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FORM OF DOCUMENT	CORRESPONDENTS OR TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
#10c map	U.S.S. Maddox Incident	n.d.	A
#10d memo report	NMCC Operational Summary	8/3/64	A
	open 10-18-83 NLS 83-171		

FILE LOCATION

Notes
Meeting Minute File, Box 1

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MEMORANDUM

(28)
THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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Saturday, January 27, 1968

6:45 p.m.

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Incidents in the Gulf of Tonkin, August, 1964

Attached are papers which address themselves to allegations that the incidents in the Gulf of Tonkin in August, 1964, did not take place but if they did, occurred in territorial waters.

1. Ambassador Stevenson, in presenting our complaint to the United Nations Security Council on August 5, said that the first Tonkin incident involving the SS Maddox occurred 30 miles at sea from the mainland of North Vietnam. The second incident involving the SS Maddox and the SS C. Turner Joy occurred 65 miles offshore. (Tab A)

The Vietnamese have, at various times, advanced the claim that the entire Gulf of Tonkin was a closed area, i.e., territorial waters. No major maritime state has acknowledged this claim. The map showing the precise track of the first incident is attached. (Tab B)

2. As regards allegations that neither of these attacks took place, there is attached a statement by the Defense Department giving conclusive proof that the U. S. destroyers were attacked twice while they were on patrol in international waters. (Tab C)

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Document IX-130

United States Complaint to the United Nations Security Council
Concerning "Deliberate Aggression by the Hanoi Regime": STATE-
MENT MADE BY THE U.S. REPRESENTATIVE (STEVENSON) IN THE U.N.
SECURITY COUNCIL, AUGUST 5, 1964 (EXCERPTS)⁸⁴

I have asked for this urgent meeting to bring to the attention of the Security Council acts of deliberate aggression by the Hanoi regime against naval units of the United States.

At 8:08 a.m. Greenwich meridian time, August 2, 1964, the United States destroyer *Maddox* was on routine patrol in international waters in the Gulf of Tonkin, proceeding in a southeasterly direction away from the coast about 30 miles at sea from the mainland of North Vietnam. The *Maddox* was approached by three high-speed North Vietnamese torpedo boats in attack formation. When it was evident that these torpedo boats intended to take offensive action, the *Maddox*, in accordance with naval practice, fired three warning shots across the bows of the approaching vessels. At approximately the same time, the aircraft carrier *Ticonderoga*, which was also in international waters and had been alerted to the impending attack, sent out four aircraft to provide cover for the *Maddox*, the pilots being under orders not to fire unless they or the *Maddox* were fired upon first.

Two of the attacking craft fired torpedoes, which the *Maddox* evaded by changing course. All three attacking vessels directed machinegun fire at the *Maddox*. One of the attacking vessels approached for close attack and was struck by fire from the *Maddox*. After the attack was broken off, the *Maddox* continued on a southerly course in international waters.

Now, Mr. President, clearly this was a deliberate armed attack against a naval unit of the United States Government on patrol in the high seas—almost 30 miles off the mainland. Nevertheless, my Government did its utmost to minimize the explosive potential of this flagrant attack in the hopes that this might be an isolated or uncalculated action. There was local defensive fire. The United States was not drawn into hasty response.

Our hopes that this was an isolated incident did not last long. At 2:35 p.m. Greenwich meridian time, August 4, when it was nighttime in the Gulf of Tonkin, the destroyers *Maddox* and *C. Turner Joy* were

⁸⁴ Department of State *Bulletin*, Aug. 24, 1964, pp. 272-274. The United States had requested a meeting of the Security Council on Aug. 4 to discuss its complaint. The subject was debated at the 1140th and 1141st meetings of the Security Council, Aug. 5 and 7. The texts of documents transmitted to the Security Council by the North Vietnamese government denying the U.S. charges and accusing the United States of violation of its territorial waters, acts of war, and aggression in South Viet-Nam are contained in U.N. docs. S/5888 and S/5907. The South Vietnamese Government forwarded documents in support of the U.S. position (U.N. docs. S/5892 and S/5906).

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again subjected to an armed attack by an undetermined number of motor torpedo boats of the North Vietnamese navy. This time the American vessels were 65 miles from shore, twice as far out on the high seas as on the occasion of the previous attack. This time numerous torpedoes were fired. That attack lasted for over 2 hours.

There no longer could be any shadow of doubt that this was a planned, deliberate military aggression against vessels lawfully present in international waters. One could only conclude that this was the work of authorities dedicated to the use of force to achieve their objectives, regardless of the consequences.

My Government therefore determined to take positive but limited and relevant measures to secure its naval units against further aggression. Last night aerial strikes were thus carried out against North Vietnamese torpedo boats and their support facilities. This action was limited in scale, its only targets being the weapons and facilities against which we had been forced to defend ourselves.⁸⁵ Our fervent hope is that the point has now been made that acts of armed aggression are not to be tolerated in the Gulf of Tonkin any more than they are to be tolerated anywhere else.

Mr. President, let me repeat that the United States vessels were in international waters when they were attacked.

Let me repeat that freedom of the seas is guaranteed under long-accepted international law applying to all nations alike.

Let me repeat that these vessels took no belligerent actions of any kind until they were subject to armed attack.

And let me say once more that the action they took in self-defense is the right of all nations and is fully within the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

The acts of aggression by the North Vietnamese in the Gulf of Tonkin make no sense whatsoever standing alone. They defy rational explanation except as part of a larger pattern with a larger purpose. As isolated events, the kidnaping of village officials in the Republic of South Viet-Nam makes no sense either. Neither does the burning of a schoolhouse—or the sabotage of an irrigation project—or the murder of a medical worker—or the random bomb thrown into a crowd of innocent people sitting in a cafe.

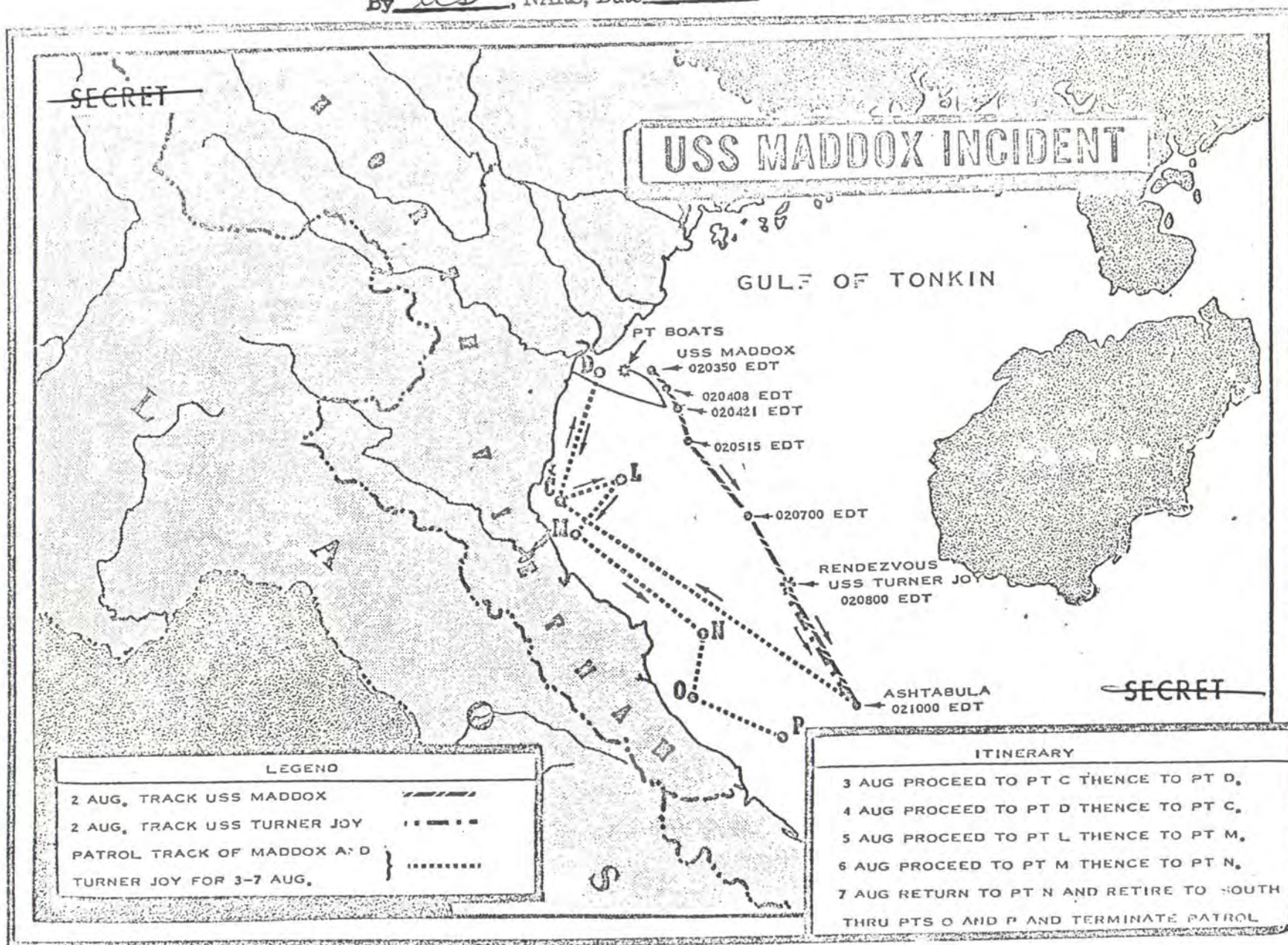
All these wanton acts of violence and destruction fit into the larger pattern of what has been going on in Southeast Asia for the past decade and a half. So does the arming of terrorist gangs in South Viet-Nam by the regimes in Hanoi and Peiping. So does the infiltration of armed personnel to make war against the legitimate government of that nation. So does the fighting in Laos⁸⁶—and all the acts of subversion—and all the propaganda—and the sabotage of the international machinery established to keep the peace by the

⁸⁵ See *post*, doc. IX-135.

⁸⁶ See *ante*, docs. IX-89-99.

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US DESTROYER ATTACKED BY NORTH VIETNAMESE PT BOATS

At 020350 EDT, while on routine patrol in the Gulf of Tonkin, the US destroyer MADDOX (DD-731) was approached by three North Vietnamese motor torpedo boats (see map) with the apparent intention of launching a torpedo attack. The MADDOX retired to the eastward at 27 knots, while the torpedo boats continued to close. As the boats approached to 9,000 yards at 020408 EDT, MADDOX fired three warning shots from her 5-inch battery. The PT boats did not alter course and were taken under continuous fire. The boats closed to 5,000 yards where they launched two torpedoes at 020421 EDT. The MADDOX turned away, and the torpedoes passed well clear. One of the three boats received a direct hit and dropped a torpedo in the water which did not appear to function. Machine gun fire from the torpedo boats resulted in one hit on the MADDOX. There were no US casualties. (S)

At 020430 EDT, four F-8E aircraft, armed with ZUNI rockets and 20-mm ammunition, arrived from USS TICONDEROGA (CVA-14). The aircraft attacked the boats and reported one PT boat dead in the water and burning. The other two boats fled toward shore with minor damage. MADDOX continued southward to rendezvous with the destroyer TURNER JOY (DD-951) and the tanker ASHTABULA (AO-51). (S)

The Joint Chiefs of Staff have directed the MADDOX and the TURNER JOY to continue the patrol as indicated on the map, remaining 11 or more miles offshore, with combat air patrol (CAP) during daylight hours. In the event these patrolling ships are attacked, they have been directed to seek to destroy the attacking forces. However, pursuit into hostile waters or air space is not authorized. (S)

SOURCE: CTG 72.1 020949Z (S); CTG 77.5 021506Z (S);
JCS 7680 021725Z (S); JCS 7681 022349Z (S)

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HMCC OPERATIONAL SUMMARY

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By is, NARS, Date 10-18-83

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STATEMENT BY DEFENSE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN

Gulf of Tonkin

Any suggestion that the August 1964 attacks on U.S. destroyers in the Tonkin Gulf did not occur is contrary to the known facts.

The two attacks were made on August 2 and 4 when U.S. destroyers were on patrol in international waters. The attacks were seen, heard, and detected electronically by the crews of the ships.

During the first, daylight, attack, photos were taken of the attacking torpedo boats, and damage was done to the destroyer by machine gun bullets.

The evidence that the destroyers were attacked is conclusive. It includes:

AUGUST 2 ATTACK

- 1) Visual sighting of three torpedo boats making daylight runs on the Destroyer MADDOX and firing at least four torpedoes.
- 2) Photographs of the attackers taken from ships and aircraft.
- 3) Damage to the MADDOX from North Vietnamese fire.

AUGUST 4 ATTACK

- 1) Radar tracks of fast, small craft paralleling and then closing in on the Destroyers MADDOX and TURNER JOY.
- 2) Numerous sonar detections of torpedoes fired at the destroyers, reported by the sonar man who manned the MADDOX'S equipment throughout the attack.
- 3) Visual sighting by an officer and several crewmen of the WAKE of a torpedo passing near the TURNER JOY.
- 4) Visual sighting of the attacking craft lit by aircraft flares and by shells fired during the engagement.

- 5) Visual sighting of a search light beam from one of the attacking craft.
- 6) Visual sighting of anti aircraft fire directed at American planes overhead.
- 7) Visual sighting from aircraft of the WAKE of a small, fast craft near the destroyers.

Persons who have examined all of the evidence can have no doubt that the MADDOX twice and the TURNER JOY once were attacked by North Vietnamese small naval craft well in international waters and without provocation.

Dictated by phone by Miss Valenti (11-70713) 12/22/67
taken by C. L. Horn

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