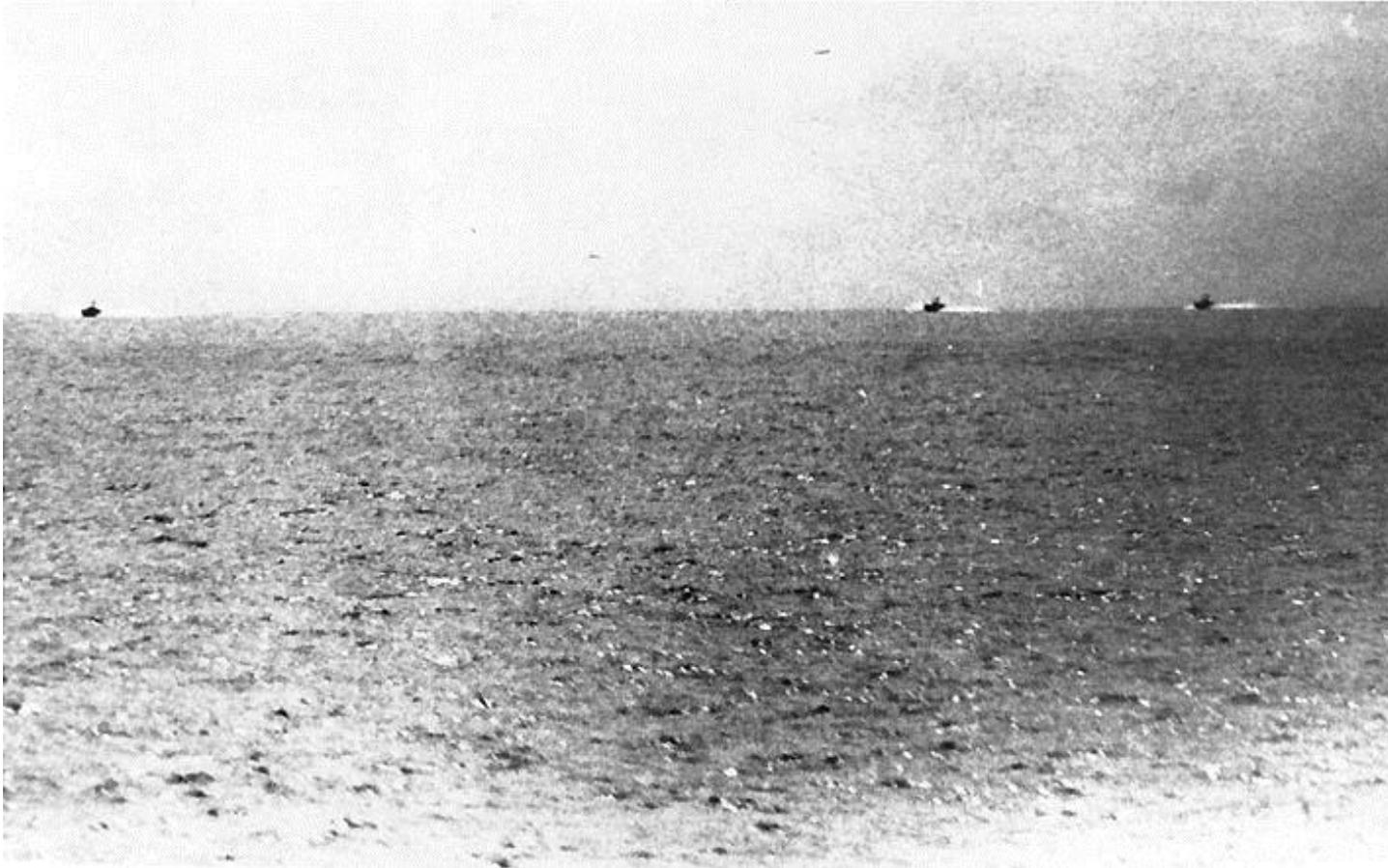


## Document Based Question

“The U.S. already planned on escalating the conflict in Vietnam prior to the second incident in the Gulf of Tonkin.”

Photo # NH 95611 North Vietnamese motor torpedo boats attacking USS Maddox, 2 Aug. 1964



Using your own background knowledge and the following documents, please evaluate the following statement:

“The U.S. already planned on escalating the conflict in Vietnam prior to the second incident in the Gulf of Tonkin.”

#### DBQ Background

Key events associated with the Vietnam War:

1884-1885- French defeat China in Sino-French War and control Northern Vietnam.

1887- French Indochina formed.

1954- Viet Minh defeat the French at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu.

1954- Geneva Convention between Viet Minh and French Government establish Communist North Vietnam, and pro-Western South Vietnam.

1964- Gulf of Tonkin Resolution passed, U.S. commitment in Vietnam grows.

1968- Tet Offensive takes place, North Vietnamese attack nearly 100 cities in North Vietnam but are pushed back by American and South Vietnamese forces. This offensive is widely seen as military victory but a political setback for Johnson who claimed the U.S. was making progress in the war.

1969- Richard Nixon begins “Vietnamization” or the slow withdrawal of US Troops from Vietnam with an emphasis on South Vietnam shouldering more of the war effort.

1971- The Pentagon Papers was leaked to the *New York Times*. The Supreme Court later ruled that its publication was legal.

1973- Paris Peace Accords signed by Nixon in January of 1973 officially ending U.S. military operations in North Vietnam.

1975- Saigon falls to the North Vietnamese and American Embassy and advisors evacuate the country.

Background Essay: Vietnam is usually considered a Cold War military conflict lasting from 1955-1975 in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. That may sound like a contradiction in terms, “Cold War military conflict”, but Vietnam began initially as U.S. military advisors aiding and instructing the South Vietnamese against Communist North Vietnam in the 1950’s escalating to an actual ground conflict in 1965 following the Gulf of Tonkin Incident in 1964. The U.S. ground forces fought in Vietnam, assisted by heavy artillery and airpower until 1975 with the US withdrawal and the fall of the South Vietnamese forces in Saigon. The United States always viewed Vietnam War as a containment policy against the spread of communism in Eastern Asia and eventually to other parts of the world. The North Vietnamese largely considered the war a nationalist one, fighting first against the French who ruled from the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century until 1954 in what was then known as French Indochina, and later against the Americans and South Vietnamese, which they considered a U.S. puppet government. The North Vietnamese were led by Ho Chi Minh, a revolutionary Western educated leader, in an unconventional guerilla war led by the Viet-Cong, a lightly armed group of South Vietnamese communist soldiers. The North also employed a larger more traditional force, The Vietnam People’s Army, sometimes using this force in large scale battles. The North Vietnamese were assisted in arms and supplies by other communist countries. The Vietnam War was highly controversial back home in America, where protestors and dissenters pressured both the Johnson and Nixon Administrations to withdrawal from South East Asia. The total cost of the war in human lives estimated in 1995 by Vietnamese authorities was over 2 million dead civilian on both sides of the conflict, and 1.1 million North Vietnamese and Viet Cong soldiers. The United States Military estimated that between 200,000-250,000 South Vietnamese soldiers lost their lives, and 58,200 American soldiers died. It was a long and arduous for all parties involved.

Evaluate this statement using the following document: “The U.S. already planned on escalating the conflict in Vietnam prior to the second incident in the Gulf of Tonkin.”

**Source 1:** Source: The Pentagon Papers, Gravel Edition, Volume 3, pp. 496-499

**Document note:** The Pentagon Papers were commissioned by Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara in 1967 to study the United States' political and military affairs from 1945-1967. Motivations for the study are ambiguous; Johnson and Secretary of State Dean Rusk did not know it existed prior to its publication in the *New York Times* in 1971. They believed it might have been given to McNamara's friend Robert F. Kennedy who sought the Democratic presidential nomination in 1968. Daniel Ellsberg worked on the task force to study American involvement in Vietnam in 1967, which included 3,000 pages of historical analysis and 4,000 pages of original documents. Ellsberg photocopied volumes of the report and released 43 of them to the *New York Times* in 1971 in an effort to expose the United States' true involvement in Vietnam that had not been previously reported or disclosed from Truman to Johnson. Ellsberg was arrested and charges were brought against him for violating the U.S. Espionage Act. A federal injunction was brought against the *New York Times* to stop printing of the Pentagon Papers, the *New York Times* appealed and the Supreme Court sided in favor of the paper 6-3 on grounds of 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment rights.

Vocabulary: *Insurgent*- a person who reacts against civil authority or an established government.

We seek an independent non- Communist Vietnam. We do not require that it serves as a Western base or as a member of a Western Alliance. Vietnam must be free; however, to accept out-side assistance as required to maintain its security. The assistance should be able to take the form not only of economic and social pressures but also police and military help to root out and control insurgent elements.

**Source:** Memorandum, "South Vietnam," from Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara to President Lyndon Johnson, March 16, 1964.

Evaluate this statement using the following document: "The U.S. already planned on escalating the conflict in Vietnam prior to the second incident in the Gulf of Tonkin."

Doc 1: 1. Who released this memo? Who was it addressed to? Why is this important?

2. What does McNamara advocate in Vietnam?

3. How will providing military and money change the U.S.'s fundamental role from an advisor position to an active player in Vietnam?

## Source 2: The National Security Archives

Vocabulary: *Covert*- concealed, secret, or disguised.

*Expended*- to spend or paid out.

**Document Note: The National Security Archives is a non-governmental library and research center located at The George Washington University, which publishes declassified government documents through the Freedom of Information Act. The aim of the archive is to open up the government's decisions to the public and historians in an effort to better understand government decisions and context of the times in question.**

President Johnson: and he's saying you've got to study it further, and say to Mansfield, "Now the President wants us, you, to get the proper people." And we come in and you say, "They fired at us. We responded immediately. And we took out one of their boats and put the other two running. And we kept our..., we're puttin' our boats right there, and we're not running on in."

Secretary McNamara: And it's hard to destroy.

President Johnson: That's right

Secretary McNamara: Right. And we're going to, and I think I should also, or we should also at that time, Mr. President, explain this Op Plan 34-A, these covert operations. There's no question but what that had bearing on. And on Friday night, as you probably know, we had four TP [McNamara means PT] boats from Vietnam manned by Vietnamese or other nationals, attack two islands. And we expended, oh, a thousand rounds of ammunition of one kind or another against them. We probably shot up a radar station and a few other miscellaneous buildings. And following twenty-four hours after that, with this destroyer in that same area, undoubtedly led them to connect the two events.

**Source: Lyndon B. Johnson**

**Monday, August 3, 1964, 10:30 A.M. (3:34)**

**Telephone Conversation with Robert McNamara, Secretary of Defense,**

**Regarding the Gulf of Tonkin Incident(s) Involving the Destroyer U.S.S Maddox**

Evaluate this statement using the following document: "The U.S. already planned on escalating the conflict in Vietnam prior to the second incident in the Gulf of Tonkin."

Doc 2: 1. What has just happened prior to this conversation?

2. What is President Johnson rehearsing? Why? Who will he be talking to?

3. What were the covert operations 34-A and what did they lead to? What were American forces already doing in Vietnam prior to the Gulf of Tonkin crisis? Were the two connected?

### Source 3: The National Security Archives

Vocabulary: *Impression*- a characteristic, trait, or feature from some influence.

President Johnson: Now I wish that uh you'd give me some guidance on what we ought to say. I want to leave an impression on the background in the people we talk to over here that we're gonna be firm as hell without saying something that's dangerous. Now what do you think? Uh, uh, the people that are calling me up, I just talked to a New York banker, I just talked to a fellow in Texas, they all feel that the Navy responded wonderfully and that's good. But they want to be damned sure I don't pull 'em out and run, and they want to be damned sure that we're firm. That's what all the country wants because Goldwater's raising so much hell about how he's gonna blow 'em off the moon, and they say that we oughten to do anything that the national interest doesn't require. But we sure oughta always leave the impression that if you shoot at us, you're going to get hit.

Source: Lyndon B. Johnson

Monday, August 3, 1964, 10:30 A.M. (3:34)

Telephone Conversation with Robert McNamara, Secretary of Defense,

Regarding the Gulf of Tonkin Incident(s) Involving the Destroyer U.S.S Maddox

Evaluate this statement using the following document: "The U.S. already planned on escalating the conflict in Vietnam prior to the second incident in the Gulf of Tonkin."

Doc 3: 1.What is Johnson's position in this phone conversation?

2. Who is Goldwater? Why is Johnson concerned about what Goldwater says he will do in Vietnam?

3. What can you infer about Johnson's plans forward with the line, "But we sure oughta always leave the impression that if you shoot at us, you're going to get hit."?

Source 4: The National Security Archives

Vocabulary: *Retaliate*- to repay usually in the form of an injury as in revenge.

Secretary McNamara: I, I personally would recommend to you, after a second attack on our ships, that we do retaliate against the coast of North Vietnam some way or other. And we'll be prepared  
President Johnson: What I was thinking about when I was eating breakfast, but I couldn't talk it-I was thinking that it looks to me like the weakness of our position is that, uh, we respond only to an action and we don't have any of our own. But when they, when they move on us, and they shoot at us, I think we not only ought to shoot at them, but almost simultaneously, uh, uh, pull one of these things that you've, you've been doing  
Secretary McNamara: Right.  
President Johnson: on one of their bridges or something.  
Secretary McNamara: Exactly. I, I quite agree with you, Mr. President  
Secretary McNamara: We will have that...a retaliation move against North Vietnam in the event this attack takes place within the next six to nine hours.

Source: Lyndon B. Johnson

Tuesday, August 4, 1964, 9:43 A.M. (6:09)

Telephone Conversation with Robert McNamara, Secretary of Defense,  
Regarding the Incident in the Gulf of Tonkin with the Destroyers U.S.S Maddox and U.S.S.  
C. Turner Joy

Doc 4: 1. What are McNamara and Johnson planning to do?

2. What is Johnson referring to with "pull one of these things that you've, you've been doing"?

3. Are Johnson and McNamara expecting another attack?

## Source Five: National Security Archives

Secretary Robert McNamara: Mr. President, we just had word by telephone from Admiral Sharp that the destroyer is under torpedo attack.

Secretary McNamara: I think I might get, uh, Dean Rusk and Mac Bundy and have 'em come over here and we'll go over these retaliatory actions. And then we ought to

President Johnson: I sure think you ought to agree with that, yeah.

Secretary McNamara: And I've got a category here. I'll call the two of them.

President Johnson: Now where are these torpedoes coming from?

Secretary McNamara: Well, we don't know.....

Source: Lyndon B. Johnson

Tuesday, August 4, 1964, 11:00 A.M. (1:05)

Telephone Conversation with Robert McNamara, Secretary of Defense,  
Regarding the Gulf of Tonkin Incident

Evaluate this statement using the following document: "The U.S. already planned on escalating the conflict in Vietnam prior to the second incident in the Gulf of Tonkin."

Doc 5: 1. 1. What news does McNamara give the President on August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1964?

2. How does the President respond?

3. Where did the torpedoes come from? How does McNamara respond and what does this reveal?

## Source Six: National Security Archives

Vocabulary: *Sonar*- a device for detecting a vessel in the water by the sound it emits in the water.

Adm Sharp: It does appear now that a lot of these torpedoes attacks were torpedoes reported in the water from the sonarman, you see, and probably a lot of them inaccurate because whenever they get keyed up on a thing like this everything they hear on sonar is a torpedo.

Gen Burchinal: You're pretty sure there was a torpedo attack?

Adm Sharp: No doubt about that, I think. No doubt about that. Oh, there is one report here that says they think maybe one PT was sunk by another PT. But that's-this is still in the conjecture stage.

Source: A recording- Admiral Sharp to General Burchinal at 2:08 PM EDT 4 August

Evaluate this statement using the following document: "The U.S. already planned on escalating the conflict in Vietnam prior to the second incident in the Gulf of Tonkin."

Doc 6: 1. What is Admiral Sharp explaining to General Burchinal?

2. Is Sharp clear about what happened the night of August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1964?

Source Seven: "Skunks, Bogies, Silent Hounds, and the Flying Fish: The Gulf of Tonkin Mystery", 2-4 August 1964 Robert J. Hanyok

Document note: This article was published in the National Security's classified magazine *Cryptologic Quarterly* in 2001. It provides insight into what occurred on August 2<sup>nd</sup> and fourth 1964 in the Gulf of Tonkin that later led to an escalation of US forces in North Vietnam.

Vocabulary: *Evaluation*- to determine of fix the value of something.

"Review of action makes many reported contacts and torpedoes fired appear doubtful. Freak weather effects on radar and overeager sonar men may have accounted for many reports. No actual visual sightings by Maddox. Suggest complete evaluation before any further action taken."

Source: Cable to command from Captain John J. Herrick of U.S.S Maddox, Aug. 4th, 1964.

Evaluate this statement using the following document: "The U.S. already planned on escalating the conflict in Vietnam prior to the second incident in the Gulf of Tonkin."

Doc 7: 1. What does Captain Herrick Commander of the U.S.S Maddox, suggest to command prior to any further action? Why does he suggest this?

2. Is this suggestion in conflict to Johnson and McNamara's proposed response? If so, how?

## Source Eight: National Security Archives

Vocabulary: *Communist*- someone who follows the practices and philosophy of communism, oftentimes viewed as subversive, left wing, or revolutionary.

...Whereas naval units of the Communist regime in Vietnam...have deliberately and repeatedly attacked United States naval vessels lawfully present in international waters, and have thereby created a serious threat to international peace. Whereas these attacks are part of a deliberate and systematic campaign of aggression that has the Communist regime in North Vietnam has been waging against its neighbors and the nations joined them in the collective defense of their freedom...

Resolved (that)...the Congress approves and supports the determination of the President as Commander in Chief, to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression...(T)he United States is...prepared, as the President determines, to take all necessary steps, including the use of armed force, to assist (South Vietnam) in defense of its freedom.

Source: Gulf of Tonkin Resolution passed by the Senate, 88-2, and the House of Representatives, 416-0, August 10, 1964.

Evaluate this statement using the following document: "The U.S. already planned on escalating the conflict in Vietnam prior to the second incident in the Gulf of Tonkin."

Doc 8: 1. What does The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution assert concerning North Vietnamese Naval Vessels? Is this an accurate assessment?

2. What does the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution give President Johnson? Why is this important?

3. What is the underlying reason given in the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution to involve America in Vietnam?

Source Nine: “Love and War: A Story of a Family’s Ordeal and Sacrifice During the Vietnam Years” by James Stockdale, 1984.

Document Note: This book which was co-written by his wife, Sylbil, and includes several letters sent between the Stockdales while he was a prisoner of war in Vietnam. The book details his time spent as a highly decorated fighter pilot who served on the USS Maddox during the Tonkin Gulf Incident in August 1964.

Vocabulary: *Destroyer*- a small fast warship usually used in support of larger vessels and armed with guns, depth charges, torpedoes, and guided missiles.

"I had the best seat in the house to watch that event, and our destroyers were just shooting at phantom targets there were no PT boats there. There was nothing but black water and American firepower."

Source: Naval Aviator James Stockdale, from his 1984 book “Love and War.”

“The U.S. already planned on escalating the conflict in Vietnam prior to the second incident in the Gulf of Tonkin.”

Doc 9:

1. What does Naval Aviator James Stockdale recall from that night on August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1964 twenty years later?
2. If the escalation in Vietnam was indeed based upon faulty or inconclusive intelligence, why would the Johnson Administration push forward with escalation of US forces in Vietnam?
3. What other recent American invasion of a sovereign nation was based on faulty intelligence?
4. How is the Iraq and Vietnam Wars similar? Different?

