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SPOT REPORT
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ALFA

DRV RADAR OPERATIONS IN GULF OF TONKIN,

31 JULY - 8 AUGUST 1964

Analysis of a DRV surface radar tracking code used to track the USS MADDOX in the Gulf of Tonkin beginning 31 July has located three and possibly four coastal observation posts (COP's) possessing radar tracking and reporting capabilities.

Heretofore, only one such COP had been identified: Bach Long Vi Island (2Ø-28N 1Ø7-43E). Analysis of this tracking code now locates radar sites in the vicinities of My Duc (19-52N 1Ø5-56E), Cape St. Anne (18-51N 1Ø5-43E) and Vinh Son (17-57N 1Ø6-3ØE). A COP possibly located on Hon Matt Island (18-48N 1Ø5-58E) also reported the movement of the MADDOX but its observations were usually limited to less than 25 nautical miles (nm). Its reports therefore could have been derived from visual rather than radar surveillance.

The MADDOX was first observed being tracked by Vinh Son about 13 nm east northeast of the COP at 23Ø4Z, 31 July. Moving northeast it was tracked by Cape St. Anne from Ø731Z, 1 August until 1427Z about 32 nm southeast of the COP. At Ø915Z the COP possibly located on Hon Matt Island reported the MADDOX five nm northeast of the island; the last report was observed at 1135Z, 11 nm to the north. As the MADDOX continued north, My Duc began

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tracking at Ø339Z, 2 August and continuously during the first attack on the MADDOX which commenced about Ø8ØØZ; the last tracking by My Duc was observed at Ø921Z. Although the COP's normally report to Naval HQ at Haiphong, Ben Thuy or Van Hoa, My Duc reported its trackings to patrol vessel T146 during 2 August, apparently to vector the vessel during the attack on the MADDOX that day. After the attack and as the MADDOX retired on a southeasterly course, it was tracked by Cape St. Anne at 1ØØØZ and later by Vinh Son from 1125Z until 14Ø3Z which was the last tracking of the MADDOX observed on 2 August. On 3-4 August, trackings of the MADDOX, now joined by the USS C. TURNER JOY, were negligible and there was a total absence of trackings on 5-8 August although the MADDOX was in close proximity to three surface radar stations. The second attack about 1345Z, 4 August was not, therefore, presaged by any significant amount of radar trackings; the MADDOX, however, was apparently shadowed by patrol vessel T142 before the attack.

COMMENT:

The behavior of the COP's to date suggests that hostile vessels are actively tracked if punitive measures are intended. The USS CRAIG on patrol in the Gulf of Tonkin last March was not tracked by surface radar and did not encounter any hostile actions. In contrast the MADDOX was under constant radar surveillance before it came under the first attack on 2 August.

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The evidence is still inconclusive in light of the virtual absence of trackings on 3-4 August before the second attack. Nevertheless, heavy radar surveillance of a hostile craft as well as the transmission of radar tracking reports on that craft from a shore station to a patrol vessel could serve as indications that hostile actions are imminent.

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