

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD

TWO THOUSAND TWENTY-FIVE

**JOINT RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE LAST UNITED STATES COMBAT MISSION IN
SOUTHEAST ASIA AT THE END OF THE VIETNAM WAR**

WHEREAS, United States involvement in the Vietnam War ended 50 years ago with the Mayaguez Incident at Koh Tang, from May 12-15, 1975, the final United States combat mission in Southeast Asia during this conflict; and

WHEREAS, in May 1975 the Cambodian Khmer Rouge navy seized the American cargo ship SS Mayaguez and its crew of 39 in international waters. The Mayaguez was anchored at Koh Tang Island near the Cambodian coast, and military planners believed the crew was on the island. Air Force gunships sank 3 Cambodian patrol boats to prevent their taking the Mayaguez's crew from Koh Tang to the mainland. Soon after, Marines boarded the Mayaguez and found it abandoned; and

WHEREAS, Marines landed on Koh Tang in Air Force helicopters to rescue the crew, but incomplete intelligence made the operation a near disaster. Expecting only light opposition, the Air Force helicopters instead faced heavy fire from a large force. The Cambodians shot down 4 helicopters, damaged 5 more and killed 14 Americans. More United States troops and aircraft urgently moved to reinforce the 131 Marines and 5 Air Force aircrew trapped on Koh Tang; and

WHEREAS, as the assault unfolded, the Mayaguez crew appeared in a small boat and were rescued unharmed. The operation immediately shifted from an offensive to rescuing the trapped Marines; and

WHEREAS, another 100 Marines moved into Koh Tang to reinforce and extract the trapped Marines. Coordinated Air Force support by attack aircraft, forward air controllers, rescue helicopters and gunships pounded Cambodian targets while the Americans on the ground fought hard to maintain their positions; and

WHEREAS, only 3 Air Force helicopters were left to extract more than 200 troops. They tried time and again, braving fierce, accurate fire, but were repeatedly driven off. Finally, they reached the beach and recovered 129 Marines in multiple trips, landing them quickly on Navy ships and returning to the island for more. On the last trip to the beach, Air Force pararescueman Tech. Sgt. Wayne Fisk left his helicopter to find 2 missing Marines still laying down covering fire. He led them to the helicopter, and the 14-hour rescue ended as the aircraft left under fire; and

WHEREAS, there were 3 Marines who were inadvertently left on the island in the darkness and confusion and were killed and buried there within a few days by the Khmer Rouge. Total United States casualties included 18 dead and 50 wounded. Twenty-three more Air Force personnel died in a support force helicopter crash in Thailand due to mechanical failure; and

WHEREAS, there were 48,000 men and women from the State of Maine who served in Vietnam, while an additional 16,000 Mainers were serving worldwide during the Vietnam War era; and

WHEREAS, the names of 343 Mainers who laid down their lives are etched on the black granite of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., and 11 of our men are still missing in Southeast Asia; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED: That We, the Members of the One Hundred and Thirty-second Legislature now assembled in the First Special Session, on behalf of the people we represent, take this opportunity to recognize the 50th anniversary of the last United States combat mission in Southeast Asia at the end of the Vietnam War and to celebrate with the utmost gratitude the service and sacrifice of every Mainer who fought in Vietnam and Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War, especially those who paid the ultimate price and cannot be with us here today.