INR File

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UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT ~~TOP SECRET DINAR~~

Memorandum

TO : INR - Thomas L. Hughes DATE: October 1, 1964

FROM : INR/RFE - Allen S. Whiting

SUBJECT: Talking Points on Tonkin Analysis

As you asked, this is a sketchy presentation of points you might raise this afternoon.

INR's Briefing Role

Under normal conditions, INR uses raw material provided by other agencies for its own analysis for use of Department officers and for evaluating interpretations made by CIA and DIA. Our function is similar in times of crisis, when adequate discussion with other agencies is often impossible, and when these agencies are not disseminating finished intelligence.

It is not unusual that we find pertinent information which has not been processed by other agencies and which we think should be brought to the attention of Department officers. For example, on September 18, when the destroyer's evidence still indicated that a deliberate attack had occurred, the question arose of possible local enemy aberration. On the basis of NSA intercepts at that time, we were able to point out in briefings that the North Vietnamese naval high-command had established direct communications with the vessels probably involved in the action, and that, therefore, local initiative could be ruled out. Other agencies may have noticed this but if so, had not made this finding available to the intelligence community (nor have they since).

Intelligence Problems as shown by Tonkin Gulf II

A. Intercepted Messages re Enemy Intentions:

1. Garbled, fragmentary or overly gisted messages concerning enemy intentions, which are sent in before adequate processing, are often misleading. (For example, a message said to read "postpone the battle" suggesting possible intent to attack, was later corrected -- almost 24 hours later -- to be merely a unit's request to be informed if battle orders were received.)

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2. Full texts of critically important messages are imperative if we are to accurately analyze enemy intentions; some texts still have not been received from NSA although we have requested them.

3. "Cleaned-up" or fully processed messages of this nature were transmitted very late.

4. Changes and corrections of messages often were not clearly referenced or described. This apparently has led to chronologies and to an NSA wrap-up a week later which repeated a message in its erroneous rather than its correct form.

5. Inadequacy of attribution of intercepted messages; i.e., failure to give date/time of transmission (the originating as well as the ralaying points) can be a source of inaccuracies and erroneous judgements.

B.

1. Need for more rapidly updated tools for analysis, such as an updated naval order of battle for North Vietnam, a biographic listing of naval officers and their probable units, a coastal radar and lookout station order of battle, a Fleet organization/call sign chart with possible areas of respobsibility. (RCI/RFE has now tentatively constructed these.)

2. Need for COMINT consumers to be advised how much material was being intercepted, what was probably missed, and what geographic areas were covered or relatively uncovered.