

~~TOP SECRET DINAR~~

3/0/ [] /R17-64
ELECTRICAL RELEASE
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SIGINT REFLECTIONS OF DRV ATTACK ON USS MADDOX

FOLLOWING COMINT INDICATIONS ON 1 AUGUST 1964 THAT NORTH VIETNAMESE NAVAL FORCES INTENDED TO LAUNCH A TORPEDO ATTACK ON THE UNITED STATES DESTROYER USS MADDOX ON PATROL IN THE GULF OF TONKIN, THE MADDOX WAS ATTACKED BY THREE PT BOATS THE FOLLOWING DAY. SUBSEQUENT REPORTS FROM THE MADDOX INDICATE THAT THE PT BOATS WITHDREW, PURSUED BY AIR-CRAFT LAUNCHED FROM THE USS TICONDEROGA. ONE OF THE PT BOATS WAS REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN DAMAGED BY FIVE INCH GUN FIRE FROM THE MADDOX; THE LATTER DID NOT SUSTAIN ANY DAMAGES.

FROM 1 AUGUST IT WAS EVIDENT THAT THE MADDOX WAS BEING TRACKED BY DRV NAVAL ELEMENTS. DURING THE SAME DAY THE SOUTHERN FLEET BASE AT BEN THUY RADIOED AN UNIDENTIFIED VESSEL NOTING THAT A DECISION HAD BEEN MADE TO "FIGHT THE ENEMY TONIGHT." AT 0444Z THE NEXT DAY THE NORTHERN FLEET BASE AT PORT WALLUT WAS ADVISED BY VESSEL T142, "RECEIVED ORDERS 146-142 DID (LGRU) USE HIGH SPEED TO GO TOGETHER (PARALLEL) WITH ENEMY FOLLOWING TO LAUNCH TORPEDOES." AN ATTACK WAS APPARENTLY IMMINENT AT 0612Z WHEN A UNIDENTIFIED SHORE STATION, POSSIBLY AT SAM SON (19-43N 105-55E) ORDERED THE T146 TO "LEAVE THE T135 AND TURN BACK TO THE PATH OF THE ENEMY TO ATTACK." AT 0807Z THE MADDOX REPORTED THAT IT WAS BEING ATTACKED BY THREE NORTH VIETNAMESE CRAFT AND THAT IT WAS OPENING FIRE.

IT IS NOT POSSIBLE, ON THE BASIS OF PRESENTLY AVAILABLE

THIS DOCUMENT CONTAINS THREE (3) PAGES

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COMINT, TO DETERMINE WHEN THE ATTACK WAS ACTUALLY ORDERED AND BY WHOM. TRACKING DATA REVEALS THAT THREE VESSELS, THE T142, T146 AND THE T135 CLOSED AND COMMENCED THE ATTACK ON THE MADDOX. AT 0900Z THE T142 AND T146 TURNED BACK TO HON ME ISLAND (ABOUT 45 NAUTICAL MILES NORTHEAST OF BEN THUY AND LESS THAN 10 MILES OFF-SHORE). AT 1430Z THE T146 WAS ADVISED TO MEET T142 AND T135 AT HON ME ISLAND AND THEN PROCEED TO 19-41N 106-37E. AFTER ARRIVING AT THAT POINT THEY WERE TO SEARCH THE AREA IN A RADIUS OF 10 NAUTICAL MILES FOR A VESSEL WHICH WAS "WOUNDED AND LOST BECAUSE OF ENEMY AIRPLANE OR ARTILLERY FIRE, OR BECAUSE OF ENGINE TROUBLES, OR OUT OF FUEL." AFTER FINDING IT THEY WERE INSTRUCTED TO TOW IT BACK.

COMMENT: ON 31 JULY, NORTH VIETNAMESE NAVAL MESSAGES REFLECTED AN "ENEMY" INCURSION INTO AN AREA ABOUT 80 KILOMETERS NORTH OF BEN THUY. AN "ENEMY" VESSEL WAS REPORTED TO BE FIRING ON THE ISLAND OF HON ME AND THERE WERE INDICATIONS OF ANOTHER "ENEMY" ATTACK AGAINST AN UNIDENTIFIED TARGET IN THE BEN THUY AREA. IN PROBABLE REACTION, THE NEW CHINA NEWS AGENCY, ON 1 AUGUST, REPORTED THAT THE LIAISON MISSION OF THE NORTH VIETNAMESE HIGH COMMAND HAD MADE A STRONG PROTEST TO THE ICC AGAINST "THE U.S. AND ITS PUPPET - - THE NGUYEN KHAMH CLIQUE FOR SHELLING TWO ISLANDS OF NORTH VIETNAM." THE PROTEST WAS CONTAINED IN A LETTER TO THE ICC IN VIETNAM SAYING THAT, ABOUT 1140 HOURS, 30 JULY, THE U.S. AND THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE ADMINISTRATION SENT TWO NAVAL VESSELS TO SHELL HON NGU ISLAND WHICH LIES FOUR KILOMETERS OFF THE COAST ON ABOUT THE SAME LATITUDE AS CUA HOI (NGE AN PROVINCE). AT ABOUT THE SAME TIME ANOTHER U.S. - SOUTH VIETNAMESE NAVAL VESSEL OPENED ARTILLERY FIRE ON HON ME ISLAND, 12 MILES OFF BA LANG (THANH HOA PROVINCE). THE LETTER ASKED THE ICC TO TAKE FIRM MEASURES TO COMPEL THE U. S. AND THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT TO PUT AN IMMEDIATE END TO THESE DANGEROUS PROVOCATIONS. THE TRACKING AND SUBSEQUENT ATTACK

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ON THE MADDOX COULD, THEREFORE, HAVE BEEN PROVOKED BY "ENEMY"
INCURSIONS INTO THE GULF OF TONKIN A DAY OR TWO BEFORE THE
ARRIVAL OF THE MADDOX IN THE AREA.

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TO DATE THERE HAVE BEEN NO [] REACTIONS TO THE
PRESENCE OF THE MADDOX IN THE GULF OF TONKIN.

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