



FOR COLONEL RANDY AUSTIN USMC (RET)

AS YOU AND THE MAGNIFICENT AIRMAN, SAILORS AND MARINES WHO FOUGHT OR SUPPORTED THE BATTLE OF KOH TANG DURING THE MAYAGUEZ RECOVERY OPERATIONS GATHER TOGETHER TODAY, IT IS HONOR FOR ME WRITE A FEW THOUGHTS ON THAT DRAMATIC EVENT.

FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE PLANNING EFFORTS TO THE END OF THE OPERATION, EXTREME RISK AND UNCERTAINTY WAS AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS. ADDING TO ALL THE DIFFICULTIES WERE THE ENORMOUS DISTANCES INVOLVED, INHERENT COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES, THE WEATHER, THE OVERALL ENVIRONMENT AND LITTLE TO NO INTELLIGENCE OR COMBAT INFORMATION FOR TACTICAL PLANNING. DESPITE ALL OF THIS, CATASTROPHE WAS AVOIDED AND THE MISSION WAS SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED. THIS WAS BECAUSE OF SHEER COURAGE, DETERMINATION AND INITIATIVE OF PILOTS, AIRCREW MEMBERS, PARARESCUSMEN, FORWARD AIR CONTOLLERS, COMMUNICATORS, SAILORS, MARINES ON THE GROUND AND ALL WHO WERE DIRECTLY INVOLVED. IN MY FORTY ONE YEARS OF SERVICE, I HAVE NEVER BEEN PROUDER OF OUR MILITARY TEAM. DURING THE SEVENTH INNING STRETCH AT A BALLGAME IN CINCINNATI, THEY ANNOUNCED THAT THE MAYAGUEZ HAD BEEN RECOVERED. THE ENTIRE STADIUM CAME TO THEIR FEET AND CHEERED YOU FOR FIFTEEN MINUTES --- THAT SAYS IT ALL!!!

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELVES, TAKE CARE OF EACH OTHER, GOD BLESS AND, AS THEY SAY IN THE NATION'S CORPS OF MARINES --- SEMPER FIDELIS.

*Alfred Gray, Marine*

In 1991, General Alfred Gray retired from the U.S. Marine Corps after 41 years of service. General Gray served as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and was the 29th Commandant of the Marine Corps. He served as military advisor to the President, the National Security Council and the Secretary of Defense.