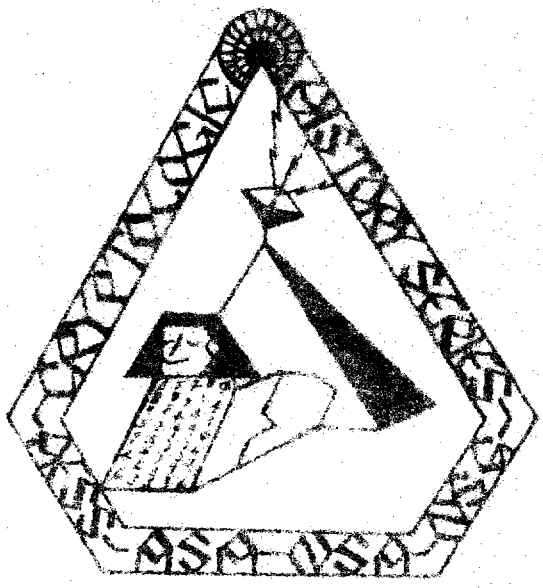
TOP SECRET NOFORN

Southeast Asia

The Gulf of Ton Kin Issue



THIS DOCUMENT CONTAINS CODEWORD MATERIAL

TOP SECRET NOFORN

Declassified and approved for release by NSA on 11-25-2005 pursuant to E.O. 12958, as amended

INTERVIEW WITH LOU GRANT

In October 1964 [redacted] 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.

[redacted] 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

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

B62. - coming back as civilian. 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 whowed 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 purpse 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 believ 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 stregy proposing to repeat the claskh 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 convinve him.

Agrees evidence shakey/

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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 fnorth of the 17th paralel, 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 acall off the raids. But they chose to go ahead. At the time it seemed more important to retaliate against NVN -- and thuspick up sev political chips -- than to scrub themsn and couble-check the facts.

"The Pres of the US is not about to commit forces and undertake actions to deter aggression in SVN to presvent this Comm conspiracy, unless and auntil the Am peopl through their Congress sign o to go in.j I didn't know what trety 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 Resol,ution.

[illegible] The PUEBLO and her crew had been captured by NK. A NK suicide squad had infiltrated the Blue House in Seoul in a claar attempt upon the life of SK's Prewident, Park Chung Hee. Two and one third SK divisions were fighting in Vietnam, and Seoul wanted them recalle 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 Westmorel 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 surcesa 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 againstSaigon. The comms, he believed were fast aproachi g total victory in SVN. T told of sikin morale in the South, a high and rising defection rate in the army, and greatly increased Comm fifiltration. Wealthy Saigo ese 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 lack luster group of Party hacks or were they. The CC had just explodced 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 lateDec Ball flew to Paris for long talk with de Gaulle. Prob J wanter dG's reaction in advance -- on e more factor to be thrown into the computation. dG argued against J's policy. He believed there waw little change of CC involve in Indoc. He was sympathethic eiwith J's probs in Vnv and suggested J press for a ceasefire in SVN and for negotiations lading to a political solution -- a colaotion government. Later on East and Wsest could get together and agree to "neutralize" all of SEA/.

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

ROOTS OF INVOLVEMENT: ELIE ABEL MARVIN KAL 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 neutrlaist forces in the PDJ and threatening to lay siege to Vientiane. Very quietly, on May 21, the US began to f recce missions over enemy opositions in L -- in part to check on their infiltratio of men and supplies into SVN; in part to ch3ck on enemy buildups in L . A week after that, 2 US recce planes were shot down by PL forces. The Pentagon then ordered air cover for the recce planes. From then on, American war planes began to fly combat missions ovrer L, but it took years before the US pulic learned wat 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 Noember 1964, when SIGINT reflected a splitting of the 325th deivision 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 involaid in late 1964k was later confirmed through collateral acquired by MACV nad repressented the first large-scale NVA committment of an organic fighting unit to thewar in the South.

NRV to NRPhhil 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 erefer 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 evidenc to substantiate concs drawn in par 4 that fishing vessels will be withdrawn from area, or anytning to substatnaiate NVN intent otto attack MADdox.

Requet 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.