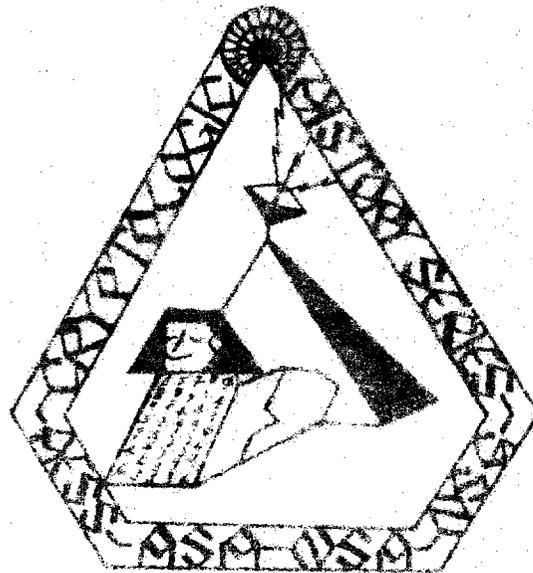


~~TOP SECRET NOFORN~~

Southeast Asia

The Gulf of Tonkin Issue



~~THIS DOCUMENT CONTAINS CODEWORD MATERIAL~~

~~TOP SECRET NOFORN~~

INTERVIEW WITH LOU GRANT

In October 1964 [] and Lou Grant went down town to brief PFIAB^{P.L. 86-36} on all three incidents.

BLAKE said they want WITCH HUNT. No godd I go. Must give idiot treatment on decryption.

NO policy. strictly operations.

[] gave notes on encrypted

Script approved by BLAKE

1½ hours and only first paragraph of script read.

Dr. Land member of board (of Polaroid Land camera fame) interjected.

Thereafter working session with crypt systems.

PITCH attempt to confirm attack.

we were not sure of 4th . Absence of ph7sical evidence.

Downtown pitch was to shift working of problem back to field which had provided all the goodies in August. Take away from NSA because it provided no goodies in September/

Actually, it is now assumed, physical surveillance at least and probably visual and/or radar tracking of the Maddox and later of the Turner Joy was continuous from the time each entered the gulf. The first indication of NVN naval action was heard by USM 626J at Phu Bai on 31 July. On that day, after

[redacted] His interviews with crypties in field sez they did not at the time believe in the 4th. But to keep that quiet.

[redacted] B62. [redacted] - coming back as civilian. [redacted] out on leave

Del Land chaired 1968 re-investigation. all messages redone. conc: supported original premise.

All went to Lang in sealed off room.

Subsequent recoveries showed NVN avoiding not attacking on 4th.

Land did not tell this downtown. Was not asked.

The DD pats in the GTK code-named DS pats, were the 3rd element in the covert mil pressures against NVN. While the purpose of the pats was mainly psy, as a show of force, the DDs collected the fkind of intel of NVN warning radars and coastal def's that would be useful to 34A raiding parties or, in the event of a bombing campaign, to pilots. The f

There was no attempt before the Aug TK incident to involve the DDs with the 34A attacks or to use the ships as bait for NVN retal. The pats were run through a spep naval chani of command.

Alto the highest levels of the Admin sent the dds into the Gulf while the 34A raids were taking place, and... there was never any evidence that a deliberate provocation was intended. The Admin did not believe that the NVN would dare to attack the ships.

But the study makes it clear that the physical presence of the DDs provided the elements for the TK clash. and immediately after the reprisal air strikes, the JCS and Ass Sec Def Mc Naug put forward a provocation strategy proposing to repeat the clash as a pretext for bombing the North.

FRANK AUSTIN ON PHONE:

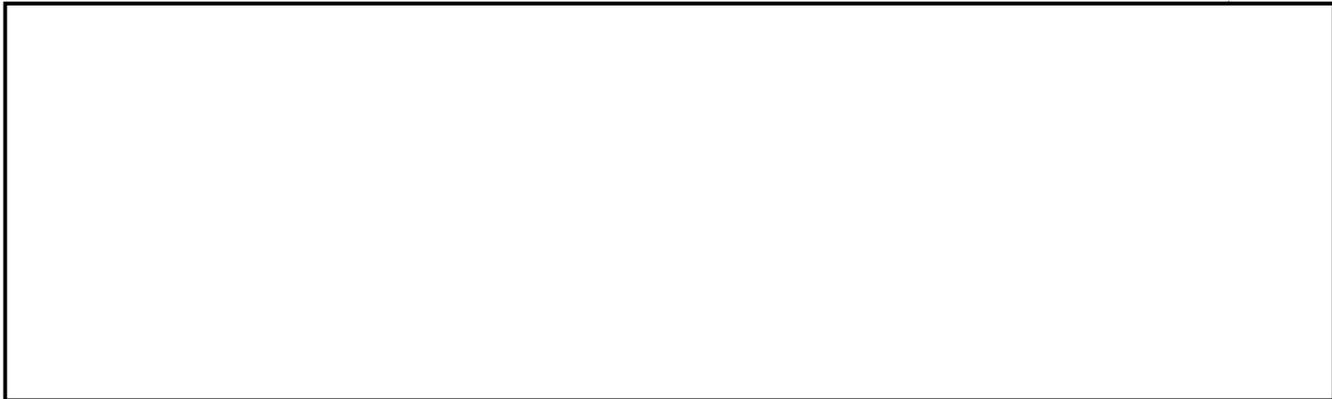
Remember as Chief B that he was briefed on events in the morning after and before Land and Z went downtown to brief.

Didn't convince him.

Agrees evidence shakey/

NSA25X3

Only Lang knows for sure what happened. Perhaps Z.



source ?

Whether the attack was premeditated - a Naval DBP designed in the heat of a presidential campaign to shatter morale in the US -- or whether it was provoked by recent SVN commando raids north of the 17th parallel, which had been carried out under the protective wing of MADDOX and other American warships in the area, was not clear

2 Aug had to compete with postal bill.

These late reports got through to MAC and the Pres in time to a call off the raids. But they chose to go ahead. At the time it seemed more important to retaliate against NVN -- and thus pick up sev political chips -- than to scrub them and double-check the facts.

"The Pres of the US is not about to commit forces and undertake actions to deter aggression in SVN to prevent this Comm conspiracy, unless and until the Am people through their Congress sign off to go in. I didn't know what treaty China might have with NVN, or Russia might have with NVN. He did not want to run the risk of war with R or C by declaring war against NVN. Hence Resolution.

had been captured by NK. A NK suicide squad had infiltrated the Blue House in Seoul in a clear attempt upon the life of SK's President, Park Chung Hee. Two and one third SK divisions were fighting in Vietnam, and Seoul wanted them recalled to man the home front. On Feb 1, in fact, Adm Sharp had urged Gen Wheeler to draft contingency plans for the return of SK forces from Vietnam. Gen Westmoreland caught up in the first stages of the Tet battle, balked. The return of SK units at that moment, he warned, was MILITARILY UNACCEPTABLE. # We added: "No surces can be forecast for the near future." The upsurge of NK activities also worried Wash. Walt Rostow, in the P's behalf, had uput an alarming question to West in a separate cable: "Do you believe there is a relationship between activities in SVN (the Tet offensive) and those in Korea/" West and Bunker responded jointly: "It would seem to us that there is a relationship"

By late Sept - Taylor said tide of battle had turned unmistakably against Saigon. The comms, he believed were fast approaching total victory in SVN. T told of sinking morale in the South, a high and rising defection rate in the army, and greatly increased Comm infiltration. Wealthy Saigonese were buying exit visas at exorbitant prices and fleeing the country.

In October J pondered many ?s. NK had been ousted and his successors were a lackluster group of Party hacks or were they. The CC had just exploded their first atomic bomb What would they do next move into NVN or into L as they had moved into NK 18 years before.

In late Dec Ball flew to Paris for long talk with de Gaulle. Prob J wanted dg's reaction in advance -- one more factor to be thrown into the computation. dg argued against J's policy. He believed there was little chance of CC involvement in Indoc. He was sympathetic with J's probs in Vnv and suggested J press for a ceasefire in SVN and for negotiations leading to a political solution -- a coalition government. Later on East and West could get together and agree to "neutralize" all of SEA/.

ol 1954Z fm Maddox - Contemplate serious reaction by movements vic PM Charlie
in near future. Received info indicating possible hostile action.

ROOTS OF INVOLVEMENT: ELIE ABEL MARVIN KAT KALB

In the summer of 64, as the American presidential campaign warmed up, the Communists vastly improved their military and political situation in Vietnam. In Laos they began a new offensive, overrunning neutralist forces in the PDJ and threatening to lay siege to Vientiane. Very quietly, on May 21, the US began to fly reconnaissance missions over enemy positions in L -- in part to check on their infiltration of men and supplies into SVN; in part to check on enemy buildups in L. A week after that, 2 US recon planes were shot down by PL forces. The Pentagon then ordered air cover for the recon planes. From then on, American war planes began to fly combat missions over L, but it took years before the US public learned what was going on.

JCS (OFFICE OF SACSA) Memo to W. Bundy and Mc Naughton
OPLAN 34A
September Schedule 27 August 1964

SIGINT had, however, provided a complete depiction of the deployment of the NVA 325th division. This activity commenced in late October/early November 1964, when SIGINT reflected a splitting of the 325th division Headquarters, and the subsequent deployment of the bulk of the division out of NVN via the Mu Gia pass, and down through Laos to the Western Highlands. The deployment of this division was recognized entirely through traffic analysis, with confirmation through MRDF, and while contested by MACV as being invalid in late 1964k was later confirmed through collateral acquired by MACV and represented the first large-scale NVA commitment of an organic fighting unit to theater in the South.

NRV to NRP Phil info NSA and NSAPAC 020245Z

consider and discuss with 27: Believe that headline "DRV Navy may attack DS pat is rather strong, is not explained in text, and is not substantiated in tec. supp altho subj tfc may well refer to DS P, see no indication of intent of DRV swatows to attack US Destroyer. ref 2/q/vhn/r 25

ref 2/q/ R 27 see no evidence to substantiate concs drawn in par 4 that fishing vessels will be withdrawn from area, or anything to substantiate NVN intent to attack MADDOX.

Request you review ref reports, and discuss poss for amending reports, unless further info avail to substantiate NVN intent. Subj reports may have considerable bearing on future action under OPLAN 34A.