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FORM OF DOCUMENT	CORRESPONDENTS OR TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
#2 report	summary notes of 538th NSC Meeting Top secret <i>Sanitized</i> NSC letter 10/24/80 2 p	08/04/64	A
#3 cable	ICS 7720 top secret 2 p	undated	A
#4a memo	re: North Vietnam top secret 2 p	08/04/64	A
#5 report	draft joint resolution on SE Asia top secret <i>open 8-30-83</i> NLJ 83-97 3 p	undated	A

FILE LOCATION

NATIONAL SECURITY FILE, National Security Council File
NSC Meetings, Vol. 3 Tab 20, 8/4/64, Gulf of Tonkin Attack

RESTRICTION CODES

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GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

GSA FORM 7122 (7-72)

SERVICE SET

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~~TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE~~
FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

SUMMARY NOTES OF 538th NSC MEETING
August 4, 1964; 6:15 to 6:40 P.M.

Gulf of Tonkin Attack

Secretary McNamara: The North Vietnamese PT boats have continued their attacks on the two U.S. destroyers in international waters in the Gulf of Tonkin. No enemy aircraft was involved. Our efforts to learn the exact situation and protect the Patrol have been complicated by a very low ceiling. One of the two destroyers was fired on by automatic weapons and was lit up by search lights.

Secretary Rusk: An immediate and direct reaction by us is necessary. The unprovoked attack on the high seas is an act of war for all practical purposes. We have been trying to get a signal to Hanoi and Peking. Our response to this attack may be that signal. We are informing NATO, SEATO, and the UN. As an indication of Hanoi's intentions, this second attack was a more serious decision for the North Vietnamese than the decision to make the first attack.

Secretary McNamara: We have agreed to air strikes on two bases in the north of North Vietnam and two base complexes in the south of North Vietnam. A fifth target has been deleted because it is close to Communist China. In addition, any North Vietnamese PT boats and Swatows found off Vietnam outside the three-mile limit will be attacked as part of an armed reconnaissance program. (The execute order as actually sent is attached -- JCS 7720.)

CIA Director McCone: The proposed U.S. reprisals will result in a sharp North Vietnamese military reaction, but such actions would not represent a deliberate decision to provoke or accept a major escalation of the Vietnamese war. (The text of Mr. McCone's estimate of probable North Vietnamese and Chinese Communist reactions to our reprisal is attached.)

The President: Do they want a war by attacking our ships in the middle of the Gulf of Tonkin?

Director McCone: No. The North Vietnamese are reacting defensively to our attacks on their off-shore islands. They are responding out of pride and on the basis of defense considerations. The attack is a signal to us that the North Vietnamese have the will and determination to continue the war. They are raising the ante.

The President: Are we going to react to their shooting at our ships over 40 miles from their shores? If yes, we should do more than merely return the fire of the attacking ships. If this is so, then the question involves no more than the number of North Vietnamese targets to be attacked.

DECLASSIFIED

Authority FRUS, Vol. I, #278
By cbm, NARA, Date 4-5-05

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Secretary McNamara: Our intelligence officers report that a Chinese Communist air regiment is moving to North Vietnam.

USIA Director Rowan: Do we know for a fact that the North Vietnamese provocation took place? Can we nail down exactly what happened? We must be prepared to be accused of fabricating the incident.

Secretary McNamara: We will know definitely in the morning. As of now, only highly classified information nails down the incident. This information we cannot use and must rely on other reports we will be receiving.

Secretary Rusk: We should ask the Congressional leaders whether we should seek a Congressional resolution. (The draft resolution read by Secretary Rusk is attached.) This short and clear draft is similar to the Mid-East resolution.

Secretary McNamara: In addition to the air strikes, we plan to send major U. S. reinforcements into the area. These include ships, men and planes. (A detailed listing of these forces is attached.)

A draft statement for the President was revised. It is to be made public by the President as soon as the U. S. attack planes are over target.

Brouley Smith

ZEN/OSD

RUEPIA/CIA..

RUEHCR/AMEMB SAIGON

RUEHBC/AMEMB DANANG

RUEHJFS/AMEMB VIENTIANE

RUEHKO/AMNCC

RUEHVD/NECPA

RUEHKS/NEACP

BT ~~TOP SECRET~~

T G P S E C R T JCS 7722 JCS SENDS.

AIR STRIKE AGAINST NORTH VIETNAM (TS)

1. BY 0700 LOCAL 5 AUGUST CONDUCT A ONE-TIME MAXIMUM EFFORT ATTACK OF FOLLOWING TARGETS WITH OBJECTIVE OF MAXIMUM ASSURANCE OF HIGH ^ELEVEL OF TARGET DESTRUCTION:

A. SWATONS AND PT BOATS LOCATED AT BASES PORT MALLUT, HON GAY, PHUC LO^C AND QUANG KHE AND AT LOC CHAC ESTUARY (19-45N; 105-57E). TARGETS ARE BOATS.

B. POL AT VINH.

C. ARMED RECCE AGAINST SWATONS AND PT BOATS BEYOND

Bundy

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JCS	letter 1-19-77
By: GCH	NARS, Date 11-22-82

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3 MILE LIMIT. FOR PURPOSE OF ARMED RECCE ATTACK OF
STATIONS AND PT BOATS, OFF-SHORE ISLANDS ARE CON-
SIDERED OUTSIDE 3 MILE LIMIT.

D. IF WEATHER PRECLUDES WAITING ABOVE TIME OF ATTACK
PROCEED SOONEST AND NOTIFY JCS ASAP.

2. USE CVA AIRCRAFT ONLY.

3. ARMED RECCE AIRCRAFT ARE TO AVOID HAINAN ISLAND
AND NOT TO COME WITHIN 50 MILES OF CHICOM BORDER.

4. CONTINUE DESOTO PATROLS.

5. DEFER 34 ALFA OPERATIONS FOR 24 HOURS.

6. ADVISE DETAILS OF OPERATIONS PLAN WHEN AVAILABLE,
INCLUDING NUMBER OF SORTIES EACH TARGET COMPLEX, WEAPON
LOADING, TACTICS, ETC. FLASH REPORT ON MISSION SUCCESS
DESIRED PLUS PHOTO COVERAGE ASAP.

7. IF TARGETS NOT DESTROYED ON FIRST STRIKE, YOU
SHOULD REQUEST AUTHORITY FOR A SECOND STRIKE. GP-3

BT

~~TOP SECRET~~

4223
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

6 August 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR:

Mr. Bromley Smith

Per your request, this is for
your historical files.

Walt
Walter Elder
Executive Assistant

Attachment

SERVICE SET

~~TOP SECRET~~

DRAFT JOINT RESOLUTION ON SOUTHEAST ASIA

WHEREAS warships of the Communist regime in North Viet-Nam have committed a series of unprovoked armed attacks in international waters against naval units of the United States;

WHEREAS these attacks are a part of a continuous, deliberate and systematic campaign of aggression and subversion carried on against free nations, and particularly against the peoples of Southeast Asia, by the Communist regime in North Viet-Nam;

WHEREAS such Communist aggression and subversion constitutes a serious threat to international peace and security and is inconsistent with the purposes and principles of the United Nations;

WHEREAS the Communist regime in North Viet-Nam has flouted its obligations under the Geneva Accords of 1954 and has engaged in aggression against the independence and territorial integrity of the Republic of Viet-Nam by carrying out a systematic plan for the subversion of the Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam, by furnishing direction, training, personnel and arms for the conduct

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Authority NLS 83-97

By ics NARS 8-30-83

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of guerrilla warfare within the Republic of Viet-Nam and by the ruthless use of terror against the peaceful population of that country;

WHEREAS in violation of its undertakings in the Geneva Agreements of 1962 the Communist regime in North Viet-Nam, has engaged in aggression against the independence and territorial integrity of Laos by maintaining forces on Laotian territory, by the use of that territory for the infiltration of arms and equipment into the Republic of Viet-Nam, and by providing direction, men and equipment for persistent armed attacks against the Government of National Union of the Kingdom of Laos;

WHEREAS at the request of the Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam, the United States is assisting the people of that country to maintain their independence and political integrity with no territorial, military or political ambitions of its own, but solely to assure that the peoples of Southeast Asia will be left in peace by their neighbors to work out their destinies in their own way.

Now, therefore, BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress Assembled:

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That the United States will not tolerate unprovoked and illegal armed attacks on its forces, that it will take such measures as may be necessary to prevent such attacks and otherwise to protect its forces and that the maintenance of international peace and security in Southeast Asia, including the preservation of the political independence and territorial integrity of the nations of South East Asia, is required by the national interest of the United States;

SEC. 2. To this end, the Congress supports the determination of the President, as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the United States:

(a) to respond instantly with the use of appropriate force to repel any unprovoked attack against the armed forces of the United States and to take such other steps as may be necessary to protect these forces and

(b) upon request from any nation in Southeast Asia, to take, consistently with the Charter of the United Nations, all measures including the use of armed force to assist that nation in the defense of its political independence and territorial integrity against aggression or subversion.

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These are divided into three categories. In the First category are those forces ordered deployed as soon as possible. They consist of the 1st CVS Group (the Kearsage, 4 destroyers, and 3 destroyer escorts) which would be moved from Japan to the South China Sea; a Marine Special Landing Force (1600 men, 24 helicopters, the Valley Forge and supporting Craft) to be moved from Subic Bay to the vicinity of Da Nang; the 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade, consisting of 6500 men to be moved from Okinawa to the South China Sea; an F-101 Reconnaissance Task Force to be moved from Shaw AFB to Kadena and a CVA Task Group, consisting of the Ranger and 4 destroyers to be moved from the 1st Fleet to WESTPAC.

The Second category are those forces alerted for deployment immediately upon the receipt of political clearance. These will consist of 2 B-57 squadrons, to be moved from Clark AFB to South Vietnam; 1 F-105 squadron to be moved from Yokota to Korat; 1 F-100 squadron to be moved from Clark AFB to Takhli; 12 F-102s to be moved from Clark AFB to South Vietnam; 8 KC-135s to be moved from SAC to Clark AFB; 2 F-100 squadrons from STRICOM to Clark; 1 F-105 squadron from STRICOM to Yokota; and 1 Reconnaissance Task Force (6 RF-101s) from Misawa/Kadena to Southeast Asia.

The Third category consists of those forces alerted for possible deployment to Southeast Asia. These are the 173rd Airborne Brigade, a Forward Floating Depot, a Marine Air Group, and an Army Brigade.

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ATTENDANCE LIST FOR THE 538th NSC MEETING
AUGUST 4, 1964, AT 6:15 IN THE CABINET ROOM
OF THE WHITE HOUSE

The President of the United States, Presiding

Speaker of the House of Representatives

CIA

John A. McCone, Director
Ray Cline, Deputy Director of Intelligence

DEFENSE

Robert S. McNamara, Secretary
Cyrus Vance, Deputy Secretary
John McNaughton, Assistant Secretary (ISA)

JCS

General Earle G. Wheeler, USA, Chairman

STATE

Dean Rusk, Secretary
George W. Ball, Under Secretary
William Bundy, Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs

TREASURY

C. Douglas Dillon, Secretary

USIA

Carl T. Rowan, Director

WHITE HOUSE

George Reedy
McGeorge Bundy
Walter Jenkins
Bill Moyers
Jack Valenti
Bromley Smith
Douglas Cater