Ch I
The Intelligence Community

The phrases "Gulf of Tonkin Incidents" and "Tonkin Resolution" seem destined to take their place ~~in history~~ along-side "Remember the Maine" and "Pearl Harbor." To the American public in 1964 the two incidents in the gulf on 2 and 4 August seemed to have come almost out of the blue. Vietnam was just one of many places in the world where we had a few forces dispensing military assistance in just a hard-to-find place on the map which the French had given up about ten years earlier. In 1970 — six years and over 40,000 casualties later — it would be hard to find anyone in the country who did not hold strong views on the course the United States followed in Southeast Asia in the intervening years.

To the intelligence community, the August events in the Gulf of Tonkin did not come as the surprise that it did among the general public. Ever since the Geneva Conference of 1952, the U.S. ~~intelligence~~ community had been ~~closely~~ watching the ~~[illegible]~~ moves ~~by~~ ~~[illegible]~~ various countries had been making that ~~affected~~ Southeast Asia, and passing the information up through channels to the ~~U.S. [illegible] (USIB), which in turn advised the National~~ Security Council and the White House.

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The Pyramid

In the late 1950's and early 1960's, the sources of information on eastern Asia and particularly Southeastern Asia were many and varied. In the area of nonsignal intelligence there were defectors, Viet Cong captured by the South Vietnamese, the pronouncements of the various governments, observations by those living in the various countries, diplomatic dispatches, and photographic intelligence. In the field of signal intelligence, the United States got its information from four types of intercept —