

~~TOP SECRET - COMINT~~

10 August 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. BUNDY

SUBJECT: Chronology of Events on Desota Patrol and Incidents
Involving the Maddox and Turney Joy

Attached is a memorandum for record developed by Colonel Steakley's people, pulling together the timing of 34A actions and the incidents in the Gulf of Tonkin. With respect to the latter, the intercepts from the DRV, as well as the key messages from our own forces, have been included.

The evidence in these messages makes the hostile intent of the DRV during the 2-4 August period unmistakable. Following the attack on the 2d of August, the DRV again began to concentrate their forces and to track the US vessels. On 4 August, two Swatow boats were told to prepare for operations that night. The Maddox had this information, and when the ships approached on hostile tracks, the action began.

I understand that some additional COMINT sifting still is underway. If these investigations turn up anything new or different--and I learn of it--I will pass it on to you.

WJS
W. J. SMITH

Declassified and approved for release by NSA on 02-13-2006 pursuant to E.O. 12958, as amended

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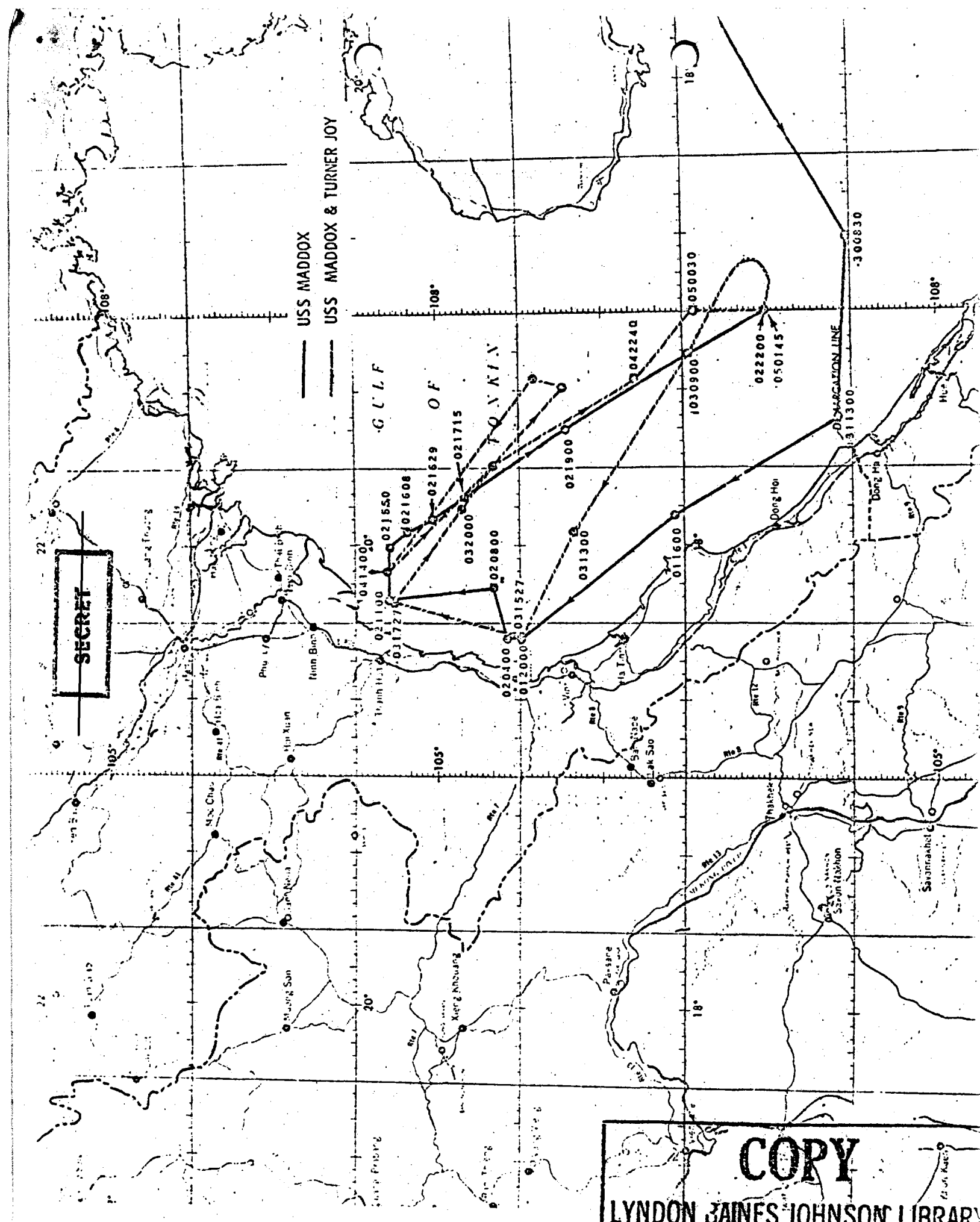
— USS MADDOX
- - - USS MADDOX & TURNER JOY

GULF OF TONKIN

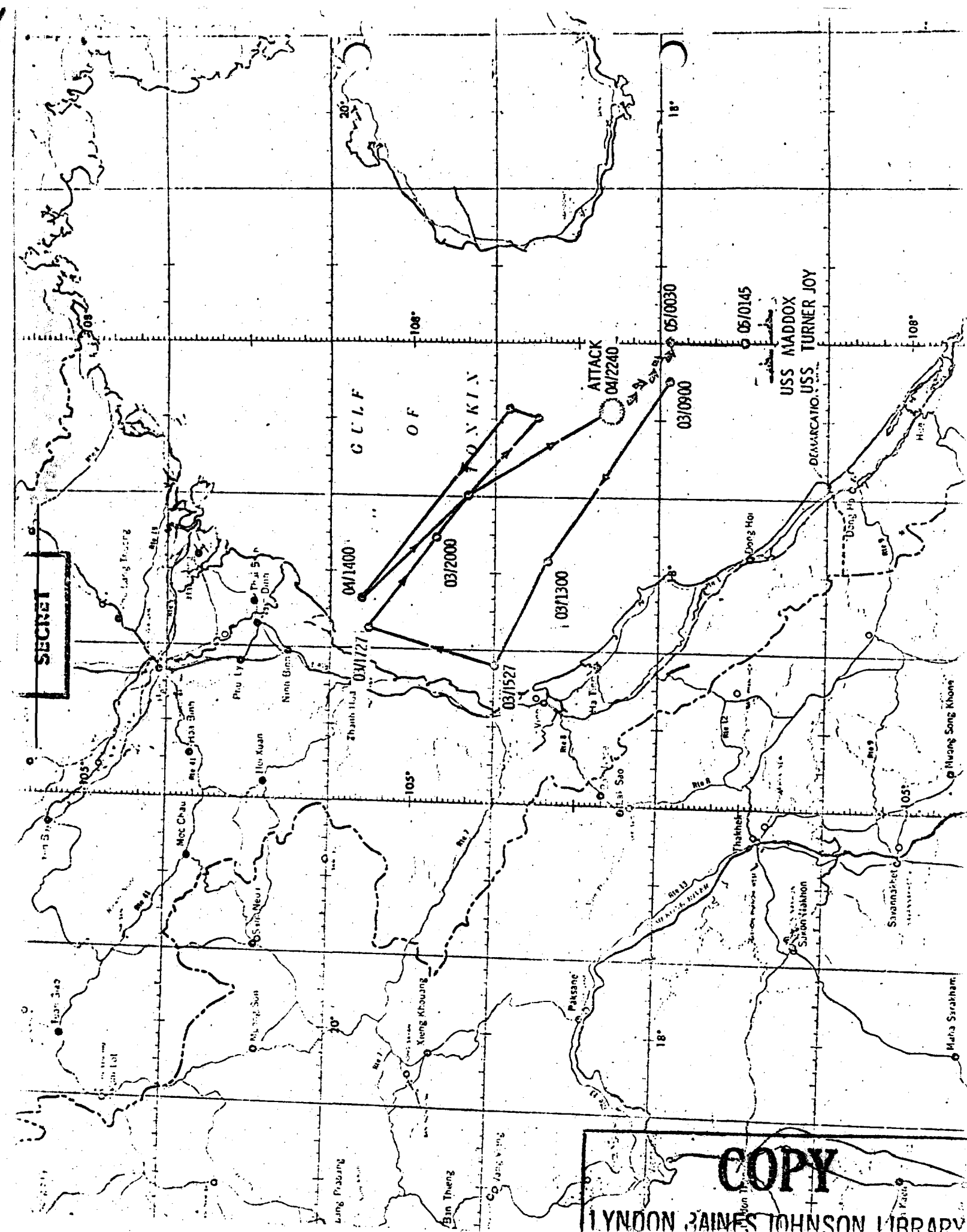
DISSEMINATION LINE

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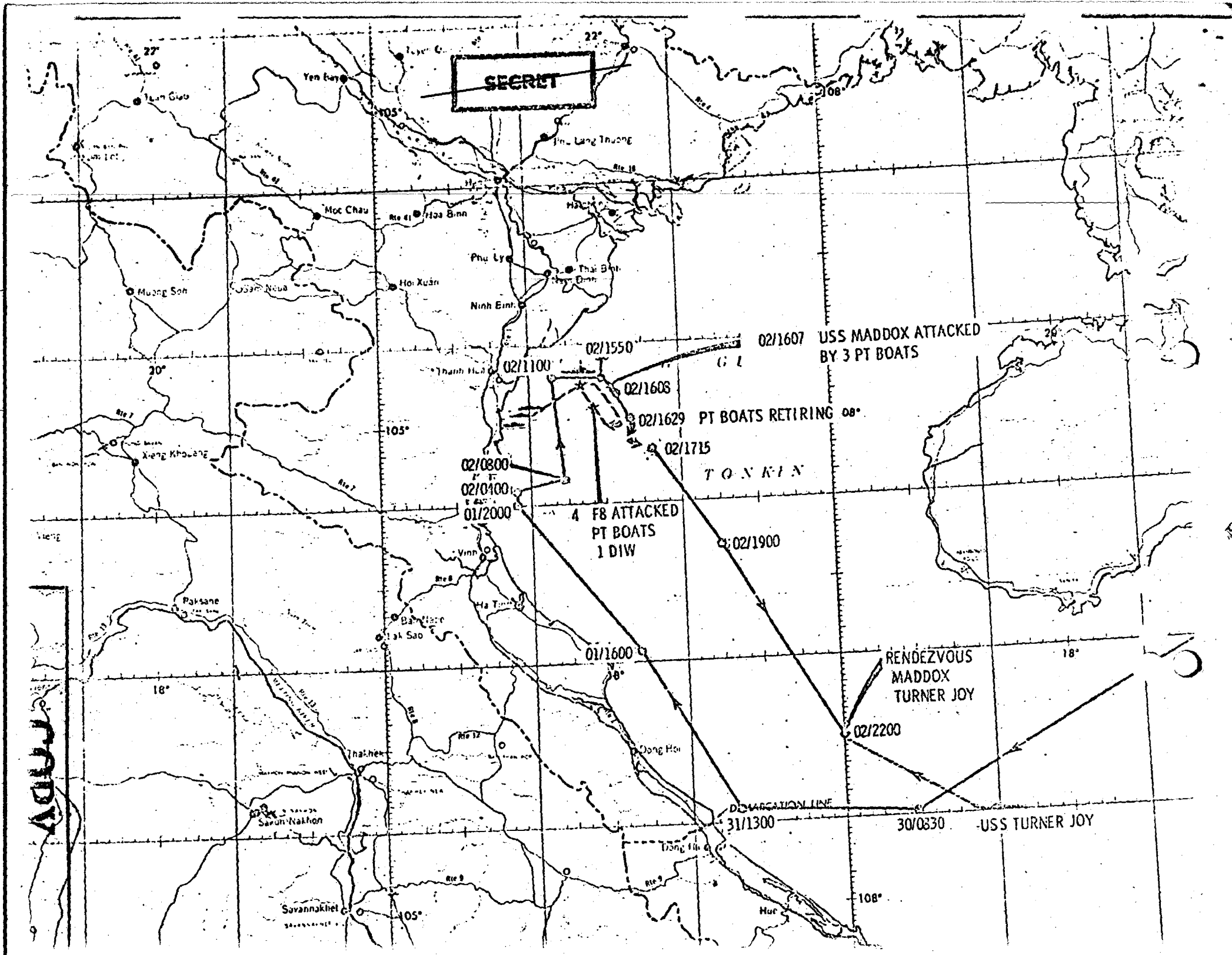
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10 August 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Subject: Chronology of Events Relating to DESOTO
Patrol Incidents in the Gulf of Tonkin
on 2 and 4 August 1964

Background - By CINCPAC's message 152123Z July, approval was requested to conduct a DESOTO Patrol in the Gulf of Tonkin during the period 31 July through 8 August. The last patrol into the area was made by the USS CRAIG (DD 885) during the period 28 February thru 10 March 1964. Limitations on the closest points of approach (CPA) for the USS CRAIG included:

- a. North Vietnamese (DRV) Coast 4 NM,
- b. Chinese Communist (CHICOM) mainland 15NM, and
- c. CHICOM off-shore islands 12NM.

- CINCPAC requested that the July - August patrol with the USS Maddox be cleared for CPA's as follows:

- a. North Vietnamese Coast 8 NM,
- b. North Vietnamese Islands, 4 NM, and
- c. CHICOM Coast 15NM.

- DRV and CHICOM reaction to the CRAIG patrol, noted below, had been quite limited:

- a. On 28 February, a Kronstadt - class patrol craft intercepted and paced the CRAIG for a short period;
- b. On 29 February, one unidentified aircraft remained 36 miles from the CRAIG for about two hours,
- c. On 1 March, Haiphong alerted the Master of a DRV ship, "The ship appearing is the enemy. Our Navy is presently pursuing and tracking,"
- d. On 2 March, Peking issued 280th serious warning.

- CINCPAC's 15 July proposal was approved as requested by the State Department, Deputy Secretary of Defense, and the Special Assistant to the President.

- First Incident (2 August)

a. Intercept of North Vietnamese communications (COMINT, Atch #1) on 1 August indicated that the MADDOX was being tracked by DRV naval elements. During the same day, the DRV Southern Fleet Base at BEN THUY radioed an unidentified surface craft that a decision had been made to "Fight the enemy tonight." At 1244H the next day, the DRV Northern Fleet base at Port Wallut was advised by Swatow Boat T-142, "Received Orders 146 - 142 DID use night to go together with enemy following to launch to sea. An attack was apparently imminent at 1412H when an unidentified shore station ordered the T-146 to turn back to path of the enemy . . . to attack." At

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1607H the MADDOX reported being attacked by three North Vietnamese craft and that it was opening fire.

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b. Subsequent DRV COMINT substantiated reports from the MADDOX that an attack had, in fact, occurred. COMINT reflections indicated that the attack had been carried out by DRV Torpedo Flotilla 135 comprised of T-333, T-336 and T-339. DRV communications revealed that the T-339 was sunk while the T-336 sustained heavy damages; the T-333 apparently escaped with only minor damages.

- Second Incident (4 August)

✓
a. On 4 August, DRV naval communications (COMINT, Atch #1) again indicated preparations were underway for another attack that night. The T-142 and T-146 (Swatow boats) were ordered to prepare for "Military Operations." The T-333, which was involved in the previous incident, was ordered to obtain oil to participate in the second attack. That night the MADDOX joined by the USS TURNER JOY, reported surface and air contacts on their radar screens. The surface contacts were later identified as hostile, and at 2240H the MADDOX opened fire. Subsequent reports from the destroyers indicated that possibly two PT boats had been sunk. This was later confirmed by a DRV message stating, "We sacrificed two comrades but all are brave and recognize our obligations." The same message reported that two enemy planes had been shot at and at least one damaged. A later report stated that "an enemy vessel perhaps wounded."

Map shows time of rendezvous as 2208H.
Identified as hostile by radar returns, 3 course changes, speed, direction.

b. Debriefing of the pilots, providing air coverage over the MADDOX and TURNER JOY, revealed that during the incident they observed gun flashes on the surface of the water and bursting light AA at their approximate flight altitude. It is possible that the DRV PT boats mistook the illumination flares being dropped by the aircraft as hits on the planes.

Swatow PT boats have some 20mm & 37mm guns.

- In response to Joint Chiefs of Staff instructions, a modified DESOTO Patrol was resumed on 7 August and completed on 8 August. The northern point for this modified track was 1841N. No DRV hostile reaction to the patrol was indicated during 7 - 8 August period. CINCPAC was authorized to withdraw the destroyers from the area due to Typhoon "IDA", however he was able to complete the modified patrol on 8 August prior to withdrawing.

- CINCPAC, by his message 080155Z, requested permission to conduct another full scale DESOTO Patrol into the Gulf of Tonkin during the period 12 - 17 August. The patrol was considered necessary in view of the recent attacks, the forced retirement from the Gulf due to Typhoon IDA, and that the intelligence objectives for the area north of 20°N latitude had not been fulfilled. The patrol has been disapproved at this time but will be considered at a later date.

Conclusions - Correlation of DRV communications traffic and situation summaries from the surface and air units involved, verifies that the two incidents not only

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place but the attacks were instigated by the DRV using Swatows and motor torpedo boats.

- Examination of tracks of the MADDOX/TURNER JOY and the units of OPLAN 34A indicates that there was no mutual interference. Additionally, the MADDOX/TURNER JOY were not in the 34A operations area when the two ships were attacked.

Ralph D. Steakley
RALPH D. STEAKLEY
Colonel, USAF
Chief, Joint Reconnaissance
Center
Operations Directorate

4 Attachments

1. Chronology of Events Derived from message traffic
2. Chart showing first incident
3. Chart showing second incident
4. Chart showing MADDOX/TURNER JOY tracks

Prepared by:

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Extension: OX 5-7356

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ATTACHMENT 1

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

<u>DATE/TIME</u> <u>(HOTEL)</u>	<u>SHIPS/PTF</u>	<u>POSITION</u>	<u>REMARKS</u>
28 July	USS WADDOX		Departed Keelung, Taiwan
300830	MADDOX	17-01N 108-29E	Sighted 2 PT type craft that passed ahead south-erly heading "NASTY CLASS" Two more sighted 15 min later one "same class" other appeared to be Soviet "P-6 class". CPA 3 miles.
301405	PTFs 2,3,5,6 <i>(These are South Vietnamese 344 jobs)</i>	Underway DANANG	
301440	PTFs 2,3,5,6	16-20N 108-20E	
301610	PTFs 2,3,5,6	17-00N 108-20E	
302110	PTFs 2,3,5,6	18-40 107-10	
302315	PTFs 2,3,5,6	19-00 106-16	PTF 2 and 5 then pro-ceeded direct to HON NIEU. PTFs 3 and 6 direc to HON ME.
310002	PTF 3,6	HON ME	PTFs commenced bombard-ment HON ME.
310037	PTFs 2,5	HON NIEU	PTFs commenced bombard-ment HON NIEU.
310048	PTFs 3,6	HON ME	PTFs departed from area
310110	PTFs 2,5	HON HIEU	PTFs departed from area
-	PTF 2,5	-	Returned to base along same route as approach
-	PTFs 3,6	-	Returned to base via 19-00N, 106-16E thence direct to Danang
310730	PTF 2	-	Suffered an engine casualty.
310955	PTF 6	DANANG	Arrived at base
311045	PTF 5	DANANG	Arrived at base
311055	PTF 3	DANANG	Arrived at base
311120	PTF 2	DANANG	Arrived at base
311300	MADDOX	17-05N 107-18E	Arrived at Pt ALPHA apparently fishing.

See this shown on maps attached.

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<u>DATE/TIME</u> <u>(HOTEL)</u>	<u>SHIPS/PTF</u>	<u>POSITION</u>	<u>REMARKS</u>
011600	MADDOX	18-04.9N 106-41.8E	
011801	<u>DERIVED FROM</u> <u>COMINT SOURCES</u>	-	A message was intercepted being passed from Naval Hqs at BEN THUY to surface vessel hull #377 which was interpreted as an apparent plan coordination of naval/artillery elements fire missions on nautical charts to support DRV naval patrols. It was interpreted as being a possible reaction to recent "enemy incursion in DRV waters".
012000	MADDOX	19-00N 105-54.3E	110 junks fishing craft sighted. USS MADDOX sent: "Contemplate serious reaction my movements in vicinity Pt. Charlie in near future. Received information indicating possible hostile actions".
012219	<u>DERIVED FROM</u> <u>COMINT SOURCES</u>	-	Message intercepted informing vessel T-142 "Turn on equipment. Enemy going in course of 52 degrees. Located 9NM from HON ME bearing 134".
012222	<u>DERIVED FROM</u> <u>COMINT SOURCES</u>	-	Vessel T-146 sent "Enemy located at 9NM from HON ME bearing 148°".
020027	<u>DERIVED FROM</u> <u>COMINT SOURCES</u>	-	BEN THUY sent a message to T-255 noting that it had been "decided to fight the enemy tonight when you receive directing orders". T-255 was queried: if she had received "the enemy's consecutive change from 52."
020152	<u>DERIVED FROM</u> <u>COMINT SOURCES</u>	-	Observation post on HON ME and Swatow Class PGM T-146 were informed that 01 1800 position of enemy vessel was 11 NM SE of HON ME bearing 168.
020255	<u>DERIVED FROM</u> <u>COMINT SOURCES</u>	-	Port Walcott informed same Swatow class vessel T-146 that three vessels from HON ME.

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<u>DATE/TIME</u>	<u>SHIPS/PTF</u>	<u>POSITION</u>	<u>REMARKS</u>
020400	MADDOX	19-05.1N 105-54E	
020413	<u>DERIVED FROM COMINT SOURCES</u>		Swatow Class PCM T-377 reported "the unit was launched at 0230G and was waiting northeast of HON NGU."
020448	MADDOX		MADDOX sent: "Have terminated orbit. Proceeding due East from Pt. "C" at ten knots until daylight. Heavy concentration of junks to North".
020645	MADDOX :		MADDOX reported: "Conditions unchanged. Unless otherwise directed an proceeding to Pt. DELTA."
021100	MADDOX	19-47N 106-08E	"Sighted approximately 75 junks. Will deviate from track as necessary to avoid passing through."
021230	MADDOX		MADDOX reported "sighted 3 PT craft 10 miles North of HON ME Island on a Southerly heading - - speed 20K. CPA 7NM. Evaluated as P-4s."
021244	<u>DERIVED FROM COMINT SOURCES</u>		T-142 to Port Wallut "received orders - 146, -142 DID (1 group missing) Use high speed to go together with enemy following to launch torpedoes."

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<u>DATE/TIME</u> <u>(HOTEL)</u>	<u>SHIPS/PTF</u>	<u>POSITION</u>	<u>REMARKS</u>
021315	MADDOX		MADDOX reported: "Sighting 2 poss. Swatow class North of HON ME on South-easterly heading. Speed 5K. All appeared to be heading for vicinity of HON 1."
021412	<u>DERIVED FROM</u> <u>COMINT SOURCES</u>	-	An unidentified source station possibly SAM SON 1943 30N/105-55E ordered the T-146 to "leave the T-135 and turn back to the enemy and attack."
021540	MADDOX		MADDOX "I am being approached by Hi speed craft with apparent intention of torpedo attack. I intend to open fire if necessary in self defense".
021547	<u>DERIVED FROM</u> <u>COMINT SOURCES</u>	-	Between 021547 thru 022230, DESOTO Patrol was under continuous surveillance by DRV naval elements. Several references to repulsing the enemy were noted. Track data reveals that three vessels, the T-142, T-146 and the T-135 close and instituted the action on the MADDOX.
021550	MADDOX	19-47N 106-31.1E	From MADDOX: "3 torpedo boats nearing on bearing 268° range 11.5 NM closing at 50 Kts."
021607	MADDOX		MADDOX: "Being attacked by 3 DRV PT craft. I am opening fire with 5 inch battery. Air support from TICO ETA 15 minutes."
021608	MADDOX	19-41.5N 106-35.6E	PT boats closed to 9000 yards, MADDOX turned to course 150° and fired 3 warning shots with 5" guns. Speed 27 knots. Torpedo boats continued to close, taken under continuous fire. Although receiving numerous hits and near misses, 2 boats closed to about 5000 yards and because of volume of gun fire made an ineffective launch. MADDOX turned away and torpedoes passed on starboard side from aft to forward.

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DATE/TIME SHIPS/PTF
(HOTEL)

POSITION

REMARKS

021508 (Cont'd)

Machine gun fire from PT resulted in one hit. After boats turned away MADDOX turned to pursue until TICO aircraft arrived. MADDOX directed aircraft to attack.

021608 MADDOX

Message from CTG 77.5 to COM7THFLT said:
"1. MADDOX 25K claims being pursued by 3 high speed 45Kt surface craft.
2. Orig providing 4 F-8E cover armed with Zuni and ammo.
3. Instructed not to open fire unless MADDOX or aircraft fired upon."

021621 MADDOX

Third torpedo boat had pulled almost abeam, and at time of receiving direct hit, dropped torpedo in water. Was not observed to run (torp

021622 DERIVED FROM
COMINT SOURCES

T-146 instructed T-142 (6157) order 135 "Do not make war during day- (Pretend to go to the shore then return to HON ME ".)

021629 MADDOX

From MADDOX: "PT craft completed torpedo attack and retired. Ship sustained no damage. Ships guns damaged one. Aircraft from TICO now attacking one craft. I am retiring to the Southeast".

021630 MADDOX

4 F-8s arrived over MADDOX and on request by MADDOX attacked 3 motor PT boats. Boats proceeding away at high speed in Northerly direction. 2 PT boats were approximately 10 miles North of MADDOX and 1 about 15 miles. The first F-8s attacked the North of PTs with Zuni. No hits on the first run. One aircraft hit but still in control, was told to orbit MADDOX.

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DATE/TIME SHIPS/PTF POSITION REMARKS
(HOTEL)

021530 (Cont'd)

Another Zuni run and 4 strafing attacks were made. Zuni did not hit target but hits were observed in the strafing runs. 2 PTFs not observed to slow down. Second 2 F-8s attacked Southerly single PT boat. Rockets were expended on first run but no hits observed. Each aircraft made two strafing runs, one aircraft against the North-erly pair. Hits were observed on all strafing runs and single PT boat was reported dead in water and burning near stern.

021641 MADDOX

MADDOX sent: "PT craft completed torpedo attack and retired. Ship sustained no damage. Ships guns damaged one. Aircraft from TICO now attacking 1 craft. I am retiring to Southeast".

021659

COM7THEFLT sent: "To MADDOX: Retire from area until situation clears and further advised. Do not pursue attacking craft. Fire as necessary in self defense. Report situation".

021700 DERIVED FROM
COMINT SOURCES

The T-142 and 146 turned back to HON ME Islands. At 022230H, messages were sent to the T-146 telling her to meet the T-142 and T-135 at HON ME Island, then go immediately to 1941N 10637E. After arriving they should investigate the area for a radius of 10NM for a DRV vessel which was wounded and lost because of enemy aircraft fire or because of engine trouble or out of fuel. After finding it they were directed to tow it back.

021707

COM7THEFLT to TICO: "Direct your NW picket (TURNER JOY) to close MADDOX best speed. Give MADDOX all practicable air support, while main-
taining own posture".

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<u>DATE/TIME</u> <u>(HOTEL)</u>	<u>SHIPS/PTF</u>	<u>POSITION</u>	<u>REMARKS</u>
021715	MADDOX	1921.5N 10646E	MADDOX retiring at best speed to rendezvous with TURNER JOY thence TICO. Anticipate rendezvous approximately 022000H.
021942	<u>DERIVED FROM COMINT SOURCES</u>		DRV vessel T-142 passed the following recap from its ships log for 2 Aug: "1525 - Saw the 135 attack the enemy". "1630 - Were ordered to turn around and return to concentrate and to communicate with 165".
031527	MADDOX	19-00N 10553E	MADDOX reports: "Air radar now operative. Detected probable skin head radar bearing 330T at 031420 indicating possible surface surveillance of my movement".
031610	PTFs 1,5	DANANG	Underway from base.
031616	PTFs 2,6	DANANG	Underway from base.
031645	PTFs 1,2,5,6	1620N 10820E	All PTFs in company.
031704	<u>DERIVED FROM COMINT SOURCES</u>	-	The T-142 sent the following message to an unidentified station: "At 1420G (1520H) HON ME reported 2 enemy ships bearing 170° range 25NM course 0°.
031727	MADDOX	1947N 10608E	MADDOX reports: "No DRV military craft sighted. CTG 77.5 provided continuous air support throughout patrol.
031758	<u>DERIVED FROM COMINT SOURCES</u>	-	The T-142 reports the 1845H position of the DESOTO destroyers as 20NM off HON ME.
031818	<u>DERIVED FROM COMINT SOURCES</u>	-	DRV merchant cargo THONG NHAT passed urgent message to Viet NEWIS NATH maritime transport service "031625 at a distance of 18NM from VAL SOV SON, there is 1 prop aircraft 303 from the direction. They will fly to observe the ship after after that to fly directly in the direction of the ship will speak."
031845	PTFs 1,2,5,6	1700N 10820E	PTF 2 engine casualty, commenced return to base.

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<u>DATE/TIME</u> <u>(HOTEL)</u>	<u>SHIPS/PTF</u>	<u>POSITION</u>	<u>REMARKS</u>
032000	MADDOX	1921.2N 10647.9E	MADDOX sends: "I intend to proceed Southeast to 1842N 10730E thence North to position 1853N 10733E thence West to Point DELL arriving and commencing line patrol to Point CHARLIE at 041300."
032110	PTF 2	DANANG	Returned to base.
032222	PTFs 1,5,6	1758N 10711E	PTFs commenced independent approach to targets.
032320	MADDOX	1845N 10716E	MADDOX reports: "Hold surface contact 012T range 38.5 miles. Contact has paralleled my movement including ZIG ZAG for past hour. TURNER JOY holds ECM contact evaluated as Skir. Head radar on same bearing. Strongly suspect shadow by block patrol/PT craft."
032352	PTF 6	1752N 10627E	Commenced fire on military complex located at South bank of RON River.
032400	PTF 1	1757.30N 10630.20E	Commenced fire on VINH SON radar site.
032400	PTF 5	1758.00N 10630.00E	Commenced fire on VINH SON radar site.
040002	PTF 6	-	Ceased fire and departed from area.
040020	PTF 6	-	Pursued by enemy craft.
040025	PTFs 1,5	-	Ceased fire, departed from area, and commenced return to base along approach route.
040100	PTF 6	-	Outdistanced pursuing craft and commenced return to base along approach route.
040625	PTF 6	DANANG	Arrived at base.
040650	PTF 5	DANANG	Arrived at base.
040715	PTF 1	DANANG	Arrived at base.
041300	MADDOX	-	MADDOX sends: "Vicinity of Point DELL. Commencing line patrol to Pt. CHARLIE. Will remain North of 1910N per ref. A. I

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DATE/TIME SHIPS/PTF
(HOTEL)

POSITION

REMARKS

041300 (Cont'd)

intend withdraw to East at 041730. Air support in the area. No significant sighting/detection. Suspect shadow continued South after my turn North at 040100. Last contact at 040400 range 78 miles'

041400

MADDOX

1947N
10619E

MADDOX sends: "Vicinity of Pt. DELTA patrolling to 1910N. Suspect shadow 15 miles to the East. Contact has paralleled my movements for the past four hours. Unable to have continuous overhead low CAP from the TICO due to distance."

041650

DERIVED FROM
COMINT SOURCES

In a series of messages released by T-142 to HAI PHONG on 4 Aug sized up the after attack report of the attack on the "MADDOX".

The 3 MTBs which were engaged, T-333, T-336 and the T-339 comprised what is believed to be MTB Sq 135. Damage result in our report is as follows: "MTB 333 with 3 holes; possible life boat damage; lube oil pressure is low; auxiliary engine damage, after pipe damage suspected.

MTB 339: Sunk as reported by T-333.

MTB-336: Heavily damaged with many holes. Our oil lines damaged and possible oil contamination. Tank gun barrel damaged; 2 men wounded. (This MTB was towed to possibly VAN NOA.)"

041701

DERIVED FROM
COMINT SOURCES

HAI PHONG had informed Swatow Class PGH T-146 and BACH DANG there are two objectives, enemy attack vessels located

at 1952.25N 10619.25E
at 1321H 1936N
10619.25E 1445H

041710

DERIVED FROM
COMINT SOURCES

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vessels T-142 of DESOTO destroyers location:
Time 1445H position
1936.23N 10619.30E.

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<u>DATE/TIME</u> <u>(HOTEL)</u>	<u>SHIPS/PTF</u>	<u>POSITION</u>	<u>REMARKS</u>
041940	<u>DERIVED FROM</u> <u>COMINT SOURCES</u>	-	HAI PHONG informed vessel T-142 (Swatow Class) to make ready for military operations for the night of 4 Aug. The sister ship T-146 has also received similar orders. COMMENT: Message indicated that all efforts were being made to include MTB T-333 in this operation as soon as additional oil can be obtained for that vessel. (MTB T-333 participated in original attack.)
042040	MADDOX	1910.7N 10700E	From MADDOX: "Received information indicating attack by PGN/P-4. (PTs or Swatow Proceeding Southeast at best speed". <i>Maddo comint copy this is same info</i>
042049			7THFLT sent to MADDOX: "At first light 5 Aug proceed to intercept original track between Pt. CHARLIE and DELTA at 1910N. Remain on this track during daylight hours. Further instructions to follow".
042136			TICO reports: "MADDOX reports two unidentified surface vessels (Skunks) and three unidentified aircraft (Bogies)."
042208			MADDOX reports: "Unidentified aircraft disappeared from radar screen. Unidentified surface contacts not closing this time, maintaining distance of 27 miles.
042234			TICO reports: "Two original Skunks opened to 40 miles. Three new Skunks contacted at 13 miles. Closed to 11 miles evaluated as hostile. CAP/STRIKE/PHOTO overhead under control of MADDOX."
042240	MADDOX		MADDOX reports: "Commenced firing on COPY LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON LIBRARY

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<u>DATE/TIME</u> <u>(HOTEL)</u>	<u>SHIPS/PTF</u>	<u>POSITION</u>	<u>REMARKS</u>
042248	MADDOX		MADDOX reports: "Two Skunks on beam closed to 10 miles, 2 South at 40 miles closing at relative speed of 70 knots."
042252	MADDOX		MADDOX reports: "Am under continuous torpedo attack."
042315	MADDOX		MADDOX reports: "Have thus far successfully avoided at least six torpedoes. Small craft continuing attacks. Believe one sunk by TURNER JOY. At least two remain".
042340	MADDOX		MADDOX reports: "PT from West continued attacking run. MADDOX opened fire. PT launched torpedo".
042350	MADDOX	1817N 10732E	MADDOX reports: "Am under attack again."
042354	<u>DERIVED FROM</u> <u>COMINT SOURCES</u>	-	Swatow Class PGN T-142 reported to MY DUC (1952. 45N 10557E) "We shot at two enemy airplanes and at least one was damaged. We sacrificed two comrade (possibly two boats) but all are brave and recognize our obligations Also reported to same station that "an enemy aircraft was observed falling into the sea. Enemy vessel perhaps wounded." <i>may have mistaken as an dropped this for aircraft falling</i>

Derived from COMINT SOURCES

Since 4 August have had additional reports of RVV preparation for further attacks on the vessels.

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