURING THE SS MAYAGUEZ INCIDENT AND RESCUE OPERATION, AND IN REMEMBRANCE OF THE 14 MARINES, 2 NAVY CORPSMEN, 2 AIR FORCE, KILLED IN ACTION DURING THE COMBAT ASSAULT UPON KHI TANG ISLAND, WEST BEACH, CAMBODIA; DIED WHILE MISSING; OR IN HELICOPTER CRASHES FROM ENEMY ACTION; AND 23 AIR FORCE, 56TH SECURITY POLICE SQUADRON, AND 3 AIR CREW, KILLED IN LINE OF DUTY IN THE CRASH OF KNIFE 13 EN ROUTE TO JOIN THE MARINE ASSAULT FORCE; THE SUCCESSFUL RESCUE AND RETURN OF THE SS MAYAGUEZ AND CREW TO AMERICAN CONTROL, MARKED THE LAST U.S. FORCES JOINT OP IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, AND— THE LAST BATTLE OF THE VIETNAM WAR.

WEST BEACH (Aerial view)
 The First Wave of helicopters met with heavy enemy machinegun, 75mm, AK-47, rockets, and quad anti-aircraft weapons. Of the night CH-53s, three were shot down: KNIFE 21 crashed in water 1 mi NW; KNIFE 31 (center) hit by two RPGs ripping the nose away, burned on the beach waterline, and destroyed by explosions. With no S-1A, 12 wounded survivors use the wreckage as cover swimming out to sea for recovery. A marine clinging to the burning helicopter died of wounds as enemy machineguns raked swimmers—one swimmer used a MIA's radio to direct air strikes on enemy positions. A USMC pilot returned to the sinking CH-53 and pulled a MIA marine above water and from the ship's body was not recovered.

Above-right: CORAL SEA Swift Boat beaches for rescue, but is forced back to sea by heavy enemy fire.

Center-left: CH-53, KNIFE 53, is tore apart from enemy fire and crashed in a fireball nearby— all 22 aboard made a dash for the shoreline. Two others were heavily damaged and disabled, one landing on a Thailand island for fuel just before proceeding to U-Tapao RTAFB, the other returning directly to U-Tapao RTAFB— A vicious battle had only just begun.

DANIEL A. BENEDETTI * LYNN BLESSING * WALTER BOYD * GREGORY S. COPENHAVER * ANDRES GARCIA * GARY L. HALL * JOSEPH N. HARGROVE * JAMES J. JACQUES * NATHANIEL A. LOONEY * DANNY G. MARSHALL
 JAMES R. MAXWELL * RICHARD W. RYENBURGH * ANTONIO RAMOS SANDOVAL * KELLON K. TURNER * BERNARD GAUSE III * RONALD J. MANNING * RICHARD VANDERGER * REWOOD E. REINHOLD

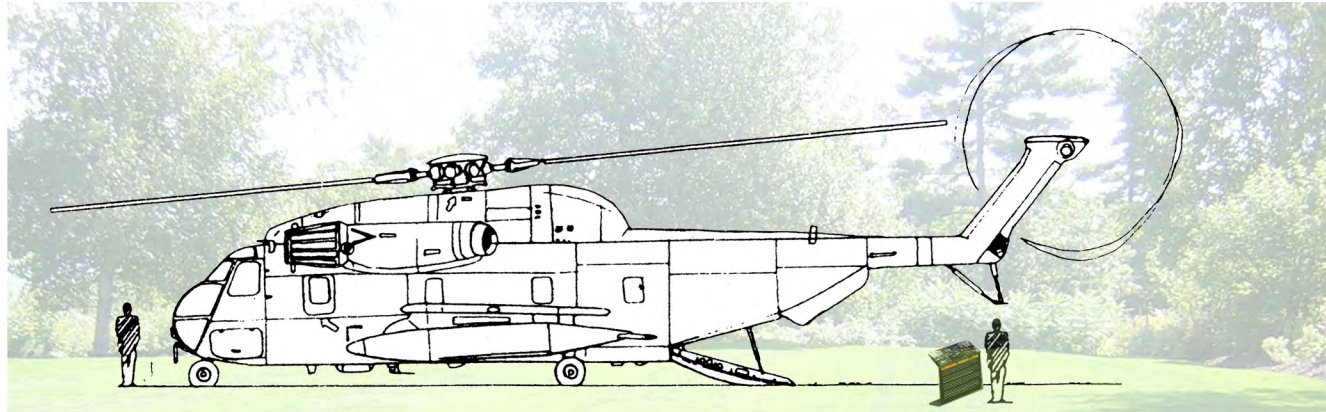
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12-15 MAY 1975
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED, RECOVERY OF CREW AND SHIP; THE FIRST SHIP TO SHIP BOARDING SINCE THE CIVIL WAR; ENDING OF THE LAST JOINT OPERATION OF U.S. FORCES— AND THE LAST BATTLE OF THE VIETNAM WAR.

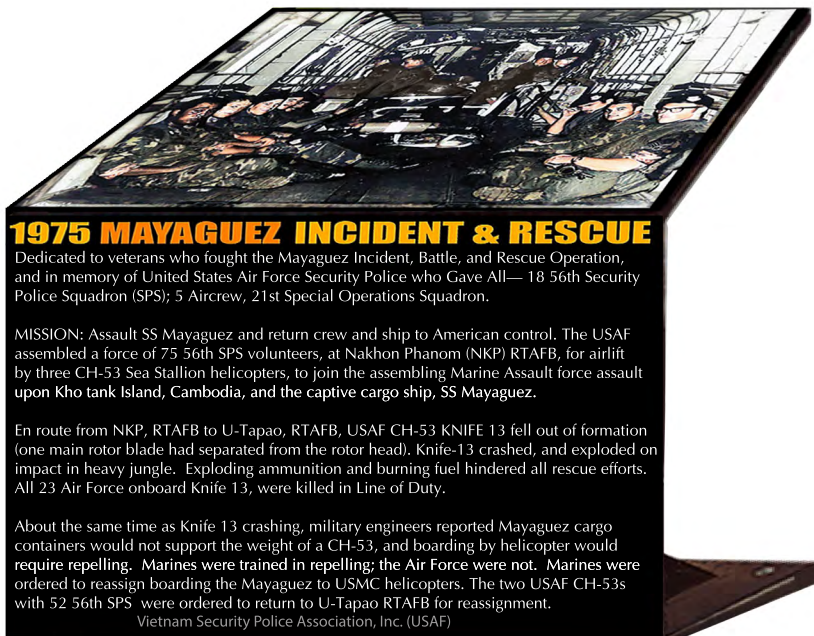


ADDENDUM - B

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DON POSS *



CH-53 KNIFE 13's Podium will display rear of the Sea Stallion's lowered ramp. The 23 Airmen's Podium's interior photo is on the top panel, allowing direct comparison of a CH-53's empty-bay with the onboard SP assault force and where they sat. Viewers will see KNIFE 13 ready for airlift, its Final Flight, and the last photo of the 18 56th SPS, and 5 Aircrew, 21st SOS. The Podium's facing is color black, providing a waterfall cascade over and in to the 1975 Mayaguez Incident & Rescue dedication. The 23 killed in Line of Duty were not just names. Viewers see real-live emotions of certain battle; expressions of concern, confidence, fear, anxiety, and the professionalism of Air Force Security Police answering their country's call to fight or defend.



PODIUM FOR CH-53 KNIFE 13, RAMP:

Dedicated to veterans who fought the Mayaguez Incident, Battle, and Rescue Operation, and in memory of United States Air Force Security Police who Gave All— 18 56th Security Police Squadron (SPS); 5 Aircrew, 21st Special Operations Squadron.

MISSION: Assault SS Mayaguez and return crew and ship to American control. The USAF assembled a force of 75 56th SPS volunteers, at Nakhon Phanom (NKP) RTAFB, for airlift by three CH-53 Sea Stallion helicopters, to join the assembling Marine Assault force assault upon Kho tank Island, Cambodia, and the captive cargo ship, SS Mayaguez.

En route from NKP, RTAFB to U-Tapao, RTAFB, USAF CH-53 KNIFE 13 fell out of formation (one main rotor blade had separated from the rotor head). Knife-13 crashed, and exploded on impact in heavy jungle. Exploding ammunition and burning fuel hindered all rescue efforts. All 23 Air Force onboard Knife 13, were killed in Line of Duty.

About the same time as Knife 13 crashing, military engineers reported Mayaguez cargo containers would not support the weight of a CH-53, and boarding by helicopter would require repelling. Marines were trained in repelling; the Air Force were not. Marines were ordered to reassign boarding the Mayaguez to USMC helicopters. The two USAF CH-53s with 52 56th SPS were ordered to return to U-Tapao RTAFB for reassignment.

Photo USAF: Podium, Top Panel (Public Domain (BW Colorized by Don Poss))

* **ADDENDUM - C:** Submission to the Vietnam Security Police Association, Inc. (USAF), with drawings, for a "Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Mayaguez Incident." A Memorial commemorating the eighteen 18 Security Police, 56th Security Police Squadron, and five (5) Aircrew of the 21st Special Operations Squadron, Killed In Line of Duty 13 May 1975, en route to U-Tapao RTAFB to join the Marine Assault Force to rescue crew and recover the SS Mayaguez, captured off Koh Tang Island, Cambodia.

ADDENDUM - C

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CH-53 KNIFE 13's Podium will display



Photo USAF: Podium, Top Panel (Public Domain (BW Colorized by Don Poss))

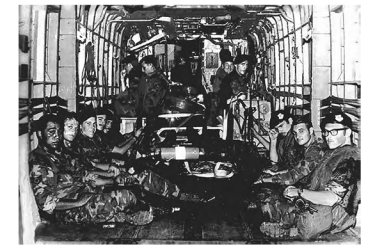
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Considering a collage on backside (Everything else is already paid for: etching is the only cost). Three photos below will be prominent.



Eighteen 56th Security Police On Board and awaiting clearance for airlift to U-Tapao RTAFB from NKP. The SPS take their duty seriously and understand potential consequences.

Laughter, forced-smiles, joking-- *We won the lotto; the 'lucky 75' out of our entire Squadron!* Mixed with concern, perhaps the expected fear and respect for an unknown enemy. Confidence in the 21st SOS aircrew ... Still, you can feel the professional determination-- *We Can Do This!* Checking weapons once more. And finally ... *We're Airborne again!*



JIMMY BLACK BOBBY COLLUMS GERALD COYLE THOMAS DWYER BOB FORD GERALD FRITZ JACKIE GLENN DARRELL HAMLIN GREGORY HANKAMER

DAVID HIGGS FALEAGAFULA ILAOA MICHAEL LANE DENNIS LONDON ROBERT MATHIAS WILLIAM MC KELVEY EDGAR MORAN II ROBERT NEALIS ROBERT ROSS

JAMES KAYS (P) LAURENCE FROELICH (CP) GEORGE MCMULLEN (FE) PAUL RABER (CC) ROBERT WELDON (FE)

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56TH SECURITY POLICE SQUADRON, 21ST SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQUADRON

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SHIP TO AMERICAN CONTROL. FOUR 56TH SECURITY POLICE SQUADRON (SPS) CH-53 'KNIFE' HELICOPTERS AIRLIFTED FROM NAKHON PHANOM RTAFB, EN ROUTE TO U-TAPAO RTAFB, TO JOIN A MARINE ASSAULT FORCE TO ATTACK THE ISLAND. EIGHTEEN USAF 56TH SPS AND FIVE AIR CREW OF THE 21ST SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQUADRON, WERE KILLED IN LINE OF DUTY, 15 MAY 1975, WHEN KNIFE 13 FELL OUT OF FORMATION

OF ONE SPS COMMAND HELICOPTER AND THREE SPS CH53C SEA STALLIONS CARRYING 75 SECURITY POLICE. KNIFE 13 CRASHED, EXPLODED, AND BURNED IN THICK JUNGLE. EXPLODING ORDNANCE AND FUEL HINDERED RESCUE BY LANDING HELICOPTERS. ALL TWENTY-THREE PERISHED. DURING THE ASSAULT ON THE ISLAND, TWO USAF AIR CREW WERE KILLED IN ACTION INSERTING MARINES IN COMBAT.

VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL, SS MAYAGUEZ INCIDENT 1975

VIETNAM SECURITY POLICE ASSOCIATION, INC. (USAF)



JIMMY BLACK



BOBBY COLLUMS



GERALD COYLE



THOMAS DWYER



BOB FORD



GERALD FRITZ



JACKIE GLENN



DARRELL HAMLIN



GREGORY HANKAMER



DAVID HIGGS



FALEAGAFULA ILOA



MICHAEL LANE



DENNIS LONDON



ROBERT MATHIAS



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ROBERT NEALIS



ROBERT ROSS



JAMES KAYS (P)



LAURENCE FROELICH (CP)



GEORGE MCMULLEN (FE)



PAUL RABER (CC)



ROBERT WELDON (FE)



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TBD where the West Beach Assault Force battle will be explained.

SIDE PANELS of the memorial could include collage of etched photos of F-4 Phantom USAF, USMC, and Navy firing rockets and dropping bombs, plus the C-130 dropping a 15,000 pound daisy-cutter by parachute off its ramp that cleared a jungle landing for a CH-53. Plus, straving A/C, door-gunners from KNIFE CH-53s; Khmer Rouge (KR) fast-boats sinking; KR directing crew served AAA at KNIFES, and dug in KR dodging incoming; Navy rescuing KNIFE aircrew' and marines shot down at sea; USS HOLT ship-to-ship boarding of Mayaguez; Deck guns firing from Destroyers off shore; and the 21st SOS KNIFE helicopters swarming like hornets around W/E beaches; and the evac airlift of 285 (?) marines.

Don Poss