

SECRET

EDT

SURPRISE AND
ANTI AIRCRAFT FIRE

GROUP	TIME	REMARKS	REMARKS
1. 4 A-1's	10:49 D 11:35	VINH 11:25	VINH-1ST STRIKE 6 PT BOATS SIGHTED 4 MODERATELY DAMAGED 2 SLIGHTLY DAMAGED 8 POL TANKS DESTROYED 2 AA GUNS DESTROYED
2. 6 A-4's	LP 12:15 LD 12:32	VINH 11:25	VINH-2ND STRIKE 2-4 ADDITIONAL POL TANKS DESTROYED
3. 6 F-8's	LD 12:15 LD 12:32	VINH 11:25	6 AA GUNS DESTROYED
4. 4 F-8's		LOE 4:03 VNH 4:45	QUANG KHE 7 PT BOATS SIGHTED, 4 SEVERELY DAMAGED 1 MODERATELY
5. 8 A-4's		LOE 4:03 VINH 4:45	HON ME 6 PT BOATS SIGHTED 3 PT BOATS DESTROYED 3 MODERATELY DAMAGED
6. 6 F-8's	LD 12:34	QUANG KHE 11:15	5 PT BOATS SIGHTED 8 DESTROYED * AIRCRAFT SHOT DOWN ON SECOND PASS. BOATS AT ANCHOR. 2ND IN COLUMN (ALVAREZ)
7. 2 A-4's		LOE 4:15 HON ME 4:15 TS 15	LOC CHAD 5 PT BOATS SIGHTED 3 SERIOUSLY DAMAGED 3 MODERATELY DAMAGED * AIRCRAFT SHOT DOWN ON 2ND PASS. BOATS OPENED FIRE 3RD IN COLUMN (SATHEN) ONE A-1 DAMAGED, (BU) SAFELY RECOVERED
8. 4 A-1's	LOE 1:00	HON BAY 13:40	
9. 10 A-4's	LOE 2:30	* HON BAY 13:40	
10. 5 A-4's	LOE 2:30	LOC CHAD 13:25	
11. 4 A-1's	LOE 1:00	* LOC CHAD 13:25	
59 TOTAL			

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DECLASSIFIED

Authority 000000 3/3/00
By 000000, NARS, Date 4/21/77

L = LAUNCH TIME
D = DEPART FOR TARGET
R = RADAR SCREEN PENETRATION
T = OVER TARGET & STRIKE

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CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS
TUESDAY, AUGUST 4
and
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 5, 1964
TONKIN GULF STRIKE

THIRD DRAFT

AUGUST 25, 1964

INTRODUCTION

This is a chronological account of the events of Tuesday, August 4, 1964 and Wednesday, August 5, 1964 as they relate to the attacks on the destroyers MADDOX and C. TURNER JOY in international waters by patrol boats of the North Vietnamese Navy and the subsequently executed retaliatory strikes against the North Vietnamese by naval aircraft from the USS CONSTELLATION and TICONDEROGA.

No chronology, of course, can ever hope to capture the full flavor and intensity of these two days in August. The events were complex, the pressures were great. Throughout, however, a number of basic themes emerge. There is the search for options, as word of the second attack on the destroyers filters in early on the morning of August 4th. These options must be shaped not only to the immediate problem of dealing swiftly and sharply with the PT Boat Bases but must, in the selection of additional reinforcements, deal as well with the long range strategic implications of the situation. There is a period of carefully refining these options for the President, the ultimate decision resting in his hands. Planning the strike occupies a good part of the afternoon of the 4th, coupled with the insistent demand that the attacks on the destroyers be verified clearly and convincingly. Throughout the evening, word is awaited for the first launch, signalling the start of the retaliatory response. The launches began at 10:43 ~~p.m.~~ PM, EDT, and the President goes on the air within the hour to announce our action to the world. Finally, the strike itself is completed, a remarkably successful operation.

The chronology has relied substantially on cables, recordings, maps, news releases, minutes of relevant meetings, and discussions with Messrs. McNamara, Vance, Bundy, McNaughton and General Wheeler.

It must be remembered that much of the action reported is occurring simultaneously at different levels - the Pentagon, in CINCPAC Headquarters Honolulu, Tonkin Gulf, the South China Sea, and the target areas. Most of these locations are in different time zones, and reports of the action arrive at different intervals. For ease of reference, however, all of the times, unless otherwise indicated, are Washington Eastern Daylight Time.

Saigon time is 12 hours later than EDT. Gulf of Tonkin time is 13 hours later, but the Destroyer in the Gulf of Tonkin kept Saigon time. CINCPAC (Honolulu) time is 6 hours earlier than EDT. Thus, for example, 10:00 AM in Washington is 10:00 PM Saigon time and 4:00 AM Honolulu time.

The various abbreviations used throughout are these:

- CINCPAC - Commander in Chief, Pacific - Admiral Sharp
- CINCPACFLT - Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet - Admiral Moore
- COMSEVENTHFLT - Commander, Seventh Fleet - Admiral Johnson

TUESDAY

AUGUST 4th, 1964

7:40 AM: (7:40 PM, August 4, Saigon Time) -- The MADDOX reports that an attack appears imminent from actions taken by unidentified vessels. The MADDOX, in company with the C. TURNER JOY, is heading southeast near the center of the Gulf of Tonkin in international waters approximately 65 miles from the nearest land. These ships immediately go on the alert. (NMCC receives this report at about 9:30 AM.)

8:13 AM: -- First word of a possible attack on the MADDOX is received at the Pentagon by the DIA Indications Center over the phone from NSA. While on the phone, a copy of the NSA field unit message arrives and copies are delivered, sometime ^{about} ~~between 8:30 a.m. and~~ 9:00 a.m. to the Secretary of Defense McNamara, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Wheeler. The message states that there are "imminent plans of DRV naval action possibly against DeSoto mission" gathered from COMINT.

8:36 AM: (8:36 PM, August 4, Saigon Time) -- The MADDOX establishes its first radar contacts with two unidentified surface vessels and three unidentified aircraft. U. S. fighter aircraft are then launched from the USS TICONDEROGA to provide the MADDOX and the TURNER JOY with protection against possible attacks from the unidentified vessels and aircraft, in accordance with the President's previously issued directives. At this time, the TICONDEROGA is located approximately 100 nautical miles East North East of Da Nang. (NMCC receives this report at about 10:30 AM.)

9:08 AM: (9:08 PM, August 4, Saigon Time) -- The MADDOX reports that the unidentified aircraft have disappeared from its radar screen but that the surface vessels are still remaining at a distance. U. S. aircraft from the TICONDEROGA arrive and commence defensive patrol over the MADDOX and the TURNER JOY. (NMCC receives this report at 11:04 AM.)

9:12 AM: McNamara calls the President and tells him about the NSA/DIA intelligence warning he has just received that the MADDOX is on the alert again, with the presence of hostile ships reported.

9:19 AM: Wheeler is now in receipt of several messages, including the NSA/DIA cable, indicating that the MADDOX may be under attack. He calls Admiral Grimm, NMCC, and asks whether Grimm has seen any messages on the attack and whether CINCPAC will be able to respond effectively. Grimm reports that he has one message, but has not talked to CINCPAC. Wheeler then says he will call CINCPAC himself.

9:23 AM: (3:23 AM, August 4, CINCPAC time) -- Wheeler calls General McCutcheon (CINCPAC J-3) and asks whether he has received any word on an impending attack on the destroyers. McCutcheon says he has no word, but will immediately check. Wheeler is insistent that the destroyers "clobber" the attackers, and make every effort to destroy the hostile ships, using additional air support, if required.

* * * *

9:25 AM - 11:25 AM
TUESDAY, AUGUST 4TH
EARLY MEETINGS AT PENTAGON

McNamara, Deputy Secretary Vance, General Burchinal, Colonel Jones, and Admiral Mustin of the Joint Staff meet at the Pentagon beginning at 9:25 AM as reports of the attack on the destroyers come in. As the situation grows more intense, possible levels and time of retaliation are discussed, and target folders are examined. High on the list are the PT boat and supporting POL installations, but other targets such as airfields, industrial complexes and bridges are also scrutinized. Captain Miller of the Navy, a mine expert, is also asked to join the meeting and the possibility of mining one or more of the North Vietnamese important ports. Here it is pointed out that the mines would have to be brought into the carriers from Subic Bay, the Philippines. McNamara orders that mines be brought to the carriers as soon as possible. Burchinal informs McNamara that a retaliatory attack can take place at first light. McNamara, during this time, calls the President, informs him that a retaliatory attack is being planned, and tells the President that he will call Secretary Rusk and Presidential Assistant Bundy to join him in preparing a number of options to be presented to the President as soon as possible. *

*McNamara made three calls to the President during this period at 9:43 AM, 10:53 AM and 11:06 AM

During these discussions, McNamara develops four options for a sharp limited blow and one option for continuous pressure against the North Vietnamese. The four options for the sharp limited blow are:

1. Air strikes against PT boats and their bases.
2. Air strikes against petroleum installations.
3. Air strikes on bridges.
4. Air strikes on prestige targets, such as ~~air fields~~.

The option for continuing pressure against the North Vietnamese is to mine their coastline.

McNamara, about 11:00 AM, summons Rusk, Bundy, and the JCS and they arrive shortly thereafter.

*certain budget
and steel
plants*

9:26 AM (9:26 PM, August 4, Saigon Time): The carriers report to CINCPAC ~~requesting~~ ^{STARTING} that pursuant to JCS orders issued on August 2, they have launched a combat air patrol over the destroyers, consisting of 2 F-8s, 2 A-3s, and 4 A-1s.

9:30 AM (9:30 PM, August 4, Saigon Time): Additional vessels are observed on the MADDOX radar screens, and these vessels begin to close rapidly on the destroyer patrol at speeds in excess of 40 knots. As the attacking craft continue to close rapidly from the west and south, the MADDOX evaluates their intentions as hostile. (NMCC receives this message at 11:20.)

9:32 AM (3:32 AM, August 4, CINCPAC Time): Grimm (NMCC) contacts the CINCPAC duty officer, Major Rosenbaum. Grimm reports that the NMCC has just received word from the MADDOX that a possible attack appears imminent from PT boats, wants to know if air cover is available, and what has been done to supply the destroyers with an effective response capability. Grimm indicates that additional measures, beyond those directly involving the destroyers, are being considered in Washington. The duty officer has no information about the situation but adds that McCutcheon is on his way in. Grimm says that he will arrange for an open line between CINCPAC and Washington, and tells the CINCPAC representative that this is a "hot one."

9:52 AM (9:50 PM, August 4, Saigon Time): The destroyers report that they are under continuous torpedo attack and are engaged in defensive

counterfire against North Vietnamese patrol boats. (NMCC receives this message at 11:39 AM and 11:42 AM.)

10:04 AM (4:04 AM, August 4, CINCPAC Time): McCutcheon calls Burchinal, who is then in McNamara's office. Burchinal tells him that the Pentagon has just received a "flash" that the destroyers are under attack. McCutcheon replies that he has not seen it yet, but indicates that the fleet and the Carrier Task Force have been alerted. The TICONDEROGA, about 15 minutes away from the destroyers by air, is alerted. So is the CONSTELLATION, which had left Hong Kong yesterday and is headed south. Burchinal states that the CONSTELLATION will be ordered to move into position off South Vietnam, in the vicinity of the TICONDEROGA. He also tells McCutcheon that a possible retaliatory strike is being considered against North Vietnamese bases and asks him to take a look at some of the possible targets if, in fact, an attack is carried out against the destroyers. Burchinal mentions that McNamara is considering a new set of rules of engagement.

10:15 AM (10:15 PM, August 4, Saigon Time): The destroyers report that they have avoided torpedoes and have sunk one of the attacking craft. (NMCC receives this at 11:52 AM.)

10:19 AM (4:19 AM, August 4, CINCPAC Time): McNamara calls Sharp and asks whether he has seen the messages regarding a possible attack on the MADDOX. Sharp says he has just arrived at the CINCPAC Command Center and that the messages are in. They discuss the "kill"

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capability of the MADDOX and the TURNER JOY. McNamara is particularly interested in assuring that the destroyers have whatever they need in the way of complete support, air and sea. McNamara tells Sharp to make it "perfectly clear" to the destroyers that the objective is to "destroy the attacking craft." McNamara also indicates that a modification of the rules of engagement is being sent to Sharp. (See 10:33 entry below.)

10:33 AM: A message, personally signed McNamara, is sent from the JCS to CINCPAC modifying the existing rules of engagement for the destroyers and their supporting aircraft. Under the old rules, pursuit of attacking forces into hostile waters or airspace was not authorized (JCS Message 7681, August 2, 1964) and the destroyers were to approach the North Vietnamese coastline no closer than 11 miles. Combat air patrol was restricted to daylight hours and maintained seaward of the destroyers so as to preclude any possibility of overflying North Vietnam. (JCS Message 7680, July 2, 1964) Under the new rules, (JCS 7700), the closest approach to the North Vietnam coastline for the destroyer patrol ^{we} would be 11 nautical miles, and in the event of a hostile attack, aircraft only were authorized to pursue and attack the hostile forces up to the three mile limit of the North Vietnamese coastline. The message also directed that the CONSTALLATION be moved into the area off South Vietnam, with the exact location at the discretion of the commander.

(Note: At 5:19 AM, August 2, the CONSTALLATION was ordered to slip quietly out of Hong Kong. The CONSTALLATION departed Hong Kong at 6:01 PM and proceeded south toward the Gulf of Tonkin.)

10:42 AM: (10:42 PM, August 4, Saigon Time) -- The destroyers report that they have evaded additional torpedoes and have sunk another

of the attacking craft. Other protective aircraft have arrived overhead, but weather and darkness are hampering their activities. (NMCC receives this message at 11:37 AM.)

10:52 AM: (10:52 PM, August 4, Saigon Time) -- The MADDOX reports that the destroyers are still under attack. (NMCC receives this message at 12:24 PM.)

~~10:53 AM: McNamara calls the President.~~

10:55 AM: (4:55 AM, August 4, CINCPAC time) -- Miller of Joint Staff calls CINCPAC and directs that mines be placed aboard the TICONDEROGA.

10:59 AM: (4:59 AM, August 4, CINCPAC time) -- Sharp calls Burchinal in McNamara's office, and a discussion of possible options for a retaliatory strike ensues. Sharp suggests HON NE, HON ME, BEN THUY, and QUANG KHE. Burchinal indicates that a number of options along these and other lines are being considered. Sharp says that a strike could be carried out - "All you have to do is say so" - , states that an armed reconnaissance along the North Vietnamese coast would be advantageous, and points out that the CONSTELLATION, about 350 miles from the destroyers, is coming in to provide support. Sharp says, "She could go in there right now and support them . . . we've speeded her up to get her down there as fast as possible." There is also talk of providing the carriers with a mining capability. Burchinal tells Sharp that McNamara wants him to get a mining capability on the TICONDEROGA as quickly as possible. Sharp says that

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it might take about 48 hours to achieve the capability, the problem being to get the mines aboard the carriers. He also reports that he has a message indicating that the destroyers are under continuous torpedo attacks. ~~(Note: Since actual word of this situation had not yet reached Washington, Sharp is filling in McNamara on the details.)~~ *check this*

~~11:06 AM: McNamara calls the President.~~

11:18 AM: (5:18 AM, August 4, CINCPAC time) -- Sharp calls Burchinal and provides him with the latest situation report on the attack. According to Sharp, the destroyers were exchanging fire with the patrol boats and the MADDOX had dodged at least five torpedoes. Sharp then suggests that the LOC CHOU estuary be added to any list of targets since he now has information it is being used as a hiding place for the PT boats. When Sharp ~~again~~ mentions the desirability of an armed reconnaissance "at first light" along the coast line, Burchinal makes it absolutely clear that McNamara is seriously considering severer action. He also indicates that there is a desire to act "at the first light background." He tells Sharp that Secretary of State Rusk is on his way to the Pentagon, and that meetings will be held later at the White House. Sharp reiterates that it will take about 48 hours to attain a mining capability.

11:30 AM: (11:30 PM, August 4, Saigon Time) -- The CONSTELLATION receives a preliminary alerting message stating that for planning purposes "there is a strong possibility you will be directed on short notice to lay

on armed reconnaissance at sea against Swatows or reprisal attack against Swatow bases such as QUANG KHE, BEN THUY or PHUC LOI. " At this time, the CONSTELLATION is heading in a south southwest direction to join the TICONDEROGA.

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11:20 AM - 12:30 PM
TUESDAY, AUGUST 4
JCS MEET

BUNDY AND RUSK ARRIVE AT PENTAGON

11:20 AM: At McNamara's call, the JCS meet in McNamara's dining room with Vance and McNamara. Present are Acting Chairman LeMay, Admiral McDonald, General Johnson, General Greene, General Goodpaster, Burchinal, Mustin and Joint Staff assistants. McNamara informs the JCS that he has called the President and that he is interested in a quick capability to respond.

11:38 AM: Rusk and Greene (Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Far Eastern Affairs) arrive at the JCS meeting. At McNamara's direction, Burchinal briefs Rusk.

11:40 AM: Presidential Assistant Bundy arrives at JCS meeting. McNamara briefs Bundy. McNamara describes the five options listed on page _____ above. McNamara informs the group that he has issued orders

to have mines moved from Subic Bay into Da Nang. There is a discussion of retaliatory measures. McNamara and Bundy discuss the advantages and disadvantages of a sharp limited blow such as air strikes and/or the continuing pressure of mining the North Vietnamese coast. McNamara tells LeMay that the JCS should work up recommendations for immediate action, then recommended actions for 24, 48 and 60 hours ahead, with special emphasis on reinforcements, such as the movement of B-57s into South Vietnam and fighter-interceptors into the Philippines.

12:04 PM: McNamara, Rusk, Bundy, Greene (State Dept.) and Vance move to McNamara's office, while the JCS continue meeting in McNamara's dining room. At this meeting the options are essentially refined to three:

1. Sharp limited strikes against such targets as PT boats, PT bases, oil depots, etc.
2. Continuing pressure, i. e., mining the Vietnam coast.
3. A combination of both.

12:20 PM: McNamara, Rusk, Bundy and Greene depart for White House. Vance goes into McNamara's dining room to ask JCS if it would make any difference whether the retaliatory strikes were conducted at first light. JCS confirm that attack could be accomplished at first light and tell Vance that the time of attack would make no difference from a military standpoint but that fewer people would be at the PT boat bases and supporting installations at first light.

12:25 PM: Vance departs for the White House. The JCS continue meeting until 1:49 PM. During their meeting, at JCS direction, Burnchinal calls McNamara at White House to recommend the sharp limited response option.

* * * *

12:40 - 3:00 PM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING

LUNCH WITH THE PRESIDENT

A regularly scheduled National Security Meeting centering on the Cyprus situation is in progress when McNamara, Rusk, and Bundy arrive at the White House. McNamara briefs the participants, ^{1/} including the President, on the available details of the attack on the destroyers. Rusk indicates that he, McNamara, and the JCS are developing a set of options, but that they are not sufficiently refined for presentation at that time.

At a lunch, which began about 1:04 PM and ended about 2:50 PM, following the NSC meeting, the types of response and the targets are key topics. Rusk, McNamara, McCone, Bundy, and Vance are with the President.

1/ Present are Robert Kennedy, McCone, McDermott, Hall, Talbot, Dillon, Rowan, Reedy, Valenti, Clifton, Bromley Smith, and Komer.

The President agrees that a firm, swift retaliatory strike must be carried out. Here, a general consensus is formed on the approach finally taken in the JCS message to CINCPAC, developed later that afternoon, ordering the strikes into execution against the PT boats located at bases PORT WALLUT, HON GAY, PHUC LOI and QUANG KHE and LOC CHAO estuary and the oil depot VINH. (See the 5:19 PM entry below.) The mining options as well as an attack on HAIPHONG are rejected. The President asks how long it would take to execute the strike. McNamara estimates from the advice he has received that a strike could be launched at about 7:00 PM, (7:00 AM Saigon time). The President suggests that McNamara call the JCS to confirm the time, but McNamara says ~~he will check it out~~ on his return to the Pentagon.

*but he wants to work it out carefully with
 **** the JCS*

12:22 PM: Sharp calls Burchinal and gives him the latest situation report on the torpedo firings at the destroyers. Estimates are that 3 to 6 PT Boats are engaged, with two reported sunk, no enemy aircraft are reported in the area, and aircraft (10 A-1s, 2 F-8s) from the CONSTELLATION are on station over the destroyers. Sharp asks that the destroyers be given permission to pursue PT Boats to the three-mile limit, and that aircraft be permitted to engage in hot pursuit over North Vietnamese territory. Burchinal advises him that the rules of engagement are being considered

by McNamara and the JCS. Burchinal advises Sharp to dig out target material on PHOC LOI, QUANG KHE, and the VINH oil complex.

12:32 PM: (12:32 AM Saigon time, August 5th) -- The destroyers report that at least two enemy craft have been sunk, but that low ceilings continue to hamper the aircraft operations. (NMCC receives this report about 1 1/2 to 2 hours later.)

12:54 PM: (12:54 AM Saigon time, August 5th) -- In addition to the torpedo attack, the TURNER JOY reports that during the engagement she was fired upon by automatic weapons while being illuminated by searchlights. (NMCC receives this report about 1 1/2 to 2 hours later.)

12:57 P.M.: (12:57 AM Saigon time, August 5th) -- CINCPAC sends message to JCS recommending that authority be granted to conduct punitive U.S. air strikes as soon as possible against BEN THUY, HON ME, QUANG KHE, and LOC CHAO. (NMCC receives this message at ____ PM.)

1:01 PM: (7:01 AM, August 4, CINCPAC TIME) - - Sharp calls Burchinal and reports two jet aircraft have been sighted flying out of HAINAN as far south as DA NANG. Sharp says that we cannot afford to permit hostile aircraft to fly over carriers. Sharp then quotes proposed message on rules of engagement for aircraft which would grant authority to declare hostile and engage any North Vietnamese/ChiCom aircraft whose actions show within a "reasonable certainty" that an attack on U. S.

forces is intended. Burchinal agrees that the message should be sent if needed for the security of CINCPAC Forces, will note Sharp's comments for the JCS, and tells Sharp that a meeting is now going on at the White House.

1:03 PM: Bob Hayes at the White House Situation Room calls Col. Nickols at Pentagon Command Center and advises that the NSC meeting has just broken up. McNamara, McCone, Rusk, Bundy, and Vance have now gone to lunch with the President. Situation Room wants to be sure that the latest reports from the destroyers are forwarded at once.

1:24 PM: McNamara, still at White House, calls Burchinal at Pentagon. Burchinal tells him that Sharp had reported the presence of hostile aircraft (probably IL 28's) flying out of HAINAN and was issuing a "to engage" order if the security of his forces was threatened by enemy air (see the 1:01 PM entry above). McNamara is insistent that faster situation reports be obtained from the MADDIX and asks that Sharp try to contact the destroyer by radio. Burchinal advises that the JCS had selected that option involving air strikes against PHUC LOI, QUANG KHE, LOC CHAO, and the VINH-PHUC LOI oil complex.

1:27 PM (1:27 AM, August 5, Saigon Time) -- The Destroyer Division Commander on the MADDOX sends a "Flash" message to CINCPACFLT, with JCS on the information list. The "Flash" states that a review of the action makes many reported contacts and torpedoes fired "appear doubtful." "Freak weather effects" on radar, and "over-eager" sonarmen may have accounted for many reports. "No visual sightings" have been reported by the MADDOX, and the Commander suggests that a "complete evaluation" be undertaken before any further action. (NMCC receives this report about 1 1/2 to 2 hours later.) (Note: Sharp repeats the substance of this message to Burchinal. See the 1:59 PM and 2:08 PM entries below.)

1:28 PM (7:28 AM, August 4, CINCPAC Time) -- Following up McNamara's request, Burchinal calls Sharp and ask for a status report on the engagement. Sharp reports that two PT Boats have been sunk but is uncertain as to the total number involved and says that some 13 torpedoes have been launched. Also, he reports that there is some indication of enemy aircraft in the area but says that aircraft from both the TICONDEROGA and CONSTALLATION are on the scene. Burchinal asks Sharp to obtain a direct radio report from the ships engaged.

1:30 PM (1:30 AM, August 5, Saigon Time): The destroyers report that the attacking craft had apparently broken off the engagement. The

MADDOX and TURNER JOY are directed to resume their patrol in the Gulf of Tonkin at daylight on the 5th of August. (NMCC receives this message about 1 1/2 to 2 hours later.)

1:59 PM (7:59 AM, August 4, CINCPAC Time): Sharp calls Burchinal and says that he cannot contact ships by voice radio, but tells him that he has sent a message requesting that situation reports be expedited. As for the communication link between CINCPAC and the destroyers, Sharp says that "our Flash messages have ~~checked~~^S up the current. I have just told everybody to knock off using FLASH." Sharp says that the last message from the ships reports that freak weather is affecting radar performance, with many contacts and torpedo runs doubtful. Sharp says that the MADDOX itself has reported no visual sightings, and over-anxious sonarmen may have accounted for what they erroneously thought to be torpedoes.

2:08 PM (8:08 AM, August 4, CINCPAC Time): Sharp advises Burchinal that the latest situation report indicates that three PT boats have been sunk, and that the weather is deteriorating and hampering aircraft operations. Sharp expresses the view that there is no doubt that a torpedo attack did occur, but adds that many of the reported torpedo attacks may have been due to inaccurate sonar reports. "Whenever they get keyed up on a thing like this, everything they hear on the sonar is ^{says} a torpedo," Sharp.

3:00 PM - 5:15 PM

Tuesday, August 4

MEETINGS AT THE PENTAGON
THE STRIKE EXECUTE MESSAGE IS DRAFTED

at about 3:25, Burchinal alerted Shop by phone, and gave him the targets to be attacked and the time of attack. 21

At the Pentagon, the Joint Chiefs begin their meeting at 3:00 PM.^{1/} McNamara and Vance arrive at 3:06 PM and inform the Chiefs that the President wants the strikes to take place at 7:00 PM Washington time, *if possible,* and at the following targets: PT boats and bases at QUANT KHE, PHOC LOI, PORT WALLUT, HON GAY and LOC CHAO, and the oil complex at VINH. The JCS agree with this proposal. At 4:42 PM, McNamara and Vance return to the JCS meeting. McNamara states that the time of the strike is important, for there will be no announcement until the strike gets under way. McNamara reviews the strike message which originally reads "By 0700 local time 5 August or as soon thereafter as weather permits conduct attack" and changes it to "By 0700 local 5 August conduct a one-time maximum effort attack," ~~The weather portion is placed in another part of the message,~~ and ~~states~~ that "if weather precludes meeting the above time of attack, proceed soonest, and notify JCS ASAP." (The major part of the message is quoted in the 5:19 PM entry below.) Also during this meeting, the deployment and alerting of reinforcements to the area is considered, telling proof of our desire to escalate if we had to. These are divided into three

1/ Throughout the afternoon, Wheeler, LeMay, McDonald, Johnson, Greene Burchinal, Jackson, Carpenter, Palmer, Buse, Manhart, Goodpaster, Forbes, Bottomly, Flickinger, Mustin and Carroll are present at various intervals.

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 South China Sea; a Marine Special Landing Force (1600 men, 24 helicopters, the Valley Force 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 aCVA 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-105nsquadron 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; 2F-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.

3:30 PM (9:30 AM, August 4, CINCPAC Time): Mustin of the Joint Staff calls Sharp and tells him to be on the alert since a strike execute message is being prepared and would be transmitted as soon as released.

3:34 PM: Mustin calls General Smith, Deputy Director for Operations, Joint Staff and informs him that the JCS are in session, that a strike execute message is now being typed for final review by the JCS and Sharp knows it is coming. Mustin asks that the line be held open for an immediate transmission of the strike execute message to Sharp.

4:08 PM (10:08 AM, August 4, CINCPAC Time) -- McNamara calls Sharp and asks for the latest information on the destroyer attack. Sharp responds by saying that although he has just received a sum-up situation report from the destroy Task Force Commander it "indicates a little doubt on just exactly what went on." McNamara wants know if there is a possibility that no attack occurred, and Sharp replies "Yes, I would say that there is a slight possibility." Sharp says he is going to ask Moore to get a definite report which "should come in within an hour." McNamara sums up the situation by stating that "We've got problems on timing here... we don't want to release news of what happened without saying what we are going to do; we don't want to say what we are going to do before we do it." Sharp recommends that any execute notice be held until "we have a definite indication that this happened."

McNamara then observes that the execute is scheduled "for 7 p.m. our time which is three hours from now." Sharp says this is local right, it being set for "7 o'clock out there." McNamara says that even

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if definite confirmation of the attack is not forthcoming for another 2 hours, an hour would still remain and the execute order could then be issued. McNamara states: "It seems to me we ought to go ahead on that basis: get the pilots briefed, get the planes armed, get everything ready to go." Sharp agrees.

4:14 PM (4:14 AM, August 5, Saigon time; 10:14 AM, August 4, CINCPAC Time) -- CINCPACFLT transmits an alert message to COMSEVENTHFLT and the TICONDEROGA and CONSTELLATION to be prepared to strike targets at 7:00 PM (7:00 AM Saigon time). The designated targets are the PT Boat bases at QUANT KHE, BEN THUY, HON NE Island and SONG MA Estuary, HON GAY and PORT WALLUT; any identified North Vietnamese PT Boats located at sea; and the VINH petroleum storage depot. The latter is labeled the number one target priority. The message indicates that it would be "desirable" that all targets be struck simultaneously, but adds that authority is granted to recycle aircraft as necessary to strike the two southern targets (QUANT KHE and BEN THUY) with a second launch if the Forces on the TICONDEROGA and CONSTELLATION are inadequate. It concludes by specifying that this is a preparatory order, and that launching should not be accomplished until an execute order is received. (TICONDEROGA receives this message at 4:55 PM.)

4:35 PM (4:35 AM, August 5, Saigon time; 10:35 AM, August 4, CINCPAC Time): CINCPAC transmits an official alert message to CINCPACFLT to prepare to execute air strikes with a "high level damage expectancy" at 7:00 PM (7:00 AM local time), against (1) PORT WALLUT, (2) BEN THUY (VINH), (3) HON GAY, (4) QUANG KHE, and (5) LOC CHAO. The message specified that the Vinh POL should be struck with a "very high level of expected damage."

4:40 PM (10:40 AM, August 4, CINCPAC Time): Sharp calls Burchinal and is informed that the JCS strike execute message is in the McNamara office ready to go, but that there is still a slight doubt whether the destroyers were in fact attacked. Sharp will try to get more definite information from Admiral Moore, but states that he has now seen reports of visual sightings of cockpit lights pursuing near the MADDOX and another report of the destroyers being illuminated and fired against. Burchinal then asks Sharp whether he continues to believe the launch could be accomplished at 7:00 PM. Sharp responds that "it will be tight," but "I think so." He adds, however, that "it may be just as well to wait an hour or so, if we have to, to be certain" an attack had occurred. Sharp then suggests it might be necessary to recycle some of the aircraft for a second strike against VINH and Burchinal says "this will be all right," if needed. Sharp estimates that about 70 aircraft in all will be involved in the strikes.

4:49 PM (10:49 AM, August 4, CINCPAC Time): The JCS strike execute message to CINCPAC is transmitted by direct teletype from the NMCC to the CINCPAC Command Center. (CINCPAC receives this message at _____.)

4:55 PM (4:55 AM, August 5, Saigon Time) TICONDEROGA

receives the CINCPACFLT alert message directing COMSEVENTHFLT to be prepared at 7:00 PM to strike the PT Boats at designated locations. The TICONDEROGA is already on an alert status as a result of the PT Boat attacks on the destroyers. Upon receipt of this alert message, its pilots and Weapons Planning Board commence to plan for the strikes. A message is also sent from TICONDEROGA to Naval Air Station at Cubi Point, Philippines (some 500 miles away), directing all ready to go A-1 and A-4 aircraft to return to the TICONDEROGA as soon as possible. This is necessary because the complement of aircraft on the TICONDEROGA has to be augmented by additional strike aircraft for the maximum strike effort. A number of the aircraft on the TICONDEROGA had been used previously for reconnaissance (Yankee Team) efforts over Laos, and could not appropriately be used for the strike.

5:00 PM -- Colonel Jones of the Joint Staff, in the JCS conference room, calls the NMCC Pacific desk at Pentagon (Commander Hathaway) and says that the JSC would like a forecast of the weather over the target area at 7:00 AM local time.

4:47 PM - 6:00 PM

Tuesday, August 4

JCS-SECDEF MEETING TO DETERMINE
IF ATTACK ON DESTROYERS OCCURRED

4:47 PM: McNamara, Vance and the JCS meet to marshal the evidence to overcome lack of a clear and convincing showing that an attack on the destroyers had in fact occurred. They conclude that an attack had taken place. In this regard five factors are considered:

1. The [~]TURNER JOY was illuminated when fired on by automatic weapons.
2. One of the destroyers observed cockpit lights.
3. A PGM 142 shot at two U.S. aircraft. (From COMINT)
4. A North Vietnamese announcement that two of its boats were "sacrificed." (From COMINT)
5. Sharp's determination that there was indeed an attack.

Burchinal, at Wheeler's request, tells McNamara that the 7:00 PM strike time will not be met because the carriers are operating on a time which makes 8:00 PM here 7:00 AM their time.

5:19 PM: -- JCS strike execute message is retransmitted flash precedence as JCS 7720 to CINCPAC. It states that by 7:00 PM EDT (0700 local time) a one-time maximum effort attack against the following targets should be conducted: PT Boats located at PORT WALLUT (later cancelled because of weather), HON GAY, PHUC LOI and QUANG KHE and at LOC CHAO. The specified targets are boats, POL at VINH, and

an armed reconnaissance against PT Boats beyond the three mile limit. The message cautions that if the weather precludes meeting the above time of attack, the commander is to "proceed soonest" and to notify the JCS as soon as possible.

5:23 PM (11:23 AM, August 4, CINCPAC Time): Sharp calls Burchinal and says there is no doubt that an attack on the destroyers had occurred, for he has intercepted a North Vietnamese message stating that two of its PT Boats were "sacrificed." Sharp is now satisfied with all the evidence, what with several additional reports from the TURNER JOY. Sharp then mentions that the attack will be coming off at 8:00 PM Washington-time not 7:00 PM but still at 7:00 AM local time. The reason is that the CINCPAC execute message used "HOTEL" time (Saigon Time) a 12 hour difference), whereas the carriers (based on a CINCPACFLT message) were shooting for the operation on "GOLF" time (a 13 hour difference), giving them an extra hour. Sharp says that he will convert his strike message to "GOLF" time.

*Convert
strike time?*

5:29 PM: Mustin calls the NMCC (General Smith) and indicates that some confusion exists over the time in the Gulf of Tonkin. He asks Smith to get on the teletype and straighten out the matter.

5:33 PM (11:33 AM, August 4, CINCPAC Time): Smith calls McCutcheon at CINCPAC and asks for a breakdown of the times between the carriers, Saigon, and Washington. McCutcheon replies that when

the Washington time is 8:00 PM, the local time for the carriers would be 7:00 AM the next morning, a 13-hour differential. When the Washington time is 7:00 PM, the local time in Saigon would be 7:00 AM the next morning, a 12-hour differential. McCutcheon reports that Sharp, realizing that they can use that extra hour, has told the carriers to use the 13-hour difference in time.

5:39 PM (1:39 PM CINCPAC time): Sharp calls Burchinal and says that his understanding is that launch time will be 7:00 AM, August 5 (carrier time), or 8:00 PM, August 4, Washington time.

5:51 PM: McNamara, Vance, and Wheeler leave the meeting for the White House.

6:10 PM (6:10 AM, August 5, Saigon time): The TICONDEROGA receives a copy of the JCS strike execute message.

6:27 PM (6:27 AM, August 5, Saigon time): CINCPAC transmits strike execute message to CINCPACFLT. (See 4:35 PM entry, August 4.)

* * * *

6:15 PM - 6:38 PM
Tuesday, August 4
NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING
6:38 PM - 6:45 PM
SPECIAL MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT

1/

The National Security Council^{1/} is convened as McNamara, Vance and Wheeler arrive at the White House. McNamara outlines the four-part plan:

1/ Present at this meeting are the President, Speaker McCormack, McCone, Cline, McNaughton, Rusk, Ball, William Bundy, Dillon, Rowan, Reedy, McG. Bundy, Jenkins, Moyers, Valenti, Bromley Smith and Cater.

1. The strike against the PT boat bases and the supporting installations ~~(but not against Haiphong, because it is too far north and too close to Red China)~~ and armed reconnaissance along the North Vietnamese coast.
2. Sending reinforcements to the area, an expression of our will to escalate.
3. Presidential announcement of these actions.

4. A Joint Congressional Resolution in support of ^{if necessary,} these actions. *first action over further*

✓ The President asks the NSC members if they have any objection to the plan. All NCS members approve the plan. The President then approves the plan. McNamara informs the President that the previously estimated 7:00 PM launch time will not be met, but that the launch time is now estimated to be 8:00 PM. McNamara then recommends that no public statement be released until 9:00 PM, the estimated time over target of the first strike.

The NSC meeting breaks up at 6:38. McNamara, Rusk, and Bundy meet with the President in his office, prior to the Congressional leadership meeting which starts at 6:45. Vance returns to Pentagon and meets with Burchinal to determine what reinforcements can be moved without political clearance from other countries and to put in motion the political clearance process where required. Vance authorizes the movement of units not requiring



[political clearance.]

* * * *

August 4,

6:07 PM: (12:07 AM CINCINNATI Time) -- Sharp calls Burchinal and repeats that he is satisfied that the destroyers were attacked. ^{Sharp} ~~He~~ now has the JCS strike execute message. Burchinal says that McNamara, now at the White House, is also satisfied that the attacks on the destroyers have occurred and had made the statement just a short time ago that the "show is now on the road." After agreeing that suppressive fire "was part of the game," Sharp then states that the press should not get the story at 7:00 PM. Burchinal replies that we will insure that nothing ^{comes} ~~gets~~ out until "we know that you're off target." Sharp estimates this to be 9:00 PM, one hour after launch. Burchinal emphasizes that any announcement will be delayed so that there is "no possibility of anyone reading" the strike. The matter of deploying additional forces to the theater is also discussed.

* * * *

6:45 PM - 8:45 PM
THEATRE, BUCHINALE
CONGRESSIONAL LEADERSHIP MEETING

General Wheeler was one of those in attendance at the leadership meeting. In his recent testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, Wheeler stated that the President told the Congressmen that he would make a public announcement but left the time "up in the air because he did not want to make the announcement too soon." Wheeler then recalled that the timing of the announcement may have actually been settled either in a preliminary meeting between McNamara and the President ^(around 6:38 PM)

[Handwritten initials]

or at the leadership meeting itself. In any event, Wheeler said that the decision was made that a statement could be released "at the time the aircraft took off from carriers, in other words when the strikes were enroute." Chairman Carl Vinson said he would verify this because "I sat there and I heard the whole discussion." In short, Wheeler remembered that the President "was going to wait until it was safe to make the announcement... it would not be made prior to the launching of the aircraft." McNamara ~~remembered that the President said~~ *recollection is in accord with General Wheeler's.*



* * *

6:56 PM: (6:56 AM, August 5, Saigon Time) -- The CONSTELLATION receives a copy of the JCS strike execute message.

7:22 PM: (7:22 AM, August 5, Saigon Time) -- The HICONDEROGA receives the CINCPACFLT execute message.

7:30 PM: (7:30 AM, August 5, Saigon Time) -- The CONSTELLATION receives the CINCPAC message which passes the JCS strike message with instructions not to execute until directed. (Note: According to Mustin, the "hold" notice was presumably prompted by CINCPAC's desire to make certain that the second attack on the MADDOX did in fact occur. Once this was confirmed the strike execute message was issued (see the 7:50 PM entry below).

7:49 PM: (7:49 AM, August 5, Saigon time) -- The CONSTELLATION receives its target assignments.

7:50 PM: (7:50 AM, August 5, Saigon time) -- The CONSTELLATION receives the CINCPAC strike execute message.

7:59 PM: (1:59 PM, August 4, CINCPAC time) -- General Wisman, NMCC Pacific Desk at Pentagon, calls the CINCPAC Duty Officer, Lt. Colonel Lindsey, and asks for the take-off times, numbers and types of planes in the carrier strike. Lindsey replies there is nothing yet on the strikes, although there is some combat air patrol activity in relation to the earlier attacks on the destroyers.

8:05 PM: Wheeler, in the Cabinet room at the White House, calls Burchinal at the Pentagon and asks if anything is happening. Burchinal says that he has a clear line open, but no word has been received. Wheeler wants to know as soon as the word arrives that the aircraft have been launched.

8:39 PM: (2:39 PM, August 4, CINCPAC time) -- McNamara, back from the White House, calls Sharp and asks whether the carriers have launched their aircraft. Sharp replies that he has received no word yet, but this is probably because the carriers will provide a coordinated report when the launch is completed. McNamara, however, says that the launch is already 40 minutes after the ordered time of take-off and wants Sharp to contact the carriers directly by radio. McNamara then states: "Let's get an immediate statement from them if we can. Part of the problem here is just hanging on this news, you see. The President has to make a statement to the people and I am holding him back from making it, but we're forty minutes past the time I told him we would launch."

~~than 40 minutes having already elapsed beyond the launch time given to~~
~~the President.~~ Sharp estimates, although he does not have the launch plan,
that it would take the aircraft about an hour to reach the target. McNamara
asks Sharp to find out when they are launching and the time of the first
flights over the targets.

9:00 PM (9:00 AM, August 5, Saigon Time); The picture of air
situation at this time and thereafter as reflected on North Vietnamese and
Chinese radar is described at Appendix 1.

9:09 PM (3:09 PM, August 4, CINCPAC Time); Sharp calls McNamara
at his office and says that one carrier (perhaps both) would not be able
to launch for another 50 minutes (10:00 PM Washington time). "In other
words, they couldn't make the time," reports Sharp. Sharp explains that
the compression of time and the communications lag are the reasons, and
thinks that the last estimated times over target, with a 10:00 PM launch
will be about 12:00 midnight, Washington time. McNamara then asks what
Sharp thinks about a Presidential statement issued about the time of
launch that would say this: "At this moment air action is now in execu-
tion against gun boats and supporting facilities in and near ports
of North Vietnam which have been used in support of hostile operations."
Sharp thinks it would not be a "good idea" because it will alert the
enemy, "No doubt about it." McNamara says that the enemy would be
alerted as soon as the aircraft start coming into the coast. Sharp says,
"They won't know where they're going. Of course they will be alerted

as soon as they get in the air because Hainan is going to pick them up and so will the other people. But they won't know where they are going. I wouldn't recommend it."

9:22 PM (3:22 PM, August 4, CINCPAC Time): Sharp tells McNamara that PT boats (presumably those returning from attack on the destroyers) were taking sanctuary within the three-mile limit. McNamara recommends that the aircraft proceed to hit designated targets, but authorizes striking any boats sighted on the way in. He says, "Get them off...That is the main thing."

9:28 PM (9:29 AM, August 5, Saigon Time): The CONSTELLATION submits its strike plan for approval to the Carrier Task Force Commander.

10:00 - 10:30 PM: During this period, McNamara calls Bundy to discuss the Presidential announcement. *As a result of* ~~in line with~~ his earlier conversation with Sharp, McNamara recommends that Bundy delete the entire sentence which reads: "At this moment ~~air~~ air action is now in execution against gun boats and supporting vessels in and near 4 ports of North Vietnam which have been used in support of hostile operations." *Bundy disagrees and tries to work out some language changes that will meet McNamara's point about giving away the targets.* The Presidential statement as given over the air at 11:40 PM, however, read this way:

"Air action is now in execution against gun boats and certain supporting vessels of North Vietnam which have been used in these hostile operations."

Thus, ~~only~~ the words "in and near 4 ports" were deleted, with the rest of the sentence allowed to remain substantially in tact.

10:06 PM: After trying to reach Senator Goldwater for several hours, the President finally gets through and informs him of the decision to retaliate. Immediately after talking to the President, Goldwater issues a statement to the wire services that "I am sure every American will subscribe to the action outlined in the President's statement. I believe it is the only thing he can do under the circumstances." This is released almost an hour before the President goes before the nation to announce the punitive strike.

10:26 PM: -- McNamara calls Sharp and asks whether the aircraft are launched yet. Sharp says he has no firm word, but is "sure" one carrier (TICONDEROGA) "is going to go, or has gone" at 10:00 PM Washington time. According to Sharp, however, the other carrier (CONSTELLATION) "is not going to launch" one of its groups (the slower propeller driven A-1 aircraft) until 1:00 AM Washington Time and the other (the jets) until 2:30 AM, with a time over target for both groups estimated around 3:15 AM, apparently because "she is not able to get in position in time." Sharp explains this by stating that the CONSTELLATION was coming from the north and had to get into position by coming around Hainan to strike her assigned northern targets. In order to get into position, "she had to use a good many of her aircraft for refuelers." Sharp repeats that the TICONDEROGA "should have gotten off a half hour ago (10:00 PM) but "we haven't heard yet." McNamara tells Sharp to make "damⁿ sure she got off" by getting in touch with her right away. As to the CONSTELLATION, McNamara asks how long it would take its aircraft to reach the target. Sharp replies the farthest target will be reached in about five hours from now. McNamara then says that no announcement here "is going to influence what they think about those aircraft coming in because you will already have launched about a half hour ago against the other targets." Sharp agrees "as long as they don't know what the targets are." McNamara states that "I have cut that out of the statement," and Sharp says "there will still be the element of surprise^{...} as long as you don't say what [the targets] are."

10:40 PM: (10:40 AM, August 5th Saigon time) -- CONSTELLATION recovers the last group of A-1 aircraft from combat air patrol over the destroyers.

10:43 PM: (10:43 AM, August 5th Saigon time) -- TICONDEROGA launches four A-1 strike aircraft with instructions to orbit overhead. This is necessary so that the carrier deck could be free for the landing of A-4 aircraft from Cubi Point then orbiting overhead and to permit coordination of prop and jet strikes to ensure a simultaneous arrival time over the target. The A-1 launching marks the beginning of the attack, and within the hour these four A-1's depart for VINH. (NMGC receives this message at PM)

(4:46 PM, AUGUST 4, (CINCPAC Time))

10:46 PM: McNamara calls Sharp again, seeking confirmation of the launch times. Sharp says that he has been trying to reach the Task Force but "it is just a question of getting through this circuit and apparently the circuit is a little jammed." He reports that no word has yet been received, and McNamara suggests he radio in the clear, asking the TICONDEROGA if it did "what it said it would do at 10:00." McNamara states that the President wants to go on the air at 11:15, but should not go on "unless he has a confirmation of the launch". McNamara then wants Sharp to secure half-hourly post-strike reports, once the launching occurs.

10:48 PM: -- Clifton at the White House calls General Wisman, the Deputy Director for Operations, Joint Staff and states that new launch

times for the CONSTELLATION have been received which are considerably later than the TICONDEROGA's, that the President is shooting for an 11:15 PM statement, and asks how much would be revealed by the announcement. Wisman states that Sharp agrees with a Presidential announcement now that McNamara has recommended the deletion of specific portions dealing with the targets.

11:05 PM: -- Wisman calls Burchinal and reports that nothing is airborne yet, that the CONSTELLATION is not in position, and that several more hours would be required for its first launch. There is now the possibility, according to Wisman, that the CONSTELLATION because of weather may have to scrub its operation. He recognizes this would tip our hand if one force goes in, and says that there can be no scrubbing of the mission until the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs are first notified.

11:11 PM: -- McNamara calls Sharp, and is told "it is just that I don't think that there is any question that they have launched. It is just a question of getting the report." McNamara, with regard to the weather conditions and possible cancellation of the CONSTELLATION strikes, states, ~~that we cannot sit here as a nation and let them attack us on the high seas and not do something.~~ ^{As a nation we just can't} So I think the President has to say we are going to retaliate." McNamara asks if there is "any reason why the CONSTELLATION couldn't launch against the southern targets," including the

check
given

oil depot." Sharp responds that this is "exactly what we would do," although he mentions that the weather to the south is not good and beginning to deteriorate.

11:20 PM: (5:20 P.M, August 4, CINCPAC time) -- Sharp calls McNamara and says it is now confirmed. "She [the TICONDEROGA] got her planes off at 0243 (Zulu time) (10:43³ PM Washington time; 10:43 AM Saigon time). Sharp indicates that it will take the aircraft about an hour and fifty minutes from now to reach their targets. The attack will be in two waves, both scheduled to arrive at the same time.

11:27 PM: Commander Henson of the NMCC Pacific Desk at the Pentagon notifies the White House Situation Room that the TICONDEROGA launched its first aircraft at 10:43 PM, with an estimated time over the target at 1:10 AM.

11:35 PM: (11:35 AM, August 5th Saigon time) -- The CONSTELLATION advises the Carrier Task Force Commander of its intended launch position for strikes with a simultaneous time over target at 3:45 AM.

* * * *

11:40 PM
TUESDAY, AUGUST 4
PRESIDENT GOES ON THE AIR

The President goes on radio and TV and states:

"Repeated acts of violence against the armed forces of the United
not
States must be met /only with alert defense, but with positive reply.

That reply is being given as I speak to you. Air action is now in execution

against gun boats and certain supporting facilities of North Vietnam which have been used in these hostile operations."

The ^{decision} recommendation to go on the air is based on these considerations:

1. By 11:34, U. S. Naval Aircraft had been in the air approximately one hour.
2. Hanoi and Hainan through their radar, had then received indications of the attack.
3. The time remaining before the aircraft arrived over the targets would probably not permit the North Vietnamese to move their boats to sea or to alert their forces.
4. It was important that our country learn of the manner in which their government was responding to the attacks on its vessels from their President, rather than from Hanoi which was expected to announce the attack at any moment.
5. It was desirable that the North Vietnamese government and others be told as soon as possible the limited, punitive, character of the attack.
6. It was important that the North Vietnamese and Chinese Communists know that this was the firm and deliberate response of the U. S. Government to an unprovoked aggressive act, and not the act of a local commander.

11:51 PM: (11:51 AM, August 5th, Saigon Time) -- Sharp calls Wheeler and they discuss the possibilities of a restrike against VINH, with Wheeler saying that he will take it up with McNamara.

11:54 PM: (11:54 AM, August 5th, Saigon time) -- The CONSTELLATION receives a message that TICONDEROGA had launched its aircraft at 10:43 PM, with scheduled arrival over target at 1:10 AM.

WEDNESDAY
AUGUST 5, 1964

12:00 Midnight: (Noon, August 5th Saigon time) -- Wheeler calls Sharp to discuss the recycling of the VINH strike. Sharp indicates that the recycling may only have to be off the TICONDEROGA, but wants the added flexibility of recycling with both carriers. "The problem" says Sharp, "is that it takes so damn long to get the word out to them." Sharp also tells Wheeler that both carriers had been conducting air operations all night before in supporting the MADDOX and TURNER JOY and as a result "they are kinda pooped out." The CONSTELLATION "didn't make as much headway as she would have because she apparently had to turn in the other direction for a landing and launching . . . so that she is behind her hoped for position . . . so that's the reason she launched late." The TICONDEROGA, on the other hand, "is also quite a long run from where she is to these various targets; and she being a small carrier doesn't have as many airplanes either." Sharp indicates that the CONSTELLATION may have to scrub only the northernmost target (Port Wallut) and this because of a combination of factors, ^{such as} the target's distance, ~~its close proximity to~~ ~~Port Wallut~~ and the adverse weather.

12:02 AM - 12:30 AM

McNAMARA PRESS CONFERENCE

Secretary McNamara holds a press conference in which he states
~~that some of the action "has already taken place"~~ ^{and describes the action} He goes on to add
 that "U.S. Naval aircraft from the carriers TICONDEROGA and
 CONSTELLATION . . . have already conducted air strikes against
 the North Vietnamese bases from

*the
action
being
done.*

which these PT boats have operated. Our naval aircraft have also conducted strikes against certain other targets which have directly supported the operation of the PT boats."

12:15 AM: (12:15 PM, August 5th, Saigon Time) -- Six A-4's and six F-8's are launched from the TICONDEROGA flying to VINH at an altitude of 25,000 feet. The target is 320 nautical miles away.

12:34 AM: (12:34 PM, August 5th, Saigon Time) -- TICONDEROGA launches six F-8's which depart for QUANG KHE, flying at an altitude of 25,000 feet. Target is 250 nautical miles away.

12:38 AM: Wheeler calls Sharp and tells him that he has discussed the recycle with McNamara. Wheeler's major concern is that the attacks must not be "open-ended" affairs. Three rules are set for the recycle: First, up to 20 aircraft may be used; second, the only target will be VINH; and third, the attack should be launched no later than 3:00 AM, Washington time. Sharp thinks that the 3:00 AM time is cutting it too short, with closer to 4:00 AM as the more realistic hour. Sharp adds that he will do his best to compress the time and will recycle as quickly as possible. Wheeler indicates that he will pass this on to McNamara.

12:43 AM: Wheeler calls Sharp and tells him that the 4:00 AM recycle time is acceptable to McNamara, but Sharp now indicates launch on the recycle could not begin until 5-6:00 AM. Wheeler says this is too late,

and they arrive at an agreement that Sharp would launch what he could up to 4:00 AM and would then have to cease.

1:00 AM: (1:00 PM, August 5th, Saigon time), -- CONSTELLATION launches four A-1's which depart for HON GAY, flying at an altitude of from 1,000 - 5,000 feet. HON GAY is 360 nautical miles away.

CONSTELLATION also launches four A-1's which depart for LOC CHAO, flying at an altitude of 1,000 - 5,000 feet. LOC CHAO is 330 nautical miles.

1:11 AM: (1:11 PM, August 5, Saigon time; 7:11 PM August 4, CINCPAC time) -- CINCPAC duty officer calls Lt. Col. Smith in McNamara's office and says that the estimated times over target for the TICONDEROGA will be 1:15 AM for the first and 1:25 AM for the second. "Everything is on track," he reports.

1:15 AM: (1:15 PM, August 5th, Saigon time) -- TICONDEROGA's six F-8's launched at 12:34 AM strike QUANG KHE with 20 mm shells and 5" rockets. There is no AA fire. Seven boats are sighted, four are severely damaged and one moderately. There are no U. S. losses. (NMCC received this report at _____ AM.)

1:25 AM: (1:25 PM, August 5th, Saigon Time) -- TICONDEROGA's four A-1's launched at 10:43 PM, six A-4's launched at 12:15 AM and six F-8's launched at 12:15 AM strike at the VINH - BEN THUY - PHUC LOI complex. They report moderate AA fire. Of the six boats sighted, four are

moderately damaged and two lightly damaged. Eight Pol tanks and two AA guns are destroyed. There are no U.S. losses. The ordnance used ranges from 1,000 lb. bombs to 5" Zuni rockets to 2.75 mm rockets. (NMCC receives this message at _____ AM.)

2:16 AM: Sharp calls McNamara's office and gives the first strike report to Col. Moody. He states that VINH has been struck, the oil installation is burning fiercely, the four PT boats in the harbor have all been hit, with one dead in the water. Heavy flak has been experienced and one F-8 is hit, headed for Da Nang. Moody says Vance will be promptly advised of these developments. Vance is informed immediately.

2:30 AM: (2:30 PM, August 5th, Saigon time) -- The CONSTELLATION launches ten A-4's and two F-4's which depart for HON GAY at an altitude of 25,000 - 30,000 feet. HON GAY is 360 nautical miles away. The CONSTELLATION also launches five A-4's and three F-4's which then depart for LOC CHAO, flying at an altitude of 25,000 - 30,000 feet. LOC CHAO is 330 nautical miles away. (NMCC receives this message at _____ AM)

3:25 AM: (3:25 PM, August 5th, Saigon time) -- CONSTELLATION's four A-1's launched at 1:00 AM and its five A-4's and three F-4's launched at 2:30 AM strike LOC CHAO. They report moderate AA fire (20 mm from the boats). The boats are not underway. Of the five PT boats sighted, two are damaged seriously and three moderately. One A-1 aircraft (Sather's, third in the column) is shot down. One A-1 is damaged, but returns to carrier safely. The attacks lasts 25 minutes. 2.75" rockets and 20 mm strafing attacks utilized. (NMCC receives this message at _____ AM.)

3:40 AM: (3:40 PM, August 5th, Saigon Time) -- CONSTELLATION's four A-1's launched at 1:00 AM and its ten A-4's and two F-4's launched at 2:30 AM strike HON GAY. They report moderate to heavy AA fire. Of the five boats sighted, five are destroyed. The boats do not get underway until after the attack started. Alvarez' A-4 aircraft, the second in column, is shot down while on a second pass against boats at anchor. The attack lasts 25 minutes, with 2.75" rockets and 20 mm strafing attacks utilized. (The NMCC received the strike message at _____)

3:43 AM: Sharp tells Wisman of the Joint Staff that it might be best to pull the MADDOX and C. TURNER JOY out of their patrol because they are low on fuel and ammunition, and the North Vietnamese have already been given a "good punishment". Sharp adds that to keep the destroyers on station might invite further attacks, perhaps even a loss. Wisman says this will require JCS approval.

3:58 AM: McCutcheon at CINCPAC calls Wisman about pulling the destroyers out. McCutcheon says that since these destroyers have special equipment and could not readily be replaced, but that the ships have had several sleepless nights. The relief of these ships would be temporary only, about a 24 hour rest, after the strikes had ceased. Wisman says he will talk to Burchinal.

4:03 AM: (4:03 PM, August 5th, Saigon time) -- TICONDEROGA launches four F-8's and eight A-4's which depart for the restrike against VINH.

4:15 AM: (4:15 PM, August 5th, Saigon time) -- TICONDEROGA launches two A-4's which depart for HON ME at an altitude of 25,000 feet.

4:41 AM: Wisman calls Burchinal and tells him that an A-1 and A-4 from the CONSTELLATION have been lost over HON GAY. (Note: actually, one was lost over HON GAY, another over LOC CHOU.) Burchinal is the first to be notified, and he suggests that Wisman inform the Chiefs and the Secretary of Defense. Vance is informed immediately.

4:45 AM: (4:45 PM, August 5th, Saigon Time) -- TICONDEROGA's four F-8's and eight A-4's, all launched at 4:03 AM, strike VINH. They report heavy AA fire from the additional AA guns brought into position after first strike, but they destroy two to four Pol tanks and six AA guns. There are no U.S. losses. (NMCC receives this message at _____ AM.)

5:15 AM: (5:15 PM, August 5th, Saigon Time) -- TICONDEROGA's two A-4's, launched at 4:15 AM, strike HON ME with 20 mm shells and rockets. They report no AA fire, and surprise is achieved. Of the six boats sighted, three are destroyed, three moderately damaged, and one is forced to beach. There are no U.S. losses.

6:08 AM: Wisman calls Mustin and says the operation is just about wound up and was a "pretty good effort, highly successful." He states that Sharp was able to accomplish the recycle against VINH and that the destroyer patrol is being pulled out, with approval, for replenishment.

(2:30 AM, August 5, CINCPAC Time)

8:30 AM: -- McNamara calls General Milton to check on the results of the punitive strike, based on present information. Here, these facts are confirmed:

CINCPAC

- 64 strike sorties were launched (with 59 planes) against 4 North Vietnamese patrol boat bases, including the LOC CHAO estuary, and the supporting oil storage depot at VINH.
- About 25 PT boats were destroyed or damaged, in addition to damage to their bases and supporting facilities.
- An estimated 90% of the VINH oil depot, containing 14 tanks and 10% of the petroleum capacity of North Vietnam, was destroyed. Smoke was seen rising to 14,000 feet.
- Two U.S. Navy aircraft were lost and two damaged.

MASTER

22

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

TUESDAY, AUGUST 4

and

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 5, 1964

TONKIN GULF STRIKE

SECOND DRAFT

①

AUGUST 24, 1964

INTRODUCTION

This is a chronological account of the events of Tuesday, August 4, 1964 and Wednesday, August 5, 1964 as they relate to the attacks on the destroyers MADDOX and C. TURNER JOY in international waters by patrol boats of the North Vietnamese Navy and the subsequently executed retaliatory strikes against the North Vietnamese by naval aircraft from the USS CONSTELLATION and TICONDEROGA.

No chronology, of course, can ever hope to capture the full flavor and intensity of these two days in August. The events were complex, the pressures were great. Throughout, however, a number of basic themes emerge. There is the search for options, as word of the second attack on the destroyers filters in early on the morning of August 4th. These options must be shaped not only to the immediate problem of dealing swiftly and sharply with the PT Boat Bases but must, in the selection of additional reinforcements, deal as well with the long range strategic implications of the situation. There is a period of carefully refining these options for the President, the ultimate decision resting in his hands. Planning the strike occupies a good part of the afternoon of the 4th, coupled with the insistent demand that the attacks on the destroyers be verified clearly and convincingly. Throughout the evening, word is awaited for the first launch, signalling the start of the retaliatory response. The launches begin at 10:43 P.M. EDT and the President goes on the air within the hour to announce our action to the world. Finally, the strike itself is completed, a remarkably successful operation.

The chronology has relied substantially on cables, recordings, maps, news releases, minutes of relevant meetings, and discussions with Messrs. McNamara, Vance, Bundy, McNaughton and General Wheeler.

It must be remembered that much of the action reported is occurring simultaneously at different levels - the Pentagon, in CINCPAC Headquarters Honolulu, Tonkin Gulf, the South China Sea, and the target areas. Most of these locations are in different time zones, and reports of the action arrive at different intervals. For ease of reference, however, all of the times, unless otherwise indicated, are Washington Eastern Daylight Time.

Saigon time is 12 hours later than EDT. Gulf of Tonkin time is 13 hours later, but the Destroyer in the Gulf of Tonkin kept Saigon time. CINCPAC (Honolulu) time is 6 hours earlier than EDT. Thus, for example, 10:00 AM in Washington is 10:00 PM Saigon time and 4:00 AM Honolulu time.

The various abbreviations used throughout are these:

CINCPAC - Commander in Chief, Pacific - Admiral Sharp

CINCPACFLT - Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet - Admiral Moorer

COMSEVENTHFLT - Commander, Seventh Fleet - Admiral Johnson

TUESDAY

AUGUST 4th, 1964

7:40 AM: (or 7:40 PM, August 4, Saigon Time) -- The MADDOX reports that an attack appears imminent from actions taken by unidentified vessels. The MADDOX in company with the C. TURNER JOY is heading southeast near the center of the Gulf of Tonkin in international waters approximately 65 miles from the nearest land. These ships immediately go on the alert. (NMCC receives this report at about 9:30 AM.)

8:14 AM: -- First word of a possible attack on the MADDOX is received at the Pentagon by the DIA Indications Center over the phone from NSA. While on the phone, a copy of the NSA field unit message arrives and copies are delivered, sometime between 8:30 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. to the Secretary of Defense McNamara, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Wheeler.

8:36 AM: (or 8:36 PM, August 4, Saigon Time) -- The MADDOX establishes its first radar contacts with two unidentified surface vessels and three unidentified aircraft. At this time, U.S. Fighter aircraft are launched from the USS TICONDEROGA to provide the MADDOX and the TURNER JOY with protection against possible attacks from the unidentified vessels and aircraft, in accordance with the President's previously issued directives. At this time, the TICONDEROGA is located approximately 100 nautical miles East North East of Da Nang. (NMCC receives this report at about 10:30 AM)

9:08 AM: (or 9:08 PM, August 4, Saigon Time) -- The MADDOX reports that the unidentified aircraft have disappeared from its radar screen but that the surface vessels are still remaining at a distance. The U. S. aircraft from the TICONDEROGA arrive and commence defensive patrol over the

MADDOX and the TURNER JOY. (NMCC receives this report at 11:04 AM.)

9:12 AM: McNamara calls the President and tells him about the NSA/DIA intelligence warning he has just received that the MADDOX is on the alert again, with the presence of hostile ships reported.

confirm w/ me

9:19 AM: Wheeler is now in receipt of several messages, including the NSA cable, indicating that the MADDOX may be under attack. He calls Admiral Grimm, NMCC, and asks whether Grimm has seen any messages on the attack and whether CINCPAC will be able to respond effectively. Grimm reports that he has one message, but has not talked to CINCPAC. Wheeler then says he will call CINCPAC himself.

9:23 AM: Wheeler calls General McCutcheon (CINCPAC J-3) and asks whether he has received any word on an impending attack on the destroyers. McCutcheon says he has no word, but will immediately check. Wheeler is insistent that the destroyers "lobber" the attackers, and make every effort to destroy the hostile ships, using additional air support, if required. ~~(The time is~~ (3:23 AM, August 4, ^{CINCPAC} Honolulu) time

9:25 AM - 11:25 AM

EARLY MEETINGS AT PENTAGON

beginning at 9:25 AM

McNamara, Deputy Secretary Vance, General Burchinal, Colonel Jones, and Admiral Mustin of the Joint Staff met at the Pentagon as reports of the attack on the destroyers come in. As the situation grows more intense,

possible levels of retaliation are discussed, and target folders are examined. High on the list are the PT boat and supporting POL installations, but other targets such as airfields, industrial complexes and bridges are also scrutinized. McNamara, about 10:00 ^APM, asks that the JCS be summoned, and they arrive shortly thereafter. Captain Miller of the Navy, a mine expert, is also asked to join the meeting and the possibility of mining the coast is discussed. Here it is pointed out that the mines would have to be brought into the carriers from Subic Bay, the Philippines. McNamara, during this time, calls the President, informs him that a retaliatory attack is being planned, and tells him that he will present a number of options to him as soon as possible.*

* * * *

4 options developed at this meeting

9:26 AM: A message is sent to CINCPAC requesting a combat air patrol over the destroyers, to consist of 2 F-8s, 2 A-3s, and 4 A-1s.

9:30 AM: (or 9:30 PM, August 4, Saigon Time) -- Additional vessels are observed on the MADDOX radar screens, and these vessels begin to close rapidly on the destroyer patrol at speeds in excess of 40 knots. As the attacking craft continue to close rapidly from the west and south, the MADDOX evaluates their intentions as hostile. (NMCC receives this message at 11:20 EDT.)

9:32 AM: (3:32 AM, August 4, at CINCPAC) -- Grimm (NMCC) contacts the CINCPAC duty officer, Major Rosenbaum. Grimm reports that the NMCC

*McNamara made three calls to the President during this period at 9:43 AM, 10:53 AM and 11:06 AM.

has just received word from the MADDOX that a possible attack appears imminent from PT boats, wants to know if air cover is available, and what has been done to supply the destroyers with an effective response capability. Grimm indicates that additional measures, beyond those directly involving the destroyers, are being considered in Washington. The duty officer has no information about the situation but adds that McCutcheon is on his way in. Grimm says that he will arrange for an open line between CINCPAC and Washington, and tells the CINCPAC representative that this is a "hot one."

9:52 AM: (or 9:50 PM, August 4, Saigon Time) -- The destroyers report that they are under continuous torpedo attack and are engaged in defensive counterfire against North Vietnamese patrol boats. (NMCC receives this message at 11:39 AM and 11:42 AM.)

10:04 AM: McCutcheon calls Burchinal, who is then in McNamara's office. Burchinal tells him that the Pentagon has just received a "flash" that the destroyers are under attack. McCutcheon replies that he has not seen it yet, but indicates that the fleet and the Carrier Task Force have been alerted. The TICONDEROGA, about 15 minutes away from the destroyers by air, is alerted. So is the CONSTELLATION, which had left Hong Kong yesterday and is headed south. Burchinal states that the CONSTELLATION will be ordered to move into position off South Vietnam, in the vicinity of the TICONDEROGA. He also tells McCutcheon that a possible retaliatory strike is being considered against North Vietnamese bases and asks him to take a look at some of the possible targets if, in fact, an attack is carried out against the destroyers.

10:15 AM: (10:15 PM, August 4, Saigon Time) -- The destroyers report that they have avoided torpedoes and have sunk one of the attacking craft. (NMCC receives this at 11:52 AM.)

10:19 AM: (4:19 AM, CINCPAC Time) -- McNamara calls Sharp and asks whether he has seen the messages regarding a possible attack on the MADDOX. Sharp says he has just arrived at the CINCPAC Command Center and that the messages are in. They discuss the "kill" capability of the MADDOX and the TURNER JOY. McNamara is particularly interested in assuring that the destroyers have whatever they need in the way of air support. McNamara also indicates that a modification of the rules of engagement is being sent to Sharp. (See 10:33 entry below.)

10:33 AM: A message, personally signed by McNamara, is sent from the JCS to CINCPAC ^{with the} ~~outlining~~ ^{existing} the rules of engagement for the destroyers. ^{and their supporting} Under ^{amiralty} the rules, the closest approach to the North Vietnam coastline for the destroyer patrol is 11 nautical miles, and in the event of a hostile attack, aircraft only are authorized to pursue and attack the hostile forces up to the three mile limit of the North Vietnamese coastline. The message also directs that the CONSTELLATION be moved into the area off South Vietnam, with the exact location at the discretion of the commander. (Note: The CONSTELLATION was ordered to slip quietly out of Hong Kong on August 2nd, 1964.)

Show what previous rules of engagement are

10:42 AM: (or 10:42 PM, August 4, Saigon Time) -- The destroyers report that they have evaded additional torpedoes and have sunk another

of the attacking craft. Other protective aircraft have arrived overhead, but weather and darkness are hampering their activities. (NMCC receives this message at 11:37 AM.)

10:52 AM: (or 10:52 PM, August 4, Saigon Time) -- The MADDOX reports that the destroyers are still under attack. (NMCC receives this message at 12:24 PM.)

10:53 AM: McNamara calls the President.

10:59 AM: Sharp calls Burchinal in McNamara's office, and a discussion of possible targets for a retaliatory strike ensues. Sharp suggests HON NE, HON ME, HEN THUY, and QUANG KHE. Burchinal indicates that a number of options along these lines are being considered. Sharp says that a strike could be carried out on "your say so", states that an armed reconnaissance along the North Vietnamese coast would be advantageous, and points out that the CONSTELLATION, about 350 miles from the destroyers, is coming in to provide support. There is also talk of providing the carriers with a mining capability, which McNamara considers important. Sharp says that it might take about 48 hours to achieve the capability, the problem being to get the mines aboard the carriers. He also reports that he has a message indicating that the destroyers are under continuous torpedo attacks. (Note: Since actual word of this situation had not yet reached Washington, Sharp is filling in McNamara on the details.)

11:06 AM: McNamara calls the President.

11:18 AM: Sharp calls Burchinal and provides him with the latest situation report on the attack. According to Sharp, the destroyers were exchanging fire with the patrol boats and the MADDOX had dodged at least five torpedoes. Sharp then suggests that the LOC CHOU estuary be added to any list of targets since he now has information it is being used as a hiding place for the PT boats. When Sharp again mentions the desirability of an armed reconnaissance along the coast line, Burchinal makes it absolutely clear that McNamara is seriously considering severer action. He tells Sharp that Secretary of State Rusk is on his way to the Pentagon, and that meetings will be held later at the White House. Again, Sharp reiterates that it will take about 48 hours to attain a mining capability.

11:30 AM: (11:30 PM, August 4, Saigon Time) -- The CONSTELLATION receives a preliminary alerting message stating that for planning purposes "there is a strong possibility you will be directed on short notice to lay on armed reconnaissance at sea against Swatows or reprisal attack against Swatow bases such as QUANG KHE, BEN THUY or PHUC LOI." At this time, the CONSTELLATION is heading in a south southwest direction to join the TICONDEROGA.

* * * *

11:20 AM - 12:30 PM

JCS MEET

BUNDY AND RUSK ARRIVE AT PENTAGON

THE OPTIONS ARE DEVELOPED

11:20 AM: At McNamara's call, JCS meet in McNamara's dining room with Vance and McNamara. Present are Acting Chairman LeMay, Admiral McDonald, General Johnson, General Greene, General Goodpaster, Burchinal, Mustin and assistants. McNamara informs JCS he has called the President and that he is interested in a quick capability to respond.

11:38 AM: Rusk and Greene (Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Far Eastern Affairs) arrive at JCS meeting. At McNamara's direction, Burchinal briefs Rusk.

11:40 AM: Presidential Assistant Bundy arrives at JCS meeting. McNamara briefs Bundy. McNamara informs group that he has issued orders to have mines moved from Subic Bay into Da Nang. There is a discussion of retaliatory measures. McNamara and Bundy discuss a sharp limited blow such as air strikes as opposed to the continuing pressure of mining the North Vietnamese coast. During discussion McNamara ^{outlined the} develops four options ^{developed} for the sharp limited blow and one option for the continuous pressure. ^{calm.}

The four options for the sharp limited blow are:

1. Air strikes against PT boats and their bases.
2. Air strikes against petroleum installations.

Bundy up

3. Air strikes on bridges.
4. Air strikes on prestige targets, such as air fields.

The option for continuing pressure against the North Vietnamese is to mine their coastline. ¶ McNamara tells LeMay that the JCS should work up recommendations for immediate action, then recommended actions for 24, 48 and 60 hours ahead, including special emphasis on reinforcements, such as the movement of B-57s into South Vietnam and fighter-interceptors into the Philippines.

12:04 PM: McNamara, Rusk, Bundy, Greene and Vance move to McNamara's office, while Chiefs continue meeting in McNamara's dining room. At this meeting the options are generally refined to three:

1. Sharp limited strikes against such targets as PT boats, PT bases, oil dumps, etc.
2. Continuing pressure, i.e., mining the Vietnam coast.
3. A combination of both.

12:20 PM: McNamara, Rusk, Bundy and Greene depart for White House. Vance goes into McNamara's dining room to ask JCS if it would make any difference whether the retaliatory strikes were conducted at first light. JCS tell Vance that ^{the fear of} such an attack would make no difference from a military standpoint but that fewer people ^{would} ~~might~~ be ~~there~~ ^{at the boat bases and supporting facilities at first light.}

12:25 PM: Vance departs for the White House. JCS continue meeting until 1:49 PM. During their meeting, at JCS direction, Burchinal calls McNamara at White House to recommend the sharp limited response option.

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12:40 - 3:00 PMNATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL MEETINGLUNCH WITH THE PRESIDENT

A regularly scheduled National Security Meeting centering on the Cyprus situation is in progress when McNamara, Rusk, and Bundy arrive at the White House. McNamara briefs the participants, ^{1/} including the President, on the available details of the attack on the destroyers. Rusk indicates that he, McNamara, and the JCS are developing a set of options, but that they are not sufficiently refined for presentation at that time.

At a lunch, which began about 1:00 ⁴PM and ended about 2:50 PM, following the NSC meeting, the types of response and the targets are key topics. Rusk, McNamara, McCone, Bundy, and Vance are with the President. The President agrees that a firm, swift retaliatory strike must be carried out. Here, a general consensus is formed on the approach finally taken in the JCS message to CINCPAC, developed later that afternoon, ordering the strikes into execution. The PT boats located at bases PORT WALLUT, HON GAY, PHUC LOI and QUANG KHE and LOC CHAO estuary and the oil depot VINH. (See the 5:19 PM entry below.) The mining options as well as an attack on HAIPHONG are rejected. The President asks how long it would take to execute the strike. McNamara estimates from the advice he has received that a strike could be launched at ~~first light~~ (7:00 AM ^{local} ~~time~~) or 7:00 PM Washington time. The President ~~asks~~ ^{suggests} McNamara to call the Chiefs to confirm the time, but McNamara says he will check it out on his return to the Pentagon.

1/ Present are Robert Kennedy, McCone, McDermott, Ball, Talbot, Dillon, Rowan, Reedy, Valenti, Clifton, Smith, and Komer.

Brandy

* * * *

12:22 PM. -- Sharp calls Burchinal and gives him the latest situation report on the torpedo firings at the destroyers. Estimates are that 3 to 6 PT Boats are engaged, with two reported sunk, no enemy aircraft are reported in the area, and aircraft from the CONSTELLATION are on station over the destroyers. Sharp asks that the destroyers be given permission to pursue PT Boats to the three-mile limit, and that aircraft be permitted to engage in hot pursuit over North Vietnamese territory. Burchinal advises him that the rules of engagement are being considered by McNamara and the JCS. Burchinal advises Sharp to dig out target material on PHOC LOI, QUANG KHE, and the VINH oil complex.

12:32 AM. (12:32 AM Saigon time, August 5th) -- The destroyers report that at least two enemy craft have been sunk, but that low ceilings continue to hamper the aircraft operations. (NMCC receives this report about 1½ to 2 hours later.)

12:54 PM. (12:54 AM Saigon time, August 5th) -- In addition to the torpedo attack, the TURGER JOY reports that during the engagement she was fired upon by automatic weapons while being illuminated by searchlights. (NMCC receives this report about 1½ to 2 hours later.)

12:57 PM. (12:57 AM Saigon time, August 5th) -- CINCPAC sends message to JCS recommending that authority be granted to conduct punitive U. S. air strikes as soon as possible against BEN THUY, HON ME, QUANG KHE, and LOC CHAO. (NMCC receives this message at ___ PM.)

1:01 PM. -- Sharp calls Burchinal and reports two jet aircraft have been sighted flying out of HAINAN as far south as DA NANG. Sharp says that we cannot afford to permit hostile aircraft to fly over carriers. Sharp then quotes proposed message on rules of engagement for aircraft which would grant authority to declare hostile and engage any North Vietnamese/ChiCom aircraft whose actions show within a "reasonable certainty" that an attack on U.S. Forces is intended. Burchinal agrees that the message should be sent if needed for the security of CINCPAC Forces, will note Sharp's comments for the JCS and tells Sharp that a meeting is now going on at the White House.

1:03 PM. -- White House Situation Room calls Pentagon Command Center and advises that the NSC meeting has just broken up. McNamara, McCone, Rusk, Bundy, and Vance have now gone to lunch with the President. Situation Room wants to be sure that the latest reports from the destroyers are forwarded at once.

1:24 PM. -- McNamara, still at White House, calls Burchinal at Pentagon. Burchinal tells him that Sharp had reported the presence of hostile aircraft (probably IL 28's) flying out of HAINAN and was issuing a "to engage" order if the security of his forces was threatened by enemy air (see the 1:01 PM entry above). McNamara is insistent that faster situation reports be obtained from the MADDOX and asks that Sharp try to contact the destroyer by radio. Burchinal advises that the JCS had been considering 3 courses of action, each progressively higher in its level of intensity, and recommended the second unanimously. This consisted of

air strikes against the PT Boat bases at PHOC LOI, QUANG KHE, LOC THOI, and the VINH oil complex. Rejected was the first option, a strike only at VINH, and the third, not only the PT Boat bases but other targets such as HAIPHONG.

1:27 PM. (1:27 AM Saigon time, August 5th) -- The Destroyer Division Commander on the MADDUX sends a "FLASH" message to CINCPACFLT, with JCS on the information list. The "FLASH" states that a review of the action makes many reported contacts and torpedoes fired "appear doubtful." "Freak weather effects" on radar, and "over-eager" sonar men may have accounted for many reports. "No visual sightings" have been reported by the MADDUX, and the Commander suggests that a "complete evaluation" be undertaken before any further action. (INMCC receives this report about 1½ to 2 hours later.) (Note: Sharp repeats the substance of this message to Burchinal. See the 1:59 PM and 2:08 PM entries below.)

1:28 PM. -- Following up McNamara's request, Burchinal calls Sharp and asks for a status report on the engagement. Sharp reports that two PT Boats have been sunk but is uncertain as to the total number involved and says that some 13 torpedoes have been launched. Also, he reports that there is some indication of enemy aircraft in the area but says that aircraft both from the TICONDEROGA and CONSTELLATION are on the scene. Burchinal asks Sharp to obtain a direct radio report from the ships engaged.

1:30 PM. (1:30 AM Saigon time, August 5th) -- The destroyers report that the attacking craft had apparently broken off the engagement. The MADDOK and TURNER JOY are directed to resume their patrol in the Gulf of Tonkin at daylight on the 5th of August. (NMCC receives this message about 1½ to 2 hours later.)

(1:59 AM Saigon time, August 5th)

1:59 PM. X -- Sharp calls Burchinal and says that he cannot contact ships by voice radio, but tells him that he has sent a message requesting that situation reports be expedited. Sharp says that the last message from the ships reports that freak weather is affecting radar performance, with many contacts and torpedo runs doubtful. Sharp says that the MADDOK itself has reported no visual sightings, and over-anxious sonar men may have accounted for what they erroneously thought to be torpedoes.

(2:08 AM Saigon time, August 5th)

2:08 PM. X -- Sharp advises Burchinal that the latest situation report indicates that three PT boats have been sunk, and that the weather is deteriorating and hampering aircraft operations. Sharp expresses the view that there is no doubt that a torpedo attack did occur, but adds that many of the reported torpedo attacks may have been due to inaccurate sonar reports. "Whenever they get keyed up on a thing like this, everything they hear on the sonar is a torpedo," says Sharp.

* * * *

3:00 PM - 5:15 PM
 MEETINGS AT THE PENTAGON
THE STRIKE EXECUTE MESSAGE IS DRAFTED

At the Pentagon, the Joint Chiefs begin their meeting at 3:00 PM. ^{1/}
 McNamara and Vance arrive at 3:06 PM and inform the Chiefs that the President wants the strikes to take place at 7:00 PM Washington time, and at the following targets: PT boats and bases at QUANG KHE, PHOC LOI, PORT WALLUT, HON GAY and LOC CHAO, and the oil complex at VINH. The JCS agree with this proposal. At 4:42 PM, ^{McNamara and Vance} they return to the JCS meeting and ^{McNamara} indicate that the time of the strike is important, for there will be no announcement until the strike gets under way. McNamara reviews the strike message which originally reads "By 0700 local time 5 August or as soon thereafter as weather permits conduct attack" and changes it to "By 0700 local 5 August conduct a one-time maximum effort attack." The weather portion is placed in another part of the message, and states that "if weather precludes meeting the above time of attack, proceed soonest, and notify JCS ASAP". (The major part of the message is quoted in the 5:19 PM entry below based on a decision made in the earlier morning meeting with the Chiefs. Also during this meeting, the deployment of reinforcements to the area is considered telling proof of our desire to escalate if we had to. 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

^{1/} Throughout the afternoon, Wheeler, LeMay, McDonald, Johnson, Greene Burchinal, Jackson, Carpenter, Palmer, Buse, Manhart, Goodpaster, Forbes, Bottomly, Flickinger, Mustin and Carroll are present at various intervals.

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 consists of those forces alerted for deployment immediately upon the receipt of political clearance. This will be comprised 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-102's to be moved from Clark AFB to South Vietnam; 8 KC-135's to be moved from SAC to Clark AFB; 2 F-100 squadrons from STRACOM to Clark; 1 F-105 squadron from STRICOM to Yokota; and 1 Reconnaissance Task Force (6 RF 101's) 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.

3:30 PM: -- Mustin of the Joint Staff calls Sharp and tells him to be on the alert since a strike execute message is being prepared and would be transmitted as soon as released.

3:34 PM: -- Mustin calls General Smith, Deputy Director for Operations, Joint Staff and informs him that the JCS are in session, that a strike execute message is now being typed and Sharp knows it is coming. Mustin asks that a transmission line be kept open.

4:05 PM. (10:05 AM, August 4, CINCPAC time) -- McNamara discusses the latest situation report with Sharp and requests that definite confirmation be obtained from the Fleet Commander of the attacks on the destroyers. McNamara notes that the time is three hours away from the scheduled execution and directs that preparations proceed for the strikes.

4:14 PM. (4:14 AM, August 5th, Saigon time; 10:14 AM, August 4th, CINCPAC time) -- CINCPACFLT transmits an alert message to COMSEVENTHFLT and the TICONDEROGA and CONSTELLATION to be prepared to strike targets at 7:00 PM (7:00 AM Saigon time). The designated targets are the PT Boat bases at QUANG KHE, BEN THUY, HON ME Island and SONG MA Estuary, HON GAY and PORT WALLUT; any identified North Vietnamese PT Boats located at sea; and the VINH petroleum storage depot. The latter is labeled the number one target priority. The message indicates that it would be "desirable" that all targets be struck simultaneously, but adds that authority is granted to recycle aircraft as necessary to strike the two southern targets (QUANG KHE and BEN THUY) with a second launch if the Forces on the TICONDEROGA and CONSTELLATION are inadequate. It concludes by specifying that this is a preparatory order, and that launching should not be accomplished until an execute order is received. (TICONDEROGA receives this message at 4:55 PM)

4:35 PM. (4:35 AM, August 5th, Saigon time; 10:35 AM CINCPAC time) -- CINCPAC transmits an official alert message to CINCPACFLT to prepare to execute air strikes at 7:00 PM (7:00 AM local time), against (1) PORT WALLUT, (2) BEN THUY (VINH), (3) HON GAY, (4) QUANG KHE, and (5) LOC CHAO.

4:40 PM. (10:40 AM CINCPAC time) -- Sharp calls Burchinal and is informed that the JCS strike execute message is in the McNamara office ready to go, but that there is still a slight doubt whether the destroyers were in fact attacked. Sharp will try to get more definite information from Admiral Moore. Burchinal then asks Sharp whether the launch could be accomplished at 7:00 PM. Sharp responds that "it will be tight" but "I think so." He adds, however, that it may be just as well to wait an hour or so, if we have to, to be certain an attack had occurred. Sharp then suggests it might be necessary to recycle some of the aircraft for a second strike against VINH and Burchinal says "this will be all right", if needed. Sharp estimates that about 70 aircraft in all will be involved in the strikes.

4:49 PM. (10:49 AM CINCPAC time) -- The JCS strike execute message to CINCPAC is transmitted by direct teletype from the NMCC to the CINCPAC Command Center. (CINCPAC receives this message at ____.)

4:55 PM. (4:55 AM, August 5, Saigon time) -- TICONDEROGA receives the CINCPACFLT alert message directing COMSEVENTHFLT to be prepared at 7:00 PM to strike the PT Boats at designated locations. The TICONDEROGA is already on an alert status as a result of the PT Boat attacks on the destroyers. Upon receipt of this alert message, its pilots and Weapons Planning Board commence to plan for the strikes. A message is also sent from TICONDEROGA to Naval Air Station at Cubi Point, Philippines (some 500 miles away), directing all ready to go A-1 and A-4 aircraft to return

to the TICONDEROGA as soon as possible. This is necessary because the complement of aircraft on the TICONDEROGA has to be augmented by additional strike aircraft for the maximum strike effort. A number of the aircraft on the TICONDEROGA had been used previously for reconnaissance (Yankee Team) efforts over Laos, and could not appropriately be used for the strike.

5:00 PM. -- Colonel Jones of the Joint Staff, in the JCS conference room, calls the NMCC Pacific desk at Pentagon (Commander Hathaway) and says that the JCS would like a forecast of the weather over the target area at 7:00 AM local time.

4:47 PM - 6:00 PM

JCS-SECDEF MEETING TO DETERMINE
IF ATTACK ON DESTROYERS OCCURRED

One of the recurrent problems throughout the afternoon was a lack of clear and convincing showing that an attack on the destroyers had in fact occurred. At 4:47 PM McNamara, Vance and the JCS meet to marshal the evidence. They conclude that an attack had taken place. In this regard five factors are considered:

1. The TURNER JOY was illuminated when fired on by automatic weapons.
2. One of the destroyers observed cockpit lights.
3. A PCM 142 shot at two U.S. aircraft. *(Comint)*
4. A North Vietnamese announcement that two of its boats were "sacrificed." *(Comint)*
5. Sharp's determination that there was indeed an attack.

It is here that Burchinal, at Wheeler's request, indicates that the 7:00 PM strike time will not be met because the carriers are operating on a time which makes 8:00 PM here 7:00 AM their time. Mollenhau, Vance, and Wheeler leave the meetings at 5:51 PM for the White House.

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5:19 PM. - JCS strike execute message is retransmitted flash precedence as JCS 7720 to CINCPAC. It states that by 7:00 PM EDT (0700 local time) a one-time maximum effort attack against the following targets should be conducted: PT Boats located at PORT WALIJE (later cancelled because of weather), HON GAY, HUC LOI and QUANG KHE and at LOC CHAO. The specified targets are boats, ^{POC} ~~Pol~~ at VINH, and an armed reconnaissance against PT Boats beyond the three mile limit. The message cautions that if the weather precludes meeting the above time of attack, the commander is to "proceed soonest" and to notify the JCS as soon as possible.

5:23 PM. -- Sharp calls Burchinal and says there is no doubt that an attack on the destroyers had occurred, for he has intercepted a North Vietnamese message stating that two of its PT Boats were "sacrificed." Sharp is now satisfied with all the evidence, what with several additional reports from the TURBER JOY. Sharp then mentions that the attack will be coming off at 8:00 PM Washington time not 7:00 PM but still at 7:00 AM local time. The reason is that the CINCPAC execute message used "HOTEL" time (Saigon time), whereas the carriers were shooting for the operation on "GOLF" time giving them an extra hour.

5:29 PM. -- Hustin calls the IMCC (General Smith) and indicates that some confusion exists over the time in the Gulf of Tonkin. He asks Smith

to get on the teletype and straighten out the matter. Smith, at 5:33 PM, calls McCutcheon at CINCPAC and asks for a breakdown of the times between the carriers, Saigon, and Washington. McCutcheon replies that when the Washington time is 8:00 PM, the local time for the carriers would be 7:00 AM the next morning, a 13-hour differential. When the Washington time is 7:00 PM, the local time in Saigon would be 7:00 AM the next morning, a 12-hour differential.

5:39 PM. (1:39 PM CINCPAC time) -- Sharp calls Burchinal and says that the indications are that launch time will be 0700 local (carrier time) or 8:00 PM Washington time.

6:10 PM. (6:10 AM, August 5th, Saigon time) -- The TICONDEROGA receives a copy of the JCS strike execute message.

6:15 PM - 6:38 PM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING

6:38 PM - 6:45 PM

SPECIAL MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT

The National Security Council^{1/} is convened as McNamara, Vance and Wheeler arrive at the White House. McNamara outlines the four-part plan:

1. The strike against the PT boat bases and the supporting installations, but not against Haiphong, because it is too far north and too close to Red China.
2. Sending reinforcements to the area, an expression of our will to escalate, and armed reconnaissance along the North Vietnamese coast.
3. Presidential announcement of these actions.
4. A Joint Congressional Resolution in support of these actions.

There are no objections to the four-part plan and the President approves it. McNamara informs the President that the previously estimated 7:00 PM launch time will not be met, but that the launch time is now estimated to be 8:00 PM. McNamara then recommends that no public statement be released until 9:00 PM, the estimated time over target of the first strike.

The NSC meeting breaks up at 6:38. McNamara, Rusk and Bundy meet with the President in his office, prior to the Congressional leadership meeting which starts at 6:45. Vance returns to Pentagon to determine what reinforcements can be moved without political clearance from other countries and to put in motion the political clearance process where required.

^{1/} Present at this meeting are the President, Speaker McCormack, McCone, Cline, McNaughton, Rusk, Ball, William Bundy, Dillon, Rowan, Reedy, McG. Bundy, Jenkins, Moyers, Valenti, Bromley Smith and Cater.

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6:07 PM: (12:07 PM CINCPAC Time) -- Sharp calls Burchinal and repeats that he is satisfied that the destroyers were attacked. ^{Sharp}~~He~~ now has the JCS strike execute message. Burchinal says that McNamara, now at the White House, is also satisfied that the attacks on the destroyers have occurred and had made the statement just a short time ago that the "show is now on the road." After agreeing that suppressive fire "was part of the game," Sharp then states that the press should not get the story at 7:00 PM. Burchinal replies that we will insure that nothing gets out until "we know that you're off target." Sharp estimates this to be 9:00 PM, one hour after launch. Burchinal emphasizes that any announcement will be delayed so that there is "no possibility of anyone reading" the strike. The matter of deploying additional forces to the theater is also discussed.

* * * *

6:45 PM - 8:45 PMCONGRESSIONAL LEADERSHIP MEETING

General Wheeler was one of those in attendance at the leadership meeting. In his recent testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, Wheeler stated that the President told the Congressmen that he would make a public announcement but left the time "up in the air because he did not want to make the announcement too soon." Wheeler then recalled that the timing of the announcement may have actually been settled either in a preliminary meeting between McNamara and the President around 6:38 PM

or at the leadership meeting itself. In any event, Wheeler said that the decision was made that a statement could be released "at the time the aircraft took off from carriers, in other words when the strikes were enroute." Chairman Carl Vinson said he would verify this because "I sat there and I heard the whole discussion." In short, Wheeler remembered that the President "was going to wait until it was safe to make the announcement... it would not be made prior to the launching of the aircraft." McNamara remembered that the President said

* * *

6:56 PM: (6:56 AM, August 5, Saigon Time) -- The CONSTELLATION receives a copy of the JCS strike execute message.

7:22 PM: (7:22 AM, August 5, Saigon Time) -- The TICONDEROGA receives the CINCPACFLT execute message.

7:30 PM: (7:30 AM, August 5, Saigon Time) -- The CONSTELLATION receives the CINCPAC message which passes the JCS strike message with instructions not to execute until directed. (Note: According to Mustin, the "hold" notice was presumably prompted by CINCPAC's desire to make certain that the second attack on the MADDOX did in fact occur. Once this was confirmed the strike execute message was issued (see the 7:50 PM entry below).

7:49 PM: (7:49 AM, August 5, Saigon Time) -- The CONSTELLATION receives its target assignments.

7:50 PM: (7:50 AM, August 5, Saigon Time) -- The CONSTELLATION receives the CINCPAC strike execute message.

7:59 PM: General Wisman, NMCC Pacific Desk at Pentagon, calls the CINCPAC Duty Officer, Lt. Colonel Lindsey, and asks for the take-off times, numbers and types of planes in the carrier strike. Lindsey replies there is nothing yet on the strikes, although there is some combat air patrol activity in relation to the earlier attacks on the destroyers.

8:05 PM: Wheeler, in the Cabinet room at the White House, calls Burchinal at the Pentagon and asks if anything is happening. Burchinal says that he has a clear line open, but no word has been received. Wheeler wants to know as soon as the word arrives that the aircraft have been launched.

8:39 PM: McNamara, back from the White House, calls Sharp and asks whether the carriers have launched their aircraft. Sharp replies that he has received no word yet, but this is probably because the carriers will provide a coordinated report when the launch is completed. McNamara, however, says that the launch is already 40 minutes after the ordered time of take-off and wants Sharp to contact the carriers directly by radio. McNamara stresses that he must get an immediate statement since the President wants to go on the air and inform the American people. This, says McNamara, is being held back pending word of the launch, with more

than 40 minutes having already elapsed beyond the launch time given to the President. Sharp estimates, although he does not have the launch plan, that it would take the aircraft about an hour to reach the target. McNamara asks Sharp to find out when they are launching and the time of the first flights over the targets.

9:00 PM: (9:00 AM, August 5, Saigon Time) -- The picture of air situation at this time and thereafter as reflected on North Vietnamese and Chinese radar is described at Appendix 1.

9:09 PM: (3:09 PM, August 4, CINCPAC Time) -- Sharp calls McNamara at his office and says that one carrier (perhaps both) would not be able to launch for another 50 minutes (10:00 PM Washington time). "In other words, they couldn't make the time," reports Sharp. Sharp explains that the compression of time and the communications lag are the reasons, and thinks that the last estimated times over target, with a 10:00 PM launch will be about 12:00 midnight, Washington time. McNamara then asks what Sharp thinks about a Presidential statement issued about the time of launch that would say this: "At this moment air action is now in execution against gun boats and supporting facilities in and near four ports of North Vietnam which have been used in support of hostile operations." Sharp thinks it would not be a "good idea" because it will alert the enemy, "No doubt about it." McNamara says that the enemy would be alerted as soon as the aircraft start coming into the coast. Sharp says, "They won't know where they're going. Of course they will be alerted

as soon as they get in the air because Hainan is going to pick them up and so will the other people. But they won't know where they are going. I wouldn't recommend it."

9:22 PM: Sharp tells McNamara that PT boats (presumably those returning from attack on the destroyers) were taking sanctuary within the three-mile limit. McNamara recommends that the aircraft proceed to hit designated targets, but authorizes striking any boats sighted on the way in. He says, "Get them off, that is the main thing."

9:28 PM: (9:29 AM, August 5, Saigon Time) -- The CONSTELLATION submits its strike plan for approval to the Carrier Task Force Commander.

9:30 - 10:45 PM: Sometime during this period McNamara calls Bundy and recommends deletion of that part of the President's statement dealing with the targets. ✓

10:06 PM: After trying to reach Senator Goldwater for several hours, the President finally gets through and informs him of the decision to retaliate. Immediately after talking to the President, Goldwater issues a statement to the wire services that "I am sure that every American will subscribe to the action outlined in the President's statement. I believe it is the only thing he can do under the circumstances." This is released almost an hour before the President went before the nation to announce the punitive strike. ✓

Get home

10:26 PM: -- McNamara calls Sharp and asks whether the aircraft are launched yet. Sharp says he has no firm word, but is "sure" one carrier (TICONDEROGA) "is going to go, or has gone" at 10:00 PM Washington time. According to Sharp, however, the other carrier (CONSTELLATION) "is not going to launch" one of its groups (the slower propeller driven A-1 aircraft) until 1:00 AM Washington Time and the other (the jets) until 2:30 AM, with a time over target for both groups estimated around 3:15 AM, apparently because "she is not able to get in position in time." Sharp explains this by stating that the CONSTELLATION was coming from the north and had to get into position by coming around Hainan to strike her assigned northern targets. In order to get into position, she had to use a good many of her aircraft for refuelers. Sharp repeats that the TICONDEROGA "should have gotten off a half hour ago (10:00 PM) but "we haven't heard yet." McNamara tells Sharp to make "dam^N sure she got off" by getting in touch with her right away. As to the CONSTELLATION, McNamara asks how long it would take its aircraft to reach the target. Sharp replies the farthest target will be reached in about five hours from now. McNamara then says that no announcement here "is going to influence what they think about those aircraft coming in because you will already have launched about a half hour ago against the other targets." Sharp agrees "as long as they don't know what the targets are." McNamara states that "I have cut that out of the statement," and Sharp says "there will still be the element of surprise as long as you don't say what [the targets] are."

10:40 PM: -- (10:40 AM, August 5th Saigon time) -- CONSTELLATION recovers the last group of A-1 aircraft from combat air patrol over the destroyers.

10:43 PM: -- (10:43 AM, August 5th Saigon time) -- TICONDEROGA launches four A-1 strike aircraft with instructions to orbit overhead. This is necessary so that the carrier deck could be free for the landing of A-4 aircraft from Cubi Point then orbiting overhead and to permit coordination of prop and jet strikes to ensure a simultaneous arrival time over the target. The A-1 launching marks the beginning of the attack, and within the hour these four A-1's depart for VINH. (NMCC receives this message at _____ PM)

10:46 PM: -- McNamara calls Sharp again, seeking confirmation of the launch times. Sharp says that he has been trying to reach the Task Force but "it is just a question of getting through this circuit and apparently the circuit is a little jammed." He reports that no word has yet been received, and McNamara suggests he radio in the clear, asking the TICONDEROGA if it did "what it said it would do at 10:00." McNamara states that the President wants to go on the air at 11:15, but should not go on "unless he has a confirmation of the launch". McNamara then wants Sharp to secure half-hourly post-strike reports, once the launching occurs.

10:48 PM: -- Clifton at the White House calls General Wisman, the Deputy Director for Operations, Joint Staff and states that new launch

times for the CONSTELLATION have been received which are considerably later than the TICONDEROGA's, that the President is shooting for an 11:15 PM statement, and asks how much would be revealed by the announcement. Wisman states that Sharp agrees with a Presidential announcement now that McNamara has recommended the deletion of specific portions dealing with the targets.

11:05 PM: -- Wisman calls Burchinal and reports that nothing is airborne yet, that the CONSTELLATION is not in position, and that several more hours would be required for its first launch. There is now the possibility, according to Wisman, that the CONSTELLATION because of weather may have to scrub its operation. He recognizes this would tip our hand if one force goes in, and says that there can be no scrubbing of the mission until the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs are first notified.

11:11 PM: -- McNamara calls Sharp, and is told "it is just that I don't think that there is any question that they have launched. It is just a question of getting the report." McNamara, with regard to the weather conditions and possible cancellation of the CONSTELLATION strikes, states that "we cannot sit here as a nation and let them attack us on the high seas and not do something." So I think the President has to say we are going to retaliate." McNamara asks if there is any reason why the CONSTELLATION couldn't launch against the southern targets, including the

oil depot." Sharp responds that this is "exactly what we would do," although he mentions that the weather to the south is not good and beginning to deteriorate.

11:20 PM: -- Sharp calls McNamara and says it is now confirmed.

"She [the TICONDEROGA] got her planes off at ^{0243"}~~10:43~~ ~~(Saigon Time)~~ (10:43 PM) (10:43 AM Saigon Time). Sharp indicates that it will take the aircraft about an hour and fifty minutes to reach their targets. The attack will be in two waves, both scheduled to arrive at the same time.

11:27 PM: -- Commander Henson of the NMCC Pacific Desk at the Pentagon notifies the White House Situation Room that the TICONDEROGA launched its first aircraft at 10:43 PM, with an estimated time over the target at 1:10 AM.

11:35 PM: (11:35 AM, August 5th Saigon time) -- The CONSTELLATION advises the Carrier Task Force Commander of its intended launch position for strikes with a simultaneous time over target at 3:45 AM.

11:40 PM
PRESIDENT GOES ON THE AIR

On the recommendation of McNamara, Vance, and Wheeler, the President goes on the air and states:

"Repeated acts of violence against the armed forces of the United States must be met not only with alert defense, but with positive reply. That reply is being given as I speak to you. Air action is now in execution against gun boats and certain supporting facilities of North Vietnam which have been used in these hostile operations."

EDT

The recommendation to go on the air is based on these considerations:

1. By 11:34, U.S. Naval Aircraft had been in the air ~~on their way~~
to the targets approximately one hour.
2. Hanoi and Hainan through their radar, had ~~then~~ received indications of the attack.
3. The time remaining before the aircraft arrived over the targets would ^{probably} not permit the North Vietnamese to move their boats to sea or to alert their forces.]
4. It was important that our country learn of the manner in which their government was responding to the attacks on its vessels from their President, rather than from Hanoi which was expected to announce the attack at any moment.
5. ~~That~~ It was desirable that the North Vietnamese government and others be told as soon as possible the limited, punitive, character of the attack.
6. It was important that the North Vietnamese and Chinese Communists know that this was the ^wfirst and deliberate response of the U.S. Government to an [↑]unprovoked aggressive act, and not the act of a local commander.

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Vietnam*

11:51 PM: (11:51 AM, August 5th Saigon time) -- Sharp calls Wheeler and they discuss the possibilities of a restrike against VINH, with Wheeler saying that he will discuss it with McNamara.

11:54 PM: (11:54 AM, August 5th Saigon time) -- The CONSTELLATION receives a message that TICONDEROGA had launched its aircraft at 10:43 PM, with scheduled arrival over target at 1:10 AM.

WEDNESDAY
August 5, 1964

12:00 Midnight: (noon, August 5th Saigon time) -- Wheeler calls Sharp to discuss the recycling of the VINH strike. Sharp indicates that the recycling may only have to be off the TICONDEROGA, but wants the added flexibility of recycling with both carriers. "The problem" says Sharp, "is it takes so ^{long} dam long to get the word out to them." Sharp also tells Wheeler that both carriers had been conducting air operations all night before in supporting the MADDOX, and as a result of this continual series of launchings and landings and getting into proper position. The current strikes were launched somewhat later than originally forecast. Sharp indicates that the CONSTELLATION would have to scrub only the northernmost target (Port Wallut) and this because of a combination of factors: the target's distance, its close proximity to China, and the adverse weather.

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12:02 AM - 12:30 AM

MCNAMARA PRESS CONFERENCE

Secretary McNamara holds a press conference in which he states that some of the action "has already taken place". He goes on to add that "U.S. Naval aircraft from the carriers TICONDEROGA and CONSTELLATION . . . have already conducted air strikes against the North Vietnamese bases from

which these PT boats have operated. Our naval aircraft have also conducted strikes against certain other targets which have directly supported the operation of the PT boats."

12:15 AM: (12:15 PM, August 5th, Saigon Time) -- Six A-4's and six F-8's are launched from the TICONDEROGA flying to VINH at an altitude of 25,000 feet. The target is 320 nautical miles away.

12:34 AM: (12:34 PM, August 5th, Saigon Time) -- TICONDEROGA launches six F-8's which depart for QUANG KHE, flying at an altitude of 25,000 feet. Target is 250 nautical miles away.

12:38 AM: Wheeler calls Sharp and tells him that he has discussed the recycle with McNamara. Wheeler's major concern is that the attacks must not be "open-ended" affairs. Three rules are set for the recycle: First, up to 20 aircraft may be used; second, the only target will be VINH; and third, the attack should be launched no later than 3:00 AM, Washington time. Sharp thinks that the 3:00 AM time is cutting it too short, with closer to 4:00 AM as the more realistic hour. Sharp adds that he will do his best to compress the time and will recycle as quickly as possible. Wheeler indicates that he will pass this on to McNamara.

12:43 AM: Wheeler calls Sharp and tells him that the 4:00 AM recycle time is acceptable to McNamara, but Sharp now indicates launch on the recycle could not begin until 5-6:00 AM. Wheeler says this is too late,

Take out "open-ended" note

and they arrive at an agreement that Sharp would launch what he could up to 4:00 AM (presumably jets only) and would then have to cease.

1:00 AM: (1:00 PM, August 5th, Saigon Time) -- CONSTELLATION launches four A-1's which depart for HON GAY, flying at an altitude of from 1,000 - 5,000 feet. HON GAY is 360 nautical miles away. CONSTELLATION also launches four A-1's which depart for LOC CHAO, flying at an altitude of 1,000 - 5,000 feet. LOC CHAO is 330 nautical miles.

1:11 AM: (1:11 PM, August 5, Saigon Time; 7:11 PM August 4, CINCPAC time) -- CINCPAC duty officer calls Lt. Col. Smith in McNamara's office and says that the estimated times over target for the TICONDEROGA will be 1:15 AM for the first and 1:25 AM for the second. "Everything is on track," he reports.

1:15 AM: (1:15 PM, August 5th, Saigon Time) -- TICONDEROGA's six F-8's launched at 12:34 AM strike QUANG KHE with 20 mm shells and 5" rockets. ~~The base is caught by surprise.~~ There is no AA fire. Seven boats are sighted, four are severely damaged and one moderately. There are no U.S. losses. (NMCC received this report at _____ AM.)

1:25 AM: (1:25 PM, August 5th, Saigon Time) -- TICONDEROGA's four A-1's launched at 10:43 PM, six A-4's launched at 12:15 AM and six F-8's launched at 12:15 AM strike at the VINH - BEN THUY - PHUC LOI complex. They report moderate AA fire. Overall, the defense are neither strong nor alert during this first attack. Of the six boats sighted, four are

?

moderately damaged and two lightly damaged. Eight Pol tanks and two AA guns are destroyed. There are no U.S. losses. The ordnance used ranges from 1,000 lb. bombs to 5" Zuni rockets to 2.75 mm rockets. (NMCC receives this message at _____ AM.)

2:16 AM: Sharp calls McNamara's office and gives the first strike report to Col. Moody. He states that VINH has been struck, the oil installation is burning fiercely, the four PT boats in the harbor have all been hit, with one dead in the water. Heavy flak has been experienced and one F-8 is hit, headed for Da Nang. Moody says Vance will be promptly advised of these developments. ~~He~~ *Vance is informed immediately.*

2:30 AM: (2:30 PM, August 5th, Saigon Time) -- The CONSTELLATION launches ten A-4's and two F-4's which depart for HON GAY at an altitude of 25,000 - 30,000 feet. HON GAY is 360 nautical miles away. The CONSTELLATION also launches five A-4's and three F-4's which then depart for LOC CHAO, flying at an altitude of 25,000 - 30,000 feet. LOC CHAO is 330 nautical miles away. (NMCC receives this message at _____ AM.)

3:25 AM: (3:25 PM, August 5th, Saigon Time) -- CONSTELLATION's four A-1's launched at 1:00 AM and its five A-4's and three F-4's launched at 2:30 AM strike LOC CHAO. They report moderate AA fire (20 mm from the boats). The boats are not underway, ~~and thus had not been alerted.~~ Of the five PT boats sighted, two are damaged seriously and three moderately. One A-1 aircraft (Sather's, third in the column) is shot down. One A-1 is damaged, but *Return to base safely.* ~~is later recovered.~~ The attack lasts

25 minutes. 2.75" rockets and 20 mm strafing attacks utilized. (NMCC receives this message at _____ AM.)

3:43 AM: -- Sharp tells Wisman of the Joint Staff that it might be best to pull the MADDOX and C. TURNER JOY out of their patrol. This is because they are low on fuel and ammunition, and we have already given ² the North Vietnamese a "good punishment." Sharp adds that to keep the destroyers on station might invite further attacks, perhaps even a loss. Wisman says this will require JCS approval.

3:58 AM: -- McCutcheon at CTNCPAC calls Wisman about pulling the destroyers out. McCutcheon says that since these destroyers have special equipment and could not readily be replaced, but that the ships have had several sleepless nights. The relief of these ships would be temporary only, about a 24 hour rest, after the strikes had ceased. Wisman says he will talk to Burchinal.

4:03 AM: (4:03 PM, August 5th, Saigon Time) -- TICONDEROGA launches four F-8's and eight A-4's which depart for the restrike against VINH.

4:15 AM: (4:15 PM, August 5th, Saigon Time) -- TICONDEROGA launches two A-4's which depart for HON ME at an altitude of 25,000 feet.

4:41 AM: -- Wisman calls Burchinal and tells him that an A-1 and A-4 from the CONSTELLATION have been lost over HON GAY. (Note: Actually, one was lost over HON GAY, another over LOC CHOU.) Burchinal is the first to be notified, and he suggests that Wisman inform the Chiefs and the Secretary of Defense.

✓ Vanu informed immediately

4:45 AM: (4:45 PM, August 5th, Saigon Time) -- TICONDEROGA's four F-8's and eight A-4's, all launched at 4:03 AM, strike VINH. They report heavy AA fire from the additional AA guns brought into position after first strike, but they destroy two to four Pol tanks and six AA guns. There are no U.S. losses. (NMCC receives this message at _____ AM.)

5:15 AM: (5:15 PM, August 5th, Saigon Time) -- TICONDEROGA's two A-4's, launched at 4:15 AM, strike HON ME with 20 mm shells and rockets. They report no AA fire, ~~and surprise is achieved.~~ Of the six boats sighted, three are destroyed, three moderately damaged, and one is forced to beach. There are no U.S. losses.

6:08 AM: Wisman calls Mustin and says the operation is just about wound up and was a "pretty good effort, highly successful." He states that Sharp was able to accomplish the recycle against VINH and that the destroyer patrol is being pulled out, with approval, for replenishment.

8:30 AM: -- McNamara calls General Milton to check on the results of the punitive strike, based on present information. Here, these facts are confirmed:

- 64 strike sorties were launched [with 59 planes] against 4 North Vietnamese patrol boat bases, including the LOC CHAO estuary, and the supporting oil storage depot at VINH.
- About 25 PT boats were destroyed or damaged, in addition to damage to their bases and supporting facilities.
- An estimated 90% of the VINH oil depot, containing 14 tanks and 10% of the petroleum capacity of North Vietnam, was destroyed. Smoke was seen rising to 14,000 feet.
- Two U.S. Navy aircraft were lost and two damaged.

23

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

TUESDAY, AUGUST 4

and

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 5, 1964

TONKIN GULF STRIKE

SECOND DRAFT

AUGUST 24, 1964

✓ McNamara - 7:00 p.m.

McN - one hour to get over target

McN - 26 [24]

McN on staff - p. 29

McN - 1.35

QUESTIONS AND POINTS TO BE RESOLVED

1. Copy of the NSA field unit message which arrived at Pentagon at approximately 8:14 a.m., August 4th. (Califano)

2. Copy of message to CINCPAC sent at 9:26 a.m., August 4th, requesting combat air patrol over the destroyers. When was it sent, by whom, and when was it received? (Levinson)

3. Copy of message directing that mines be transported from Subic Bay to Da Nang. Sent sometime during the morning of August 4th. Who sent it and when was it received at CINCPAC? (Levinson)

4. Where is COMSEVENTHFLT located? What time is it on, as compared to Washington EDT? (Levinson)

5. When did CINCPAC receive the JCS strike execute message (7720) sent at 4:49 p.m. EDT August 4th from NMCC? (Levinson)

6. What is PGM 142 -- one of ours or one of theirs? (Levinson)

7. What was the first indication received at the Pentagon that the initial proposed time over target for the first strike would be 8:00 a.m. (Saigon time) or about one hour after the 7:00 a.m. (Saigon time) expected launch? (Califano)

8. Why was the CONSTELLATION ordered by CINCPAC at 7:30 a.m. (Saigon time) not to execute the JCS strike execute message in view of the fact that the TICONDEROGA at 7:22 a.m., August 5th (Saigon time) had received a CINCPACFLT strike execute message? (Levinson)

9. Times of McNamara's calls to Bundy re revisions of the statement. (Califano)

10. Who is General Milton? *Bush - name during NSC period*

11. Details of McNamara's calls to the President at 9:12 a.m., 9:43 a.m., 10:53 a.m., and 11:06 a.m. (Califano)

12. First indication of a 7:00 a.m. (Saigon time) expected launch?

13. Mention of the Constellation when it left Hoy Toy on 3 August. What was its initial mission?

14. First indication ~~that~~ or ~~of~~ ~~we~~ ~~would~~ setting up the 7:00 AM (7:00 PM) strike time. Who came up with 7:00 AM?

Any early calls to Sharp from McNamara on the timing.

ZONE LETTER

55

TIME PREVIOUS DAY:

EST:

EDT:

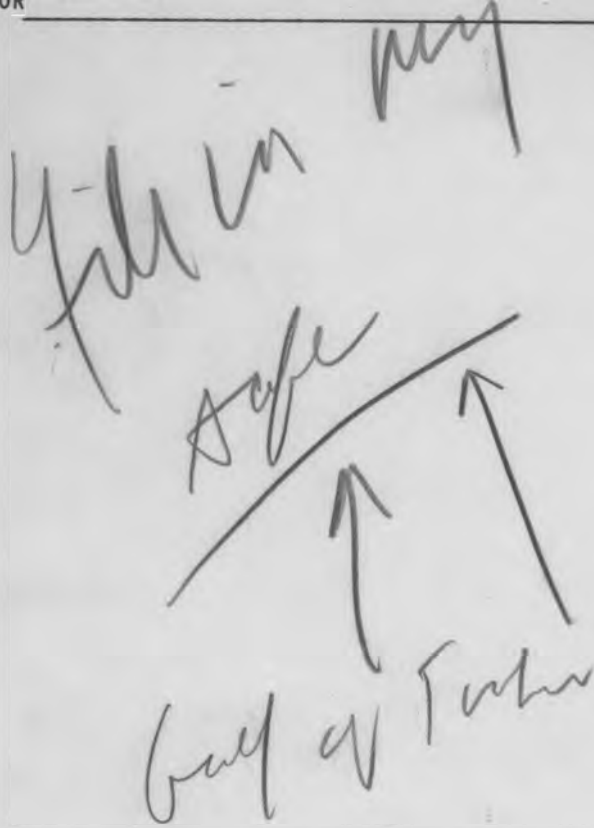
TIME NEXT DAY:

M	L	K	I	H	G	F	E	D	C	B	A	Z	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y
17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	09	08	07	06	05	04	03	02	01	00	23	22	21	20	19	18	17
18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	09	08	07	06	05	04	03	02	01	00	23	22	21	20	19	18
19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	09	08	07	06	05	04	03	02	01	00	23	22	21	20	19
20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	09	08	07	06	05	04	03	02	01	00	23	22	21	20
21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	09	08	07	06	05	04	03	02	01	00	23	22	21
22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	09	08	07	06	05	04	03	02	01	00	23	22
23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	09	08	07	06	05	04	03	02	01	00	23
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02	01	00	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	09	08	07	06	05	04	03	02
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14	13	12	11	10	09	08	07	06	05	04	03	02	01	00	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14
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16	15	14	13	12	11	10	09	08	07	06	05	04	03	02	01	00	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16
		AUSTRIA		TOYKO SEOUL KOREA	MANILA CHINA VIETNAM HONG KONG	THAILAND LAOS SIANGKROK			MOSCOW MAGYAR MOMBAI	PARIS BERLIN ROME TAHOIEN LONDON LONDON				SO. AMER.	SO. AMER.	WASH PANAMA	VENT AM LEON PANAMA				HAWAII			

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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

MEMO FOR _____



26-a

TRANSCRIPT OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATIONS
4-5 AUGUST

Recorded conversation, General McCutcheon to General Burchinal at 1004 AM, EDT, 4 August.

General McCutcheon, sir.

GEN MCCUTCHEON: Good morning, sir, this is McCutcheon in CINCPAC.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes.

GEN MCCUTCHEON: In response to the previous request to General Wheeler, I'll give you an interim report as to what I've found out. Admiral Moorer is in his Command Post. Fleet and the Task Group are alerted and aware of these messages and the threat. As far as measures to be taken, they have the two DD's that are on station there, the TURNER JOY and MADDOX. The TICO with her three DD's is 15 minutes away by air. She is alerted. The CONNIE came out of Hong Kong yesterday and is headed south. I haven't got an ETA yet, but she's headed to rendezvous with the TICO.

GEN BURCHINAL: We just had a flash that that outfit is under attack now. Do you have anything on that?

GEN MCCUTCHEON: No, sir. I haven't seen that one yet.

DECLASSIFIED

Authority RAC 139-044-7-1

By JOW, NARA, Date 12/13/05

GEN BURCHINAL: For your information, the message is coming telling you take the CONNIE and put it off SVN, maybe in the vicinity of the TICON, but bring it on down into that area. We'll leave the deployment position up to you. Got that?

GEN MCCUTCHEON: That action has already been done. She's headed south.

GEN BURCHINAL: On Admiral Sharp's request for Rules of Engagement.

GEN MCCUTCHEON: Right.

GEN BURCHINAL: We're sending a message which says stay at eleven. He asks for eight. It just says stay at eleven. It says aircraft only up to 3-mile limit.

GEN MCCUTCHEON: Okay.

GEN BURCHINAL: Is authorized.

GEN MCCUTCHEON: Right.

GEN BURCHINAL: You want to pass that by phone, fast.

GEN MCCUTCHEON: Okay. Aircraft up to three but the boats stay at eleven.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right.

GEN MCCUTCHEON: Right.

GEN BURCHINAL: And we're taking a look at some possible re-taliatory type points that we might want to take out. You might be thinking of it and come in if you've got any particular ideas on where we might go, inside the places, bases, etc., to womp them back if they do, in fact, make this attack.

GEN MCCUTCHEON: Right.

GEN BURCHINAL: Okay, if you get any word on the attack, results etc., keep them coming just as fast as you can get them.

GEN MCCUTCHEON: Yes, sir. Will do.

GEN BURCHINAL: Thank you.

EMERGENCY ACTIONS: General Burchinal.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes.

EMERGENCY ACTIONS: Would you go to Mr. McNamara's office please, sir.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right.

EA: Thank you, sir.

A recording, Mr. McNamara to Admiral Sharp at 1019 AM, EDT, 4 August.

MR. MCNAMARA: Hello.

ADM SHARP: Yes, sir.

MR. MCNAMARA: Hello Ollie, Bob. Sorry to awaken you tonight. Have you seen these messages regarding the MADDOX and a possible attack on her?

ADM SHARP: No, sir. I just got into Headquarters but they're all here and my Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations has read them.

MR. MCNAMARA: Okay, good.

ADM SHARP: I just got in.

MR. MCNAMARA: Well, we have a slight change in Rules of Engagement going out to you. I understand it has been sent by telephone,; we're confirming it by cable. It accepts, partially, your recommendation to pursue to the 3-mile limit except it's for aircraft only. But that isn't really the reason for my call. The reason for my call is to suggest that you examine the kill capability of the MADDOX and its associated aircraft to be sure that we've done everything we possibly can to assure destruction of any attacking craft and use whatever carrier force, flaeships, fighters, anything else you need in terms of numbers and weapons to obtain that objective.

ADM SHARP: All right, sir. Now when I talked to Keith McCutcheon about 15 minutes ago, he was talking about flaeships and flaeships are the one thing that I'm not sure about right now.

MR. MCNAMARA: You mean you don't know whether they have them or whether it would be wise to use them.

ADM SHARP: Well, no, we'll use them if we have them but the question is, are they ready and we have already told the fleet to get them ready.

MR. MCNAMARA: Yes.

ADM SHARP: But there is a question in my mind right now whether they're there or not. And of course, these people --- these aircraft have a limited night attack capability anyway.

MR. MCNAMARA: Yes.

ADM SHARP: But when we get the flareships there, we're all right. In the meantime, of course, I think the two destroyers can handle themselves pretty doggone well anyway.

MR. MCNAMARA: Well, do you think the two destroyers could destroy the attacking craft -- the Swatows.

ADM SHARP: Yes, sir.

MR. MCNAMARA: At night?

ADM SHARP: Yes, sir. They should be able to.

MR. MCNAMARA: Make perfectly clear that's the objective.

ADM SHARP: Oh, yes sir, they know that.

MR. MCNAMARA: Just use whatever force you need to accomplish that, air and sea.

ADM SHARP: Right. Well, we've got two F-8's and two A-4D's right now up and 4 A-1H's will be up shortly.
Now -

MR. MCNAMARA: Why not put 20 more in the hole. I'm just going to an extreme here. I just want to understand why it's only 4.

ADM SHARP: It's not 4, it's 8.

MR. MCNAMARA: All right, why 8, why not 20?

ADM SHARP: Well, I think that until an attack happens - -

MR. MCNAMARA: Oh, yes, surely, I understand that, but after the attack happens, you wouldn't feel limited to 8 or 10 or anything like that.

ADM SHARP: We'll put everything on deck up, sir. Ha! Ha!

MR. MCNAMARA: Alright Ollie. If any question arises, just pick up the phone and call me.

ADM SHARP: All right, sir, certainly will.

MR. MCNAMARA: "Buzz" Wheeler is on his way to New York. This is one of the reasons I'm calling you. Dave Burchinal is here in my office at the present time.

ADM SHARP: All right, sir. Well, we're organized now. I think we have everything we need here - - the TICO has 3 destroyers with her including 1 DDG and then the other 2, the MADDOX and JOY - now the TURNER JOY has got a good battery and should be able to handle these things pretty easily, I think.

MR. MCNAMARA: Is the TURNER JOY's battery better than the MADDOX's?

ADM SHARP: Yes, sir; yes, sir. She's an after World War II destroyer and has these very fast firing 5"/54's.

MR. MCNAMARA: I see. Thanks very much, Ollie.

ADM SHARP: You're welcome, sir. Nice talking to you.

MR. MCNAMARA: Righto. Bye.

A recording, Admiral Sharp to General Burchinal at 1059 AM, EDT, 4 August.

GEN BURCHINAL: Hello.

ADM SHARP: Dave, --- Ollie.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes.

ADM SHARP: We're just thinking about what we might hit in reprisal.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes.

ADM SHARP: HON ME Island. HON ME.

GEN BURCHINAL: Significant?

ADM SHARP: Huh. Significant that the PT's have been working out of there. Apparently they've been going in there to fuel.

GEN BURCHINAL: There is a base there, then, for them.

ADM SHARP: Yes. They've been working out of there, we've noticed.

GEN BURCHINAL: HON ME, huh.

ADM SHARP: Yes, and then there's another little island called HON NE which is up ---

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes, now we've been doing those you know.

ADM SHARP: Huh?

GEN BURCHINAL: We've been hitting those with other things, you know.

ADM SHARP: Yes -- yes. That's right, but a good air strike on them would do a hell of a lot more than those other things.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes.

ADM SHARP: And can be done rather easily and right now, the CONSTELLATION will be -- she's within 350 miles of the Task Group right now.

GEN BURCHINAL: Uh huh. So you give her what -- about 12 hours; how much --

ADM SHARP: Oh well, she could make -- she could go in there right now and support them. No strain.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes.

ADM SHARP: That's stretching a little now but, she's going that way all the time and it's real easy.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right.

ADM SHARP: And we've speeded her up to get her down there as fast as possible.

GEN BURCHINAL: . Good.

ADM SHARP: But she -- in other words, we've got two CVA's now that are ready to go. Now there are two other Swatow bases are QUANG KHE.

GEN BURCHINAL: Got that.

ADM SHARP: And BEN THUY.

GEN BURCHINAL: BEN THUY --- our info is that it has been replaced by PHUC LOI.

ADM SHARP: By what?

GEN BURCHINAL: PHUC LOI.

ADM SHARP: How do you spell it.

GEN BURCHINAL: PHUC LOI -- it's just down the river.

ADM SHARP: Yes.

GEN BURCHINAL: Down closer to the coast.

ADM SHARP: Yes --- yes.

GEN BURCHINAL: And there are five altogether. Hear they eliminated the one near the big city HAIPHONG.

ADM SHARP: Yes.

GEN BURCHINAL: And kept four in and what Mr. McNamara wants is for you to move to assemble, move, and get on the TICO as quickly as you can, a mining capability as an option for these four. This was the purpose of the call to your people asking them to get a hundred Mark 50's with assembly teams to the TICO as quickly as possible and let us know when.

ADM SHARP: Okay. We might put them on the CONSTELLATION instead.

GEN BURCHINAL: Okay. Either way.

ADM SHARP: Okay. We can do that. I still --- you know how we feel about -- mining, don't you.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes. The other thing --

ADM SHARP: Did you see the message I sent you yesterday? Our evaluation of the vulnerability of a certain place down south?

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes -- yes.

ADM SHARP: You've seen that one, have you?

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes. The other thing is we're just developing a number of options.

ADM SHARP: Yes.

GEN BURCHINAL: The other thing would be air, of course, against the bases and the boats themselves.

ADM SHARP: Well, how about an armed recco which would sort of fly up and down between HON ME and up around HON NE and hit any of this kind of craft we see --- either in the bay or at sea?

GEN BURCHINAL: I think that would be a good one.

ADM SHARP: Well, we can put that one on and all you have to do is say go.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right. The other is we're looking at the POL associated with the BEN THUY or PHUC LOI; there are two right there.

ADM SHARP: Uh huh, yes. There's that one at VINH.

GEN BURCHINAL: Uh huh, yes. That one and then there's one down river, a smaller one or about the same size actually it appears to support the base itself. Right at PHUC LOI.

ADM SHARP: Well, we can -- all these things -- we can do and all you have to do is say so.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right. Your people, I understand, are moving on the mining as Mr. McNamara wants that capability as fast as he can get it.

ADM SHARP: Okay. It'll take that -- let's see, I think we estimated 48-hours.

GEN BURCHINAL: 48 hours.

ADM SHARP: But, yes, it takes time.

GEN BURCHINAL: Can you fly them there?

ADM SHARP: Oh, we can fly them, yes, but, see the only thing you can fly aboard a carrier are these COD things and they don't carry too many.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes, yes.

ADM SHARP: And so, it'll be a little slow.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right.

ADM SHARP: Of course we can -- here's another thing we could do, we could carry quite a few of them in A-3D's from Subic.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes. Sure.

ADM SHARP: So, that can always be done. Okay, we'll have both those capabilities cranked up then.

GEN BURCHINAL: Fine. I'll suggest these other two.

ADM SHARP: Yes. Okay. Okay, Dave. Tell Mr. McNamara that we've -- that the CONSTELLATION will be -- is close enough now pretty quick.

GEN BURCHINAL: To provide support if needed. Right, and understand things are a little tight out there at the moment.

ADM SHARP: We just -- we just got a report saying that DESOTO Patrol is under continuous torpedo attack. Did you get that?

GEN BURCHINAL: No.

ADM SHARP: We just got it.

GEN BURCHINAL: Keep them coming on the reports of action.

ADM SHARP: Okay.

GEN BURCHINAL: Okay, Ollie. Right. Thank you.

A recording, Admiral Sharp to General Burchinal at 1118 AM, EDT, 4 August.

GEN BURCHINAL: Hello.

ADM SHARP: Hello, Dave.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes, Ollie.

ADM SHARP: I guess you know they've started shooting at them.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yep.

ADM SHARP: Both ways. One of them is -- said they've dodged five torpedoes and he's firing on the PT and one -- we had one message that said he was going to try to ram one. So they must be pretty close.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right.

ADM SHARP: Now, on this uh --

GEN BURCHINAL: Your air doing anything yet, or can you tell.

ADM SHARP: Can't tell yet, we haven't anything on that. Now on this mining deal. You know about this one?

GEN BURCHINAL: Yep.

ADM SHARP: What we ought to do with this is airlift these things to DANANG.

GEN BURCHINAL: Uum hum.

ADM SHARP: And then from there we can COD them out to the carrier --

GEN BURCHINAL: Right.

ADM SHARP: Which would not be the TICONDEROGA but the CONSTELLATION probably, and then in addition, we'll get some ready over there at Subic for the A-3's.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right.

ADM SHARP: That's a long flight. But this is not the way to do this job. The way to do this job is with air.

GEN BURCHINAL: Understand. He just wants an option.

ADM SHARP: Yep. Okay, we'll get the option ready but this option, you know, is roughly 48 hours.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right.

ADM SHARP: So it's not something that's going to happen right away.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right.

ADM SHARP: And that constitutes a quick answer on when this is going to happen. About 48 hours.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right.

ADM SHARP: Now, have you seen -- here's one from DIRNSA to a lot of people out here. 041441.

GEN BURCHINAL: No.

ADM SHARP: Dave.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes.

ADM SHARP: This talks about a place where the -- where these people are going into to hide.

GEN BURCHINAL: Oh, name -- you got a name there.

ADM SHARP: Yea, LOC CHAO Estuary.

GEN BURCHINAL: Uh huh. Okay, we'll run that one down.

ADM SHARP: It's 19.46 North.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right.

ADM SHARP: That'll give you a lead.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right.

ADM SHARP: So -- what we ought to have done -- this idea of an armed recco, running up and down between HON ME and HON NE, would cover this place.

GEN BURCHINAL: They want to do something that's -- probably -- maybe that to, but more severe than going right in and picking up secondaries.

ADM SHARP: Well, what we ought to do as soon as it gets light is put up an armed recco to go in and take these people because it would be reasonably simple with a good strong armed recco up there.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right.

ADM SHARP: Well, it's not simple but -- because these people are kind of hard to hit, running around 50 knots and turning fast.

GEN BURCHINAL: Okay.

ADM SHARP: But, I would -- that's the first thing to do.

If we want to really get them as soon as it ---

GEN BURCHINAL: At the first light background.

ADM SHARP: Well, right now if we can. If its open season on these boys which I think it is, we'll take it from there.

GEN BURCHINAL: Okay. Any word we can get we're going to have a meeting with SECSTATE, White House, directly.

ADM SHARP: Okay.

GEN BURCHINAL: Okay. Thank you and any more report of action out yonder, tune us in.

ADM SHARP: Okay.

GEN BURCHINAL: Thank you.

A recording, White House Situation Room to Pacific Desk, NMCC at 1213 PM, EDT, 4 August.

COL BUCKLEY: Pacific Desk, Col Buckley.

WHITE HOUSE: This is Werner, Sit Room. Tell me, we had a message earlier saying of the launch of some aircraft. What happened to the CAP. Weren't they --- Our last conference call there was no CAP, what's the --

COL BUCKLEY: Right, sir. I think the only thing we can draw conclusion here that they may of had to refuel, run out of gas or time, possibly.

MR. WERNER: So you think that they're back down on the carrier then?

COL BUCKLEY: I think this is probably right. It says no air support at present. In other words, it looked like he might have had some but they may have had to refuel somewhere.

MR. WERNER: Okay. Thank you.

COL BUCKLEY: We should have some more clarification on this and we'll give you a call as soon as we get something different.

MR. WERNER: Right.

COL BUCKLEY: Okay.

A recording, Admiral Sharp to General Burchinal at 1222 PM, EDT, 4 August.

ADM SHARP: Dave.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes, go ahead.

ADM SHARP: There apparently have been at least 9 torpedoes in the water. All missed and apparently 2 of the boats have been sunk as far as we can tell.

GEN BURCHINAL: Good. How many were engaged? Do you know?

ADM SHARP: Let's see, there must of been a total of six engaged, I think. Not sure on that yet.

GEN BURCHINAL: Any aircraft?

ADM SHARP: You mean enemy?

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes.

ADM SHARP: No, I don't --- wait a minute now. I'm not so sure about this number of engaged.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right.

ADM SHARP: We've got to check it out here. It may not be that high. NO. No report on - we did have a report on bogies at one time but we haven't any confirmation of that.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right. Were they sunk by gunfire or air attack? Do you know?

ADM SHARP: By gun I think. TURNER JOY.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right.

ADM SHARP: Now the CONSTELLATION has six A-4's and two F-4's on the scene. She launched them at 2300 H which, of course, is an hour and a half ago, and she sent in another four A-1's at 2315. Her present position is 18-07 N and 112 E, and she is closing 77.5. The CVA's have flare aircraft up there. There are also some C-123's at DANANG which we are telling them they can use if they want to.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right.

ADM SHARP: I told PACAF to send four F-102's to either of two fields, either DANANG or TAN SON NHUT.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right.

ADM SHARP: And I told him to get 12 F-102's down to Clark - as back up.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right.

ADM SHARP: And that's about it. The two carriers are close enough now that they can support each other.

GEN BURCHINAL: Are they still exchanging fire?

ADM SHARP: I've been so busy doing other things that I haven't looked at the last - whether they're still shooting each other or not.

GEN BURCHINAL: (UNREADABLE)

ADM SHARP: I can't - I don't see that they have. Here's another one now, just got it. Let me see - The MADDOX says she has evaded about 10 torpedoes. Two craft are sunk. No casualties to us and they got some AD's and A-4D's on the scene but they're having trouble with illumination. The TURNER JOY or one of the two was giving star shell illumination for the planes. As far as we can tell there were only three boats. But that doesn't count up to that many torpedoes I don't think. It sounds to me like there are more boats than just three. Well that's about the size of it, Dave. Now I have sent out one telling them to take care of them in the general area of the problem. It's open season on PT's and Swatow's. I've also told MACV to keep those ones down, you know in DANANG, in port so that they don't get mixed up in this thing.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right. So you're calling them off for three or four days.

ADM SHARP: I've called them off, yes. That's just about it Dave.

GEN BURCHINAL: Okay. Ollie.

ADM SHARP: Of course, we would like to see that 11 miles changed to three.

GEN BURCHINAL: Understand. We're working on it.

ADM SHARP: Okay. And also we would like to do hot pursuit with aircraft.

GEN BURCHINAL: Understand. We're working on that.

ADM SHARP: I'm sending a message to you now suggesting an armed recco between HON NE and HON ME.

GEN BURCHINAL: For your info Ollie you might dig out the target material to be sure that the boys in the CVA's have them.

ADM SHARP: Target material?

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes. On two southern Swatow bases. QUANG KHE and PHUC LOI.

ADM SHARP: QUANG KHE and PHUC LOI.

GEN BURCHINAL: PHOC LOI, I guess it is. PHOC LOI plus the VINH and PHOC LOI POL.

ADM SHARP: VINH and PHOC LOI?

GEN BURCHINAL: POL.

ADM SHARP: Thats PHUC LOI?

GEN BURCHINAL: It's PHOC LOI, I think. It's just down the river from BEN THUY.

ADM SHARP: BEN THUY.
GEN BURCHINAL: Yes, just down the river from BEN THUY base.
ADM SHARP: Okay, Dave.
GEN BURCHINAL: You might have those target materials on hand.
ADM SHARP: Okay, thanks a lot.

A recording Adm Sharp to Gen Burchinal at 1:01 PM EDT 4 Aug

ADM SHARP: Dave?
GEN BURCHINAL: Yes.
ADM SHARP: We need to give these people some rules of engagement on aircraft and here is what I am suggesting. I would say to CINCPACFLT/7th FLT "Authority granted to declare hostile, and engage, any DRV/CHICOM aircraft whose actions and behavior indicate within reasonable certainty that an attack on US forces is intended".
GEN BURCHINAL: Yes. Do you have any indication of those screwing around out there?
ADM SHARP. Yes. There have been a couple which flew down south of HAINAN, that went down almost, as I recall, to DA NANG - out at sea.
GEN BURCHINAL: Do you know what kind they were?
ADM SHARP: No. They were Jets - their speeds were, as I recall, about 400 kts.
GEN BURCHINAL: From HAINAN down as far as DA NANG?

ADM SHARP: What?

GEN BURCHINAL: HAINAN down as far as DA NANG?

ADM SHARP: Yes.

GEN BURCHINAL: When did that happen - last night?

ADM SHARP: Yes. I don't - (Do you have that piece of paper we had about the two aircraft we saw flying around?) Dave, we've got quite a few aircraft on HAINAN you know, roughly 50, something like that.

GEN BURCHINAL: 28's and what else? Do you know?

ADM SHARP: T28's and MIG 17's, 15's. There is a total of 79, I have here. So there is a considerable force there and these CVA's are too close right now to let these fellows fly over us.

GEN BURCHINAL: I understand.

ADM SHARP: And he's got some, matter of fact, he's got some F8's in the air right now with sparrows on them and some F4's. So we've got to have something other - we can't allow these people to fly over our carriers at this point.

GEN BURCHINAL: Understand Ollie.

ADM SHARP: And, do you want me to wait until you give me an OK on it? Or shall I go out with it?

GEN BURCHINAL: Well, all I can do at the moment is note it because we're meeting at the White House. If you think it's necessary for the security of your forces, I think that's your job to put it out.

ADM SHARP: Well, I'm going to go ahead with it.

GEN BURCHINAL: And I'll just note it and tell the Chief that's what you've done. And if anything comes up we'll be in a countermanding position, but I think from the point of view of security of your forces you can't do anything less.

ADM SHARP: Yes - I'm going to go ahead and put it out.

GEN BURCHINAL: OK

ADM SHARP: Right

GEN BURCHINAL: Fine Ollie. Bye.

A recording - White House Situation Room to Command Center Operations
Team Chief at 1:03 PM EDT 4 AUG

MR. HAYS: Col Nickols, this is Bob Hays in the White House Situation Room. The NSC meeting has broken up now. Your Secretary, Mr. McNamara, Mr. Rusk and Mr. McCone are going to be having lunch with the President.

COL NICKOLS: Would you say that again and let me write it down.

MR. HAYS: Right

COL NICKOLS: Now, who's meeting with the President?

MR. HAYS: Well, the NSC meeting has broken up and McCone, Rusk and McNamara will be having lunch with the President along with Mr. Bundy. What we wanted to do was to make sure we were getting all these MADDOX messages on Priority and we will take care

of servicing all four of them upstairs, and with the President.

COL NICKOLS: Okay. They are having lunch in the White House.

MR. HAYS: Pardon me?

COL NICKOLS: They are having lunch in the White House?

MR. HAYS: Yes, they are having lunch with the President.

So if you get anything, shoot it over as fast as you can. I know you have been, but we wanted to let you know his whereabouts.

COL NICKOLS: We'll do it.

MR. HAYS: Fine - thank you. Bye.

A recording - Secretary McNamara to Gen Burchinal at 1:24 PM EDT 4 AUG

SEC McNAMARA: Hello, Dave.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes sir.

SEC McNAMARA: Dave, any further reports?

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes. Well, I talked to Adm Sharp on another matter. He called and said he, for the security of his forces, had to give his air CAP some instructions in case any enemy aircraft showed up - and he's done that. Last night they did spot two that they think were IL28s flown from HAINAN, down off DA NANG, and back again. The Chiefs have considered courses of action, sir. They considered three: the first, was a low level type retaliatory which would take just the

PT base at PHUC LOI and the oil associated with it at VINH. They are all in the same area. The second, was to take the two Swatow bases south of the 20th, plus that estuary which our intelligence says these boats run up in the daytime - with armed recce, and the two oil. The third, was to take all five of the Swatow bases, plus the two oil south there, and HAIPHONG. They are unanimously agreed on the second course of action. That south of the 20th you would take the Swatow bases at PHUC LOI and QUANG KHE, and the estuary at LOC CHAO. With those three PT targets you would also take the oil storages at VINH and PHUC LOI. That is their unanimous recommendation.

SEC McNAMARA:

What further action reports do you have?

GEN BURCHINAL:

I don't have any except for one intercept that came in somewhat garbled form that said that one enemy boat wounded and one enemy airplane seen falling from the sky.

SEC McNAMARA:

Would you call Ollie Sharp and find out from him what his latest information is? Almost an hour has gone by since we last had a report. Has the engagement broken off? and, if so, with what results?

GEN BURCHINAL:

The last I had was that there was no further indication of engagement. I'll get him right back again . . .

SEC McNAMARA: If he doesn't have any further information, ask him to radio to the task force and get it.

GEN BURCHINAL: I will.

SEC McNAMARA: And then call me here over at the Mansion.

GEN BURCHINAL: I will.

A recording - Gen Burchinal to Adm Sharp at 1:28 PM EDT 4 AUG

GEN BURCHINAL: Ollie, Mr. McNamara just called me from the White House. What's your very latest on the engagement?

ADM SHARP: The best we know is two sunk.

GEN BURCHINAL: I've given him that.

ADM SHARP: We don't know how many are involved really. There is some indication that one of our aircraft might have been hit but that is just an indication, nothing else.

GEN BURCHINAL: He wanted to know if you could get on the radio out there and find out really what the latest is. Has the engagement broken off? There is one report we received which said that one of our aircraft was seen falling into the sea.

ADM SHARP: Yes. That's the one I saw. You know what kind that was.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes. Is there any way you can get on the horn to Moore and find out what the status of engagement is?

ADM SHARP: I'll see if PACFLT has a circuit open to him.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes. I'll hold on.

ADM SHARP: It will take some time. No use in holding on, I will call you back.

GEN BURCHINAL: All right. He wants to be called over there on the latest status of engagement if you can get any word.

ADM SHARP: Well, I would say that we haven't had a report of any shooting now - there have been 13 torpedoes launched at the ships. None of them have hit. The aircraft were attacking, and let me see, a total of 12 torpedoes, 2 PTs destroyed. The TICONDEROGA aircraft are illuminating and attacking. The CONSTELLATION has aircraft on the scene now, and also the CONSTELLATION has four F-4's up armed with Sparrows as a CAP.

GEN BURCHINAL: OK. When you get through, call me.

ADM SHARP: I'll get anything I can in addition.

GEN BURCHINAL: Thanks, Ollie.

ADM SHARP: Welcome.

A recording between Adm Sharp and Gen Burchinal at 1:59 PM EDT 4 AUG

ADM SHARP: Dave, we aren't able to contact them by voice. We have sent a message saying expedite your SITREPS. The latest thing we have is one from 72.1 which says he has reviewed the action now, he said, many of the reported contacts and torpedoes fired appear doubtful. Have you seen

this one?

GEN BURCHINAL:

No.

ADM SHARP:

Freak weather effects on radar and overeager sonarmen may have accounted for many reports. No actual visual sightings by MADDOX. Of course, this doesn't take anything away from the other destroyer and, of course, we know that there has been contacts because we got the dope on the destruction, as you know. So there we are, and we can't get them by single side band.

GEN BURCHINAL:

You don't know whether the air attacks are still going on or not?

ADM SHARP:

The latest thing that I have is that we have some A-1s airborne. As far as we know, they still have aircraft up, in fact I'm sure they do.

GEN BURCHINAL:

Do you know if they're attacking, engaging or not?

ADM SHARP:

No, the last indications we have were that they were illuminating and it didn't say whether they were attacking or not, but they had flare ships up.

GEN BURCHINAL:

Okay. Well, I'll tell Mr. McNamara this, and if anything else comes in to you . . .

ADM SHARP:

I'm afraid what's happened is that our Flash

messages have choked up the circuit. I have just told everybody to knock off using Flash. That is from here. That is the best I can give you Dave, sorry.

GEN BURCHINAL: Okay. Many thanks, Ollie.

ADM SHARP: As soon as I get any more I will let you know.

GEN BURCHINAL: Thanks a lot.

ADM SHARP: OK. Goodbye.

A recording - Adm Sharp to Gen Burchinal at 2:08 PM EDT 4 August

ADM SHARP: Dave. We have a more recent one from 77.5. He said three PT's reported sunk now. He talks about the weather. He says weather over De Soto past three hours varied 800 to 3000 broken. And I don't know miles visibility. It is deteriorating which is hampering aircraft in the location of targets. And an EA-1B moved from a middle man position to De Soto to attempt to vector planes to contact. Two F4's are on the scene, and two are about to launch. No torpedo firings in the last 15 minutes. De Soto patrol reports no contacts on the radar screen.

GEN BURCHINAL: And what's the date time group?

ADM SHARP: This was 041732 Z.

GEN BURCHINAL: That's about 1315 our time, about an hour ago, the attack.

ADM SHARP: Not quite an hour ago.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right. OK, that will do it.

ADM SHARP: OK.

GEN BURCHINAL: Thank you.

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 the 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 that maybe one PT was sunk by another PT. But that's - this is still in the conjecture stage.

GEN BURCHINAL: OK, well that's fine. As far as we know then the aircraft are still attempting to maintain contact?

ADM SHARP: They are - they definitely are - right.

GEN BURCHINAL: Thank you, Ollie.

ADM SHARP: Welcome - Bye.

A recording - Adm Mustin to the DDO for Operations B/Gen Smith
at 3:34 PM EDT 4 AUG

ADM MUSTIN: Bob - Jim Miller is getting the execute

message typed up on this thing. Its got a few modifications in it from what I discussed with you, but that's neither here nor there. He's going to bring it up here, and I'm going to take it into the tank for the Chiefs to look at finally before it goes. When they say it's ready to go, then I want it to go on that open line which I trust you are still holding.

DDO: We've just sent them a little message to check it out and they are just bringing the message back. They "Rogerred" for the one I sent.

ADM MUSTIN: OK. I've just been talking to Adm Sharp on the phone and he knows this is expected momentarily and he may call back for it, so keep your tape cutters and whatever else you need right there ready to roll.

DDO: I told him the Joint Chiefs were in session and that we would have something for him shortly.

ADM MUSTIN: Righto.

DDO: All right, sir.

ADM MUSTIN: OK.

A recording - Adm Sharp to Gen Burchinal at 4:40 PM EDT 4 AUG

ADM SHARP: Hi, Dave.

GEN BURCHINAL: The message is up in SECDEF's office now. We should have it on the wire to you directly.

ADM SHARP: I talked to him just a few minutes ago and he

said what's the dope, and I told him that there is still a slight amount of doubt.

GEN BURCHINAL: As to whether he actually had one or not?

ADM SHARP: So he said what do you think, and I said I had told Moore about a half hour before that we had to get some definite information from these characters out there and he's gone out for it. I told him I thought we would have it within 2 hours.

GEN BURCHINAL: One report said no question of that they were illuminated and had guns fired at them.

ADM SHARP: Yes. We have another one here which I am just calling your attention to now.

GEN BURCHINAL: East 11 fires.

ADM SHARP: Hmmmmmmmm?

GEN BURCHINAL: The one - there was about -- well -

ADM SHARP: No, this one said certain that original ambush was bonafide. Details of action following present a confusing picture. Have interviewed witnesses who made positive visual sightings. Have you seen that one?

GEN BURCHINAL: No.

ADM SHARP: Of cockpit lights or similar passing near MADDOX. You haven't seen that one?

GEN BURCHINAL: No.

ADM SHARP: Well. This is . . .

GEN BURCHINAL: Hasn't got in yet.

ADM SHARP: This is 041848 from CTG 72.1. That's the latest thing we have. It looks fairly certain. But anyway, I'm to call him and tell him.

GEN BURCHINAL: The minute you get an answer?

ADM SHARP: Yes - and we're not to go until we are confident that we have had one.

GEN BURCHINAL: You think you can launch by seven?

ADM SHARP: Yes, I think so. It'll be tight.

GEN BURCHINAL: And the idea being only to ---

ADM SHARP: But it may be just as well to wait an hour or so if we have to, to be certain.

GEN BURCHINAL: And the only one of course is the one major go at these places, except for the possibility of the recce which may be continued.

ADM SHARP: Well, that's new - now I was figuring on a recycle, if necessary.

GEN BURCHINAL: Oh - well if it's on an as-necessary basis, I think that's probably OK.

ADM SHARP: Yes, because there were quite a few -

GEN BURCHINAL: You get reports on some soft stuff that they didn't get, and there is something to go back again.

ADM SHARP: Yes - well - that's right. Especially on VINH.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes - that one you put enough on initially to really clean it up and if . . .

ADM SHARP: Well - we're going after so many places at once, that it looks like a redo would have to be on one of these.

GEN BURCHINAL: And that would probably be the best.

ADM SHARP: Yes.

GEN BURCHINAL: If you can make that northern one a one go, it would be better too.

ADM SHARP: Right, right. I agree.

GEN BURCHINAL: Because of the reaction possibility.

ADM SHARP: Yes, and I told them a recce is feasible so that we don't necessarily have to go up there. I just want to call your attention to that one message which indicates . . . a little better.

GEN BURCHINAL: OK - well, we'll wait for your call back on the confirmation routine, then we'll have the operator roll.

ADM SHARP: OK.

GEN BURCHINAL: Thanks, Ollie - Bye.

ADM SHARP: Hey, Dave, tell Dave MacDonald that he was about right on 70 total.

GEN BURCHINAL: On both?

ADM SHARP: That's 70 for the two of them. Not 70 each.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right. Right. OK.

ADM SHARP: OK. Right. Goodbye. Thank you.

A recording - Col Jones in the JCS conference room to the NMCC
Pacific Desk, Cdr Hattaway, at 5:00 PM EDT 4 AUG

CDR HATTAWAY: Hello, This is Cdr Hattaway on the Pac Desk.

COL JONES: This is Col Jones, I'm up at the Gold Room. The Chiefs would like to get the forecasters to give us a forecast of the weather as of 0700 local time out at the target area.

CDR HATTAWAY: Forecast as of 0700?

COL JONES: That's right, out there about 2 hours from now.

CDR HATTAWAY: OK, all right.

COL JONES: Over the target area, and we would like the information up here as soon as you get it.

CDR HATTAWAY: All right.

COL JONES: Thank you.

A recording - Adm Sharp to Gen Burchinal at 5:23 PM EDT 4 AUG

ADM SHARP: Dave, reference DIRNSA 041933Z.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes.

ADM SHARP: Have you seen it?

GEN BURCHINAL: No. Well, I'm not sure I have.

ADM SHARP: Well, here now they came out definitely and said they sacrificed two ships and the rest are ok.

GEN BURCHINAL: Oh, yes, we've seen that. I couldn't tell whether they meant ships. They said comrades.

ADM SHARP: No, no, I remember that one. This was a different

one. Now this is where they say they sacrificed two ships and all the rest are ok. You haven't seen that one?

GEN BURCHINAL:

No.

ADM SHARP:

I just got it. You ought to look at it because this pins it down better than anything so far.

GEN BURCHINAL:

Indicates that they were out there on business, huh?

ADM SHARP:

Oh, yes. Very definitely.

GEN BURCHINAL:

OK.

ADM SHARP:

They thought that they shot down a couple of planes. Now we also have one from 7th Fleet recapping and he says that TURNER JOY reports two.

GEN BURCHINAL:

Yes - we got that.

ADM SHARP:

And

GEN BURCHINAL:

SECDEF is satisfied with the evidence.

ADM SHARP:

He is, huh?

GEN BURCHINAL:

Yes.

ADM SHARP:

Well, now - I'm waiting for one more from the TURNER JOY. We're expecting one more. And actually I'm satisfied too. But then another thing. Now this thing is coming off at 2000 your time.

GEN BURCHINAL:

Yes.

ADM SHARP: Because we're shooting on GOLF time. Now we were using - HOTEL time in our message, but we're going to change it. Tom used GOLF in his.

GEN BURCHINAL: So it's 2000 our time.

ADM SHARP: Right.

GEN BURCHINAL: OK.

ADM SHARP: Now I think I'll give you a call pretty soon - I'll talk with Mr. McNamara pretty quick.

GEN BURCHINAL: He's right here with us.

ADM SHARP: OK - well - I'm waiting for one more message then I'll give you the dope.

GEN BURCHINAL: Thank you, Ollie.

ADM SHARP: OK - goodbye.

Recorded conversation, Admiral Mustin to the DDO NMCC General Smith at 5:29 PM, EDT, 4 August.

ADM MUSTIN: Bob, there is again this confusion about what time it is in the Gulf of Tonkin. I wish you'd get on that Teletype circuit or something and get this straightened out once and for all. We want to know not only what time do they keep in Saigon, but we also want to know what time those carriers are keeping at sea up there in the Gulf of Tonkin, in case there is any difference.

DDO: Yes, sir, there should be no. . .

ADM MUSTIN: There seems to be some confusion whether we have a 12 hour difference, 11 hour difference, or what

we have; and we want to know, and we want to know right here in the tank right now. So put somebody through on a wire that will go through for sure, like to CINCPAC's War Room, and ask him to check a little further to resolve the possibility of differences between what's kept in Saigon, which may be an artificial time, and what time the carriers are keeping, and let us know back here, and use whatever it takes to get through at the desk.

GEN SMITH: I'll do that.

ADM MUSTIN: Righto.

Recorded conversation, the Deputy Director for Operation General Smith to General McCutcheon at 5:33 PM, EDT, 4 August.

GEN SMITH: This is Smith at the NMCC. I have just had a call from Admiral Mustin out at the tank and apparently a big discussion has come up over the imte in the Bay of Tonkin that you CVA's are carrying, as opposed to the ~~time~~ in Saigon. Can you straighten this out for me?

GEN McCUTCHEON: That's correct. We had told CINCPACFLT in our message to go on HOTEL time, but they had previously gone out to 7th fleet and used GOLF time. The particular real estate in question is about halfway between GOLF and HOTEL. Realizing that they can use that extra hour, Admiral Sharp has told them to plan on using GOLF time. That would

make it 2000 Washington time if it comes off as scheduled.

GEN SMITH: 2000 at Saigon time would be waht, 1900?
GEN McCUTCHEON: Negative - 2000 Washington time.
GEN SMITH: 2000 Washington time. I am with you.
GEN McCUTCHEON: That would be 1400 here in Honolulu and would be 0700 out there.
GEN SMITH: 0700 out there. Alright now. If they use the HOTEL time what time would it be?
GEN McCUTCHEON: Well, if they went on HOTEL time it would be one hour earlier; it would be 1900 Washington time.
GEN SMITH: Right and 0600 out there. Right?
GEN McCUTCHEON: Negative. If they went on ^{7:00 AM Monday} 0700 HOTEL it would be ^{7:00 AM} 1900 in Washington. If they go on ^{7:00 AM} 0700 GOLF it would be ^{8:00 AM} 2000 in Washington.
GEN SMITH: OK, I am with you. That's fine. OK, I'll call that into them. Thank you ever so much.

Recorded conversation, Admiral Sharp to General Burchinal at 5:39 PM, EDT, 4 August.

ADM SHARP: Hi, Dave.
GEN BURCHINAL: Yes - I read that message you referenced.
ADM SHARP: Good.
GEN BURCHINAL: Indicates there may be some other activity under way.
ADM SHARP: Well -
GEN BURCHINAL: They said in the message that they were -
ADM SHARP: They were carrying out the hunt.
GEN BURCHINAL: Yes.

ADM SHARP: Right - Now I just wanted to be sure that we understood each other on this as to the time that will be launch time.

GEN BURCHINAL: At 0700 local.

ADM SHARP: Right.

GEN BURCHINAL: Launch time - that's right.

ADM SHARP: Yes.

GEN BURCHINAL: Now - we were having an argument here with the clocks again. We're on eastern daylight - Saigon is 12 hours - is this different than Saigon?

ADM SHARP: According to our clock here you're on Queen time. What time is it there now?

GEN BURCHINAL: Right now at here it is 5:40 - 1740.

ADM SHARP: Right - that's right - and we check on that. And it's 4:40 in the morning.

GEN BURCHINAL: In that local area, not in Saigon.

ADM SHARP: No, no. It's Saigon's. They're on a special time.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes.

ADM SHARP: 4:40.

GEN BURCHINAL: OK.

ADM SHARP: So we're checked. We got you on, right?

GEN BURCHINAL: Right.

ADM SHARP: OK, Dave - I just wanted to check - I'm still waiting for one more.

GEN BURCHINAL: Did you get that other word on possible things from the North moving down?

ADM SHARP: No, I don't believe I did.

GEN BURCHINAL: NSA stuff again. I haven't seen it. I just heard a report. There is a report that some stuff from the north - north - north would move into the north. . .

ADM SHARP: You mean air?

GEN BURCHINAL: Chi stuff, yes, into Dien Bien.

ADM SHARP: No, I haven't seen that one.

GEN BURCHINAL: We'll keep an eye out for it and be sure.

ADM SHARP: OK, Dave.

GEN BURCHINAL: OK, Ollie.

ADM SHARP: Call you later.

Recorded conversation, Admiral Sharp to General Burchinal at 6:07 PM, EDT, 4 August.

ADMIRAL SHARP: Hey, Dave. A couple things here. I've been waiting for another one from TURNER JOY but she keeps passing them through 77.5 and he interprets instead of sending us the thing, but I'm satisfied myself.

GEN BURCHINAL: We are, too. There will be no change.

ADM SHARP: Alright. Now a couple things -

GEN BURCHINAL: You've got the message that says go?

ADM SHARP: We have it. And that's it, huh? Is that agreeable with SECDEF?

GEN BURCHINAL: He was sitting there listening and he says he's satisfied.

ADM SHARP: OK, OK.

GEN BURCHINAL: He considers you're on the highway, friend.

ADM SHARP: He wanted me to call him and -

GEN BURCHINAL: I didn't realize it.

ADM SHARP: You've been relaying.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes. He was in the meeting with the Chiefs all the time you were calling. I was relaying. He's satisfied and he considers that the show is on the road.

ADM SHARP: Well, you tell him that I'm going ahead.

GEN BURCHINAL: That's correct.

ADM SHARP: Two things now; suppressive fire is part of this game, right?

GEN BURCHINAL: There is no question in my mind about that.

ADM SHARP: Alright, I've told CINCPACFLT that suppressive fire is part of the game.

GEN BURCHINAL: Where you have identified positions that may interfere with your forces, clean them up on the way in.

ADM SHARP: Right. Now the press should not get this story at 1900 your time.

GEN BURCHINAL: We are cognizant of that and will probably not - we will insure that nothing comes out here until we know that you're off target.

ADM SHARP: Alright. That's going to be 2100 your time.

GEN BURCHINAL: We're making plans to have it late.

ADM SHARP: Well, I notice that there is going to be a meeting across the river.

GEN BURCHINAL: It's going on right now, but nothing;s coming out of it at the moment. They will delay that until they are sure that there is no possibility of anyone reading it.

ADM SHARP: OK. I'm going to tell CINCPACFLT to GO.

GEN BURCHINAL: Alright - Now - One thing your staff might be thinking of, Ollie - We have in hand, a series of actions out of 37, of alerts and deployments to **b**uild up the posture in the area and improve our ability to react. If they clear that across the way, they will send it to you and it will bring in not only your forces, but some outside ones. And it will ask you for any others you need, to put a peak posture out there. And you people might be thinking of it. We're using 37 as the basis. But they can go on from there and anything they think they need. So those will be both alerts and deployments.

ADM SHARP: OK - I'm not going to call you again on this - this is my telling you that I'm going to execute.

GEN BURCHINAL: This is my telling you that that's our understanding here firmly.

ADM SHARP: OK.

GEN BURCHINAL: Fine, Ollie.

ADM SHARP: Thank you, Dave. Goodbye.

Recorded conversation, NMCC PAC desk to the CINCPAC D/O at 7:59 PM,
EDT, 4 August.

LCOL LINDSEY: This is Commander Hattaway, NMCC.

CDR HATTAWAY: Some of the wheels are concerned about this CTG
77.6's 141759Z.

LCOL LINDSEY: Let me get it - just a minute.

GEN WISMAN: Hattaway, you got the PAC D/O there?

LCOL LINDSEY: Yes sire, on.

GEN WISMAN: OK, now what we need is the off-times, numbers and
types ASAP.

LCOL LINDSEY: Yes, sir.

GEN WISMAN: You got anything yet?

LCOL LINDSEY: Not a thing.

GEN WISMAN: OK, now you'll come through on the KY 9, right?

LCOL LINDSEY: Yes, sir.

GEN WISMAN: OK, and the NMCC here is supposed to have a circuit
open for you, a hot line, so you can come right
up on the KY 9 and get it in here to us.

LCOL LINDSEY: OK. I have that one.

CDR HATTAWAY: They want to make sure this has no relation to
the current operation.

LCOL LINDSEY: That's correct.

CDR HATTAWAY: This is just some CAP or effort against the
earlier attack.

LCOL LINDSEY: Yes, sir.

CDR HATTAWAY: That's the way you read it, too?

LCOL LINDSEY: Yes, sir.

CDR HATTAWAY: Thank you very much. Goodbye.

Recorded conversation, General Wheeler to General Burchinal at 8:05 PM, EDT, 4 August.

GENERAL WHEELER: Dave? Anything happening?

GEN BURCHINAL: We're standing by with a clear line. Have heard nothing yet.

GEN WHEELER: OK. Well, I'm in the President's office, the outer office. If you get any word, pass the word to me. They can call me to the phone. I'm in the cabinet room, actually.

GEN BURCHINAL: I will indeed.

GEN WHEELER: OK, Dave. Goodbye.

Recorded conversation, Secretary McNamara to Admiral Sharp at 8:39 PM, EDT, 4 August.

MR. MCNAMARA: Ollie, what have you heard about the launch?

ADM SHARP: We have not heard yet, sir. I think what probably will happen will be that they will give us a coordinated report when the launch is completed.

MR. MCNAMARA: Can't you radio out to them and ask them whether they are taking off, and if not, when they plan to take off?

ADM SHARP: Yes, sir. I'll try it.

MR. MCNAMARA: It's forty minutes after the ordered time of take off.

ADM SHARP:

I think what they're probably doing is planning on giving us a coordinated take off report, which they do at the completion of take off.

MR. MCNAMARA:

"Let's get an immediate statement from them if we can. Part of the problem here is just hanging on this news, you see. The President has to make a statement to the people and I am holding him back from making it, but we're forty minutes past the time I told him we would launch."

ADM SHARP:

Alright. I will have CINCPACFLT, who has a direct line to them, see if he can raise an answer from them.

MR. MCNAMARA:

How long will it take them after launch to get over the targets?

ADM SHARP:

Well, it's going to take some of them a little over an hour.

MR. MCNAMARA:

I don't think we need worry - How soon will the first ones be over target?

ADM SHARP:

We don't have the plan of their launch. Now, if they let them all go at once, which they may do, then of course they will hit the southern targets quite quickly.

MR. MCNAMARA:

See if you can find out when they are launching and when you think their first flights will be over targets.

ADM SHARP: All right, sir.
MR. MCNAMARA: Very good. And then just call me back directly. I will be in my office.
ADM SHARP: All right, sir. Thank you.
MR. MCNAMARA: All right, Ollie. I appreciate it.
ADM SHARP: Yes, sir. Bye.

Recorded conversation, Admiral Sharp to Secretary McNamara at 9:09 PM, EDT, 4 August.

MR. MCNAMARA: McNamara.
ADM SHARP: This is Ollie, Sir.
MR. MCNAMARA: Yes, Ollie.
ADM SHARP: I just got one from one carrier.
MR. MCNAMARA: Yes.
ADM SHARP: He may be talking for both of them because he is the senior one. And he says, "Time of launch is going to be 0200Z," which means not for another 50 minutes. In other words, they couldn't make the time.
MR. MCNAMARA: Oh, my God.
ADM SHARP: And last time over target will be 0400.
MR. MCNAMARA: 0400.
ADM SHARP: 0400Z.
MR. MCNAMARA: Let's see - 0400Z, which would mean. . .
ADM SHARP: Which would mean three hours.
MR. MCNAMARA: Eleven o'clock. Three hours from now.
ADM SHARP: Yes, sir.

MR. MCNAMARA: And that is over target?

ADM SHARP: That is the last one over target.

MR. MCNAMARA: What is the first over target?

ADM SHARP: Well, the first one would be about 0300. He gave this one TOT, which could mean that he is trying to make a coordinated attack. But you see what happened, this compression of time has got him and he has had to delay his launch.

MR. MCNAMARA: Well, now, let's get clear. His time of launch is fifty minutes from now?

ADM SHARP: That's right, yes, sir.

MR. MCNAMARA: Which would make it ten PM Washington time.

ADM SHARP: That is right. Yes, sir. And the TOT would be midnight, your time.

MR. MCNAMARA: Two hours?

ADM SHARP: Yes, sir.

MR. MCNAMARA: Is it two hours to the closest target?

ADM SHARP: We assume that that meant the last TOT.

MR. MCNAMARA: Alright, what is the first TOT for ten PM Washington launch?

ADM SHARP: I don't know yet. We are trying to get an amplifying report. But as I say he could be making a coordinated attack, which would mean that he would try to get them all over at the same time, you see?

MR. MCNAMARA: How serious do you think would be a Presidential statement about the time of launch that would say

this, "At this moment air action is now in execution against gun boats and supporting facilities in and near four ports of North Vietnam which have been used in support of hostile operations"?

ADM SHARP: I don't think it would be good, sir. Frankly. Because it will alert them. No doubt about it.

MR. MCNAMARA: They will be alerted as soon as these planes start coming into the coast.

ADM SHARP: Well. They won't know where they are going. You see. Of course, they are going to be alerted as soon as they get in the air because HAINAN is going to pick them up and so will the other people. But they won't know where they are going. It wouldn't recommend it. I am sorry we can't get it foo any faster, but I know what would happen.

MR. MCNAMARA: Sure.

ADM SHARP: It's a compression all along the line, you know, and communications take time.

MR. MCNAMARA: Alright. Keep me informed as the night goes by.

ADM SHARP: Yes, sir. Sure will.

MR. MCNAMARA: Thank you.

ADM SHARP: Yes, sir. Goodbye.

Recorded conversation, Admiral Sharp to Secretary McNamara at 9:22 PM, EDT, 4 August.

MR. MCNAMARA: McNamara.

ADM SHARP: Sir, this is Ollie again.

MR. MCNAMARA: Yes, Ollie.

ADM SHARP: We have some indications, in a channel, you know, that we can't talk about, that these PTs are going in close to the shore and they are told to stay close and they are going into these various estuaries. This brings up this three mile prohibition. See, we are going in to hit these various places but we still have to stay outside of three miles; otherwise, and it looks as though we are giving them a three mile sanctuary which they are already taking advantage of. Of course, they wouldn't know it but what they are doing is getting in close to try to hide. This is a . . . Well, I am not sure that you are on this one.

MR. MCNAMARA: Yes, I am on it.

ADM SHARP: But on that particular message?

MR. MCNAMARA: Well, no, but I know basically what you are talking about.

ADM SHARP: Then I would suggest, sir, that. . .

MR. MCNAMARA: I think we have enough on our hands at the moment, Ollie. Let's just stay with the targets we have and strike those and worry about the three mile limit later.

ADM SHARP: Well, I was just concerned that we are apt to run these things in close and then won't be able to do anything about it.

MR. MCNAMARA: Well, I think that is right, but the orders are to hit those targets and as I understand it, you will use your whole force for that.

ADM SHARP: Yes, sir. We will have a. . .

MR. MCNAMARA: We don't need to fight in the three mile limit.

ADM SHARP: Well, here is what I anticipate is going to happen. That some of the ones down south will probably be vacant. There probably won't be anybody there because I think they are up a little farther North and we will find them up there in close to the beach, I think. They will have had time to get there, you see. I think that is what we are going to run into. However, that is. . .

MR. MCNAMARA: I would think that the aircraft going in on these initial strikes, the ones you are launching now or will launch shortly against the bases, could be authorized to attack these vessels where ever they find them.

ADM SHARP: That is what I think to^o, sir.

MR. MCNAMARA: That is alright. You go ahead and instruct them to that; but after the first strike, I mean after you have launched your first wave and they come back to the ships, then the patrols should attack only outside the three mile limit. Buzz Wheeler and Cy Vance are here and all are nodding their heads.

ADM SHARP: Alright, sir.

MR. MCNAMARA: So that means that on the way in.

ADM SHARP: Go ahead.

MR. MCNAMARA: Go ahead and attack any place you find them

ADM SHARP: Alright, sir, I will tell them that.

MR. MCNAMARA: Very good. Thanks. Get them off though, Ollie -
That is the main thing.

ADM SHARP: Sir?

MR. MCNAMARA: Get them off, that is the main thing.

ADM SHARP: We will get them off.

MR. MCNAMARA: Good night.

ADM SHARP: Good night, sir.

Recorded conversation, Secretary McNamara to Admiral Sharp at 10:26
PM, EDT, 4 August.

ADM SHARP: Sharp.

MR. MCNAMARA: Bob McNamara. Have we had any word that they have
launched?

ADM SHARP: No, sir. We haven't, although I am sure the one
outfit is going to go, or has gone at 0200, I am
quite sure. The other one, however, this is the
one that came down from the North, you know --

MR. MCNAMARA: Yes.

ADM SHARP: - and also is taking the targets that are farthest
away. She is not going to launch until 1300 their
time, with the slow aircraft. And then she is going
to launch the others at 1430. Apparently she is

not able to get in position in time. That is their time. Two and one half hours from now, she launches one set and the other set a four hours from now. You got that, sir?

MR. MCNAMARA: Yes. ~~My~~ God.

ADM SHARP: Here is the problem, she is coming down from the North and she had the farthest North targets so she had to come down around that place, you know.

MR. MCNAMARA: Yes.

ADM SHARP: And in order to get in there, she had to use a good many of her aircraft for refuelers. So while one of them is going to get off at the time I said, which was the Southern one, you know.

MR. MCNAMARA: Which got off a half an hour ago, is that right?

ADM SHARP: It should have gotten off a half an hour ago. We haven't heard yet but we will be hearing any minute, I am sure.

MR. MCNAMARA: But shouldn't she. . . Why don't you get in touch with her right away and make Damn sure she got off.

ADM SHARP: Right.

MR. MCNAMARA: Ollie.

ADM SHARP: Yes, sir.

MR. MCNAMARA: Now this other one will get off four hours from now and then how long is it to the target?

ADM SHARP: Let's see - 1545, which will be five hours and fifteen minutes from now. Of course, those are the farthest away.

MR. MCNAMARA: But no announcement here is going to influence what they think about those aircraft coming in because you will already have launched a half an hour ago against the other targets.

ADM SHARP: That's right. As long as they don't know what the targets are.

MR. MDNAMARA: Yes. Well, I have cut that out of the statement.

ADM SHARP: Good. Yes, sir. So I think we are alright on that, as long as you don't say what they are.

MR. MCNAMARA: Yes.

ADM SHARP: There will still be the element of surprise.

MR. MCNAMARA: OK, Ollie. And check with. . .

ADM SHARP: I will give you the word, as soon as we get in touch with them.

MR. MCNAMARA: Well, get in touch with them right away.

ADM SHARP: Yes, sir.

A Recording, Mr. McNamara to Admiral Sharp at 10:46 PM, EDT,

4 August 1964.

ADM SHARP: Yes Sir.

MR. MCNAMARA: Any confirmation of Launch yet Ollie?

ADM SHARP No Sir. I have just called for it again and I have not had it, Sir.

MR. MCNAMARA: Can't you go in the clear on this and ask "Did you do what you said you were going to do at 10 O'Clock?"

ADM SHARP: We have to go through Sangley on it Sir, and I just told them to go back on it again. But they have not had it. It is just a matter of getting it through this communications system. I will give it to you -

MR. MCNAMARA: How long should it take? The President wants to go on the air at 1115, that is the problem, and he shouldn't go on unless he has a confirmation of launch.

ADM SHARP: I should think we will have it by that time, Sir. I am needling them like mad but it is just a question of getting it through this circuit and apparently the circuit is a little jammed up or something.

MR. MCNAMARA: Well can't you get priority on this?

ADM SHARP: Actually it is coming from the other end and I am sure he got it up to FLASH right now sir.

MR. MCNAMARA: Well, keep after him.

ADM SHARP: I will keep after him.

MR. MCNAMARA: Next Ollie, after you get this out of the way and the launch, be sure that you let them know that we want post strike flash reports promptly. He ought to report every half hour through the night as to what he has done launching, post strike information, any attacks on him, any unidentified aircraft, he just ought to have a half hourly report so that you can keep up to date.

ADM SHARP: All right, I will tell him that.

MR. MCNAMARA: Very Good, Thanks Ollie.

ADM SHARP: All right Sir.

A recording, General Clifton to Deputy Director for Operations, General Wisman, at 10:48 PM, EDT, 4 August 1964.

DDO: Hello.

GEN CLIFTON: Hi.

DDO: General.

GEN CLIFTON: Yes.

DDO: We have the Chairman here now in another conversation with SECDEF and Admiral Sharp, can I help you?

GEN CLIFTON: Yes. Let me tell you what my problem is. We are looking over this CONSTELLATION Plan. -

DDO: Yes.

GEN CLIFTON: and I know -

DDO: We have new launch times now that we just received from the CONSTELLATION.

GEN CLIFTON: Right.

DDO: Which is considerable later than the TICONDEROGA.

GEN CLIFTON: Right.

DDO: The TICONDEROGA should have launched at 10 and if we hear differently we will notify you.

GEN CLIFTON: Well. Mr. Bundy and the President are together up there.

DDO: Right.

GEN CLIFTON: And they are talking about 1115.

DDO: For what?

GEN CLIFTON: For their statement, and I am looking at the statement to see whether, . . . let's say that they go with this early launch time, how much are they going to reveal and warn the people?

DDO: Well now Admiral Sharp and Secretary McNamara have discussed that and McNamara has deleted that portion from the message and this is what he told Sharp on the phone.

GEN CLIFTON: He has deleted that portion from the President's message, but even when he makes a statement will he alert them this many hours in advance?

DDO: Admiral Sharp said not so as long as he doesn't give the targets.

GEN CLIFTON: I see. OK.

DDO: That was his conversation with the SECDEF.

GEN CLIFTON: The SECDEF has had it with the President I am sure.

DDO: Right.

GEN CLIFTON: All right. Thank you.

A recording, the Deputy Director for Operations, General Wisman, to General Burchinal at 11:05 PM, EDT, 4 August 1964.

GEN BURCHINAL: Hello.

DDO: General, Wisman, Sir.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes.

DDO: Still nothing from getting airborne get. And also new info from the one that was moving down from up North, not in position yet. So, they will not be launching for a few hours. And the latest deal is that the Chief out there has called the Chief here, and he wants to scrub that ones launching because of bad weather.

GEN BURCHINAL: What does that do to the operation?

DDO: Well, it cuts out some of the targets that they had split up between the two. Of course, the hand will already be tipped if you go in with the one force. That is the only thing that comes to my mind immediately. The Chairman is up with the SECDEF and Admiral Sharp just talked to the SECDEF, with this information that I am giving you.

GENERAL BURCHINAL: Did he tell him which ones they couldn't hit?

DDO: Sir?

GEN BURCHINAL: Did he tell him which ones they couldn't hit?

DDO: No. They didn't go into that but the Chairman just left here and we showed him on the map which was which. So he knows, and he is sitting there with him.

GEN BURCHINAL: What happened to them. Hell, they are supposed to have been together an hour, you know.

DDO: Well the latest guidance was the directive from SECDEF, "Don't scrub anything until you call me back."

GEN BURCHINAL: That is not good.

DDO: No Sir.

GEN BURCHINAL: The other one has no weather problem?

DDO: Well he doesn't think so but it is funny that he can't confirm anything getting airborne. I am beginning to suspect it now.

GEN BURCHINAL: Of course, if he is waiting for a coordinated go, that is one thing that could have held up the other ones.

DDO: Yes Sir, it could have.

GEN BURCHINAL: Call me if you get anything tonight.

DDO: All right Sir, will do.

GEN BURCHINAL: In 10 or 15 minutes I will be coming over.

DDO: All right, Sir.

GEN BURCHINAL: Thank you very much.

A recording, Mr. McNamara to Admiral Sharp at 11:11 PM, EDT, 4 August 1964.

ADM SHARP: Yes Sir.

MR. MCNAMARA: Ollie, if you don't launch against those northernly targets because of bad weather.

ADM SHARP: Yes Sir.

MR. MCNAMARA: Is there any reason why the CONSTELLATION couldn't launch against the southernly targets, including the oil depot?

ADM SHARP: No Sir. That is exactly what we would do.

MR. MCNAMARA: Is the weather ok down there?

ADM SHARP: It is better down ther, Sir. It's not good, it's deteriorating now.

MR. MCNAMARA: I think the point is, that as a Nation we just can't sit here and let them attack us on the high seas and not do something.

ADM SHARP: No Sir.

MR. MCNAMARA: So I think the President has to say that we are going to retaliate.

ADM SHARP: We are going to do it sir. There is no doubt about that, it is just that I don't think that there is any question that they have launched. It is just the question of getting the doggone report.

MR. MCNAMARA: OK.

ADM SHARP: I have just blasted them again.

MR. MCNAMARA: OK Ollie. Thanks again.

ADM SHARP: Doing my best.

MR. MCNAMARA: Right O.

ADM SHARP: Right O.

A recording, the Deputy Director for Operations, General Wisman, to General Burchinal at 11:20 PM, EDT, 4 August 1964.

GEN BURCHINAL: Hello.

DDO: General at the recent conversation the SECDEF called him back and said, "All right now why can't you put Connie down on those Southern targets too if they can't go north so we do something." So that is what they are looking at now. In other words his point to him was that as a nation we cannot sit here and not retaliate.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes.
DDO: So they are thinking.
GEN BURCHINAL: Do you mean put both out there?
DDO: Yes. If necessary in order to insure success.
GEN BURCHINAL: Nobody go North?
DDO: If the weather absolutely prevents it.
GEN BURCHINAL: Up North?
DDO: Yes Sir. If it does.
GEN BURCHINAL: If the weather up North.
DDO: Yes Sir.
GEN BURCHINAL: How the Hell they going to know that?
DDO: Evidently they got some recon in the area. I don't know.

GENERAL BURCHINAL: OK.

DDO: All right, Sir.

GEN BURCHINAL: I will be leaving in just a few minutes.

DDO: All right Sir.

A recording, Admiral Sharp to Mr. McNamara at 11:20 PM, EDT, 4 August 1964.

MR. MCNAMARA: McNamara

ADM SHARP: Sir, this is Ollie.

MR. MCNAMARA: Yes, Ollie.

ADM SHARP: She got her planes off at 0243. 0243

MR. MCNAMARA: How long ago was that?

ADM SHARP: That is one hour, no not quite an hour ago. 50 minutes ago, and they will be over the target at 0510Z.

MR. MCNAMARA: What time? How much is that from now?

ADM SHARP: That is one hour and 50 minutes from now.

MR. MCNAMARA: Well, now, it couldn't have taken off 40 minutes ago or 50 minutes ago; and be one hour and 50 minutes from now.

ADM SHARP: They have taken off in two waves so that they all get there at the same time. And the slow ones took off at 0243 and the fast ones will take off later. They will all join over the target. So they are making a coordinated attack, you see.

MR. MCNAMARA: Right. So they took off about how long ago now?

ADM SHARP: They took off 40 minutes ago.

MR. MCNAMARA: 40 minutes ago.

ADM SHARP: 40 minutes ago. Yes Sir.

MR. MCNAMARA: And they will be over the target when?

ADM SHARP: They will be over the target in one hour and 10 minutes. No, No, one hour and 50 minutes!

MR. MCNAMARA: One hour and 50 minutes.

ADM SHARP: Right.

MR. MCNAMARA: Right O.

A recording, the CINCPAC DO to the NMCC Pacific Desk at 11:23 PM, EDT,
4 August 1964.

CDR HENSON: Military Command Center, Cdr. Henson.

MAJ JONES: Cdr. Henson, this is Maj. Joines CINCPAC Duty.

CDR HENSON: Yes, Major.

MAJ JONES: On the TICO first TOT 0510Z.

CDR HENSON: 0510Z. Now what do we base this on, Major?

MAJ JONES: Off at 0243Z.

CDR HENSON: Off at 0243Z. What was the time again?

MAJ JONES: 0243Z

CDR HENSON: 0243Z

MAJ JONES: Roger. Now this dope has already been given to Mr. McNamara.

CDR HENSON: It has. Well how are we going to get this stuff in here? Is it all going to come in here like this?

MAJ JONES: Well I couldn't say. I am just giving it to you because I didn't think you had it.

CDR HENSON: Well, you are right I didn't have it.

MAJ JONES: So, I just wanted to tell you that it was given just now to Mr. McNamara, and I thought maybe it might have had something to do with your notification.

CDR HENSON: It sure would. Thank you very much, Major. Is that all you have on it?

MAJ JONES: That is all I've got.
CDR HENSON: Where did you get this?
MAJ JONES: This came from CINCPACFLT.
CDR HENSON: OK. Thank you very much.
MAJ JONES: Roger.

A recording, the NMCC Pacific Desk to the ARMY Wr Room, NFP, AFCP, MC
Command Center, State Operations, White House Sit Room, and CIA, at
11:27 PM, EDT, 4 August 1964.

CDR HENSON: This is Cdr. Henson Military Command Center calling.
I am making a Pierce Arrow notification. I repeat
a Pierce Arrow notification. The first aircraft
were launched from the TICONDEROGA at 0243Z
estimated time on target 0510Z. Any questions, over.
No questions White House.
Army copied.
Air Force copied.
Navy copied.
Marines copied.
State copied.

A recording, the Deputy Director for Operations, General Wisman, to Admiral Mustin at 11:37 PM, EDT, 4 August 1964.

ADM MUSTIN: Admiral Mustin.

DDO: Yes Sir. About two minutes ago we got the word that they were off.

ADM MUSTIN: Good.

DDO: It may be that the one that was coming down from up North will put her forces down South also.

ADM MUSTIN: Yes. Oh goodness, are they going to send her up to the most northern targets?

DDO: Yes Sir.

ADM MUSTIN: It'll give them a long flight.

DDO: It sure did.

ADM MUSTIN: Well, we didn't give them much notice to get this thing going.

DDO: That is right.

ADM MUSTIN: OK, Bill. Well let me know if you get any news.

DDO: OK Sir.

ADM MUSTIN: Thanks.

A recording, the Deputy Director for Operations, General Wisman, to General Reaves at 11:38 PM, EDT, 4 August 1964.

GEN REAVES: Hello.

DDO: Kelsey? Wisman. They are airborne.

GEN REAVES: Good.
DDO: OK Kelsey.
GEN REAVES: OK Bill, thanks a lot.
DDO: Right O.

A recording, Admiral Sharp to General Wheeler at 11:51 PM, EDT,
4 August 1964.

GEN WHEELER: General Wheeler.
ADM SHARP: Buzz, this is Ollie.
GEN WHEELER: Yes, Ollie.
ADM SHARP: I talked to SECDEF about coming off of that most
Northern one.
GEN WHEELER: Right.
ADM SHARP: Because of the bad weather and the long distance,
and the fact that we are squeezed for planes.
GEN WHEELER: Right.
ADM SHARP: So, we are going to shift them down to the next one.
GEN WHEELER: I got you.
ADM SHARP: What we want to do here is to send this group back
to the carriers. And, launch another one at that
particular place that we want to be sure is knocked
down.
GEN WHEELER: Right.
ADM SHARP: And, it is pretty hard to tell from your message
whether that means we have to ask for authority
for a second; or whether this is called the second.

GEN WHEELER: No. That is right Ollie. If you are going to recycle then you are going to ask for it.

ADM SHARP: Then I am asking for it right now.

GEN WHEELER: You say you are going to send it back to the carrier and go back and hit which one?

ADM SHARP: Vinh.

GEN WHEELER: OK, I will talk to the SECDEF about it right away.

ADM SHARP: In the quantity that is needed.

GEN WHEELER: In the quantity needed.

ADM SHARP: Right.

GEN WHEELER: OK.

ADM SHARP: And, I would like to get that authority, you see, so that I can get on with the planning. Our plannings are pretty well advanced, and because of the long distances, you see, its pretty necessary to do it.

GEN WHEELER: OK.

ADM SHARP: These are all maximum distance strikes for these people.

GEN WHEELER: I'll go up and talk to him right away Ollie and call you back.

ADM SHARP: OK, fine Buzz.

GEN WHEELER: I think it will probably be all right. But, I'll just have to give you a ring on it.

ADM SHARP: Well, I hope so because otherwise there is some danger of not doing the job properly.

GEN WHEELER: I got your point.
ADM SHARP: OK.
GEN WHEELER: Right O, thanks, Ollie.
ADM SHARP: Right. Bye.
GEN WHEELER: Bye.

A recording, from General Wheeler to Admiral Sharp at midnight, EDT,
4 August 1964.

ADM SHARP: Sharp.
GEN WHEELER: Ollie.
ADM SHARPL Yes Sir.
GEN WHEELER: I practically missed him because he has a pack of
avid news hounds on his neck. So, I though I'd
just make sure that I got all of this right down
to the gnat's eyebrow. Then I'll call you back
in a very few minutes, and give you an answer. If
I understand it. You are having weather problems
to the North.
ADM SHARP: That's right.
GEN WHEELER: Check. Now the second package.
ADM SHARP: Now, here, let me tell you a little more.
GEN WHEELER: All right, good.
ADM SHARP: Not only weather problems but: A. It's a very
long distance, ...
GEN WHEELER: Yes.

ADM SHARP: That they've set up there. Apparently the fellow that, the ship that, had to come down from North you know,

GEN WHEELER: Right.

ADM SHARP: It was just joining up.

GEN WHEELER: Check.

ADM SHARP: See, they both ran air ops all last night so that:
A. They are kinda pooped out.

GEN WHEELER: Check

ADM SHARP: B. The one that was coming down from the North didn't make as much headway as she would have because she apparently had to turn in the other direction for a landing and launching.

GEN WHEELER: I got you.

ADM SHARP: So that she is behind her hoped for position.

GEN WHEELER: I got you.

ADM SHARP: So that's the reason she had to launch late.

GEN WHEELER: I got you.

ADM SHARP: Then, the other one is also quite a long run from where she is to these various targets; and she being a small carrier doesn't have as many airplanes either.

GEN WHEELER: Right.

ADM SHARP: So that it's a lot of targets for a one shot job. You see what I mean.

GEN WHEELER: I got you.

ADM SHARP: So they got these fellows kinda thin.

GEN WHEELER: I got you.

ADM SHARP: Now, I'm not happy with the number of airplanes they are getting out.

GEN WHEELER: I got you.

ADM SHARP: Because they are having to use refuelers undoubtedly and this takes away from the strike aircraft.

GEN WHEELER: I got you.

ADM SHARP: It's therefore important, as far as I'm concerned, to let these people recycle, which they can do easily, and go back in.

GEN WHEELER: This will be from both.

ADM SHARP: I think it will only be the TICO.

GEN WHEELER: I got you.

ADM SHARP: But, I'd like to have the flexibility of doing it with both of them.

ADM SHARP: If I have that we can tell them. You see, the
(CONT) problem is it takes so damn long to get word out to them.

GEN WHEELER: I got you.

ADM SHARP: That I'm afraid we'll run through the day, if we are not careful.

GEN WHEELER: I got you.

ADM SHARP: If I have permission to use both of them, then we can tell the Task Group Command out there that both of them can go after this place on the second strike, if that's necessary. I'm sure it won't be, I mean I think it won't be.

GEN WHEELER: Yes.

ADM SHARP: But, I'd like to have that assurance.

GEN WHEELER: In other words you're afraid you're just going to be thin on the ones that you can get at.

ADM SHARP: That's right, thin on the first strike.

GEN WHEELER: And they do have something to launch against it on the first strike?

ADM SHARP: Oh yes, definitely.

GEN WHEELER: But you just want to make sure?

ADM SHARP: But I want to make sure, that's right.

GEN WHEELER: OK but you are going to have to lose out on those Northern ones?

ADM SHARP: Just one. Just the most Northern one. Now for two reasons. It's pretty close to the other country.

GEN WHEELER: I got you.

ADM SHARP: The weather's bad and they would have difficulty locating the target and might stray. We also know that we got some people coming down from that other country.

GEN WHEELER: I see. I understand.

ADM SHARP: You know?

GEN WHEELER: Yes, I see.

ADM SHARP: And we've got some opposition to bother about.

GEN WHEELER: Right.

ADM SHARP: So I'd like to concentrate on it a little bit.

GEN WHEELER: I got the picture now.

ADM SHARP: Good.

GEN WHEELER: OK, Ollie.

ADM SHARP: Right O.

GEN WHEELER: I'll call you a little later.

ADM SHARP: Right O.

GEN WHEELER: Bye.

ADM SHARP: Bye.

4:08 PM

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Telephone conversation between Secretary McNamara and Admiral Sharp:

McNamara: Hello, Ollie, this is Bob McNamara. What's the latest information on the action?

Sharp : The latest dope we have, Sir, is a sort of summation SITREP by CTG 72.1, and it indicates a little doubt on just exactly what went on and we are trying to get a recap of it right now to -- apparently the thing started by a sort of ambush attempt by the PTs.

McNamara: In what respect? Describe that.

Sharp : I can't, Sir, because I haven't got it. That's all it said.

McNamara: OK.

Sharp : It said initial ambush attempt was definite. And that they were bothered by freak radar echos and the sonar men giving these torpedo contacts, and, of course, in that sort of thing, these young fellows are apt to say any noise is a torpedo, so that, undoubtedly, there were not as many torpedos -- you know, at one place there they had 21. There undoubtedly weren't that many. And we had the -- the reports are a little confusing on what happened. Neither ship saw a ship or a wake. The TURNER JOY tracked two contacts and fired on -- that is, tracked them for a considerable period, and fired on, I think, something like 13 contacts. They -- she claims three boats hit and one sunk, for sure -- The Turner Joy. The Maddox, let me see, she doesn't claim a boat -- oh yes, she does, too -- she claims one or two, as I recall it, now. So that is the general picture, Sir.

McNamara: There isn't any possibility there was no attack, is there?

Sharp : Yes, I would say that there is a slight possibility, and that is what I am trying to find out right now, and about 20 minutes ago I told Tom Moore to get in touch with these people and get a definite report on it.

McNamara: OK. How soon do you think it will come in?

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By ics, NARS, Date 11-17-82

Sharp : Well, it should come in within an hour, but I have a slight doubt now, I must admit, and we are trying to get it nailed down because the Task Group Commander, that is, of the destroyer, says we need a daylight recce of the whole situation and the situation's in doubt, he says. Now I don't -- I am in my office right now, which is just about half a block from the Command Center, as you know.

McNamara: Yes.

Sharp : And that particular piece of paper is down in the Command Center and I don't have it right here. I gave the Date Time Group to Lloyd Mustin when I talked to him.

McNamara: We've got problems on timing here, of course, we don't want to release news of what happened without saying what we are going to do; we don't want to say what we are going to do before we do it.

Sharp : Right.

McNamara: We obviously don't want to do it until we are damn sure what happened.

Sharp : That's right.

McNamara: Now how do we reconcile all this?

Sharp : Well, I would recommend this, Sir. I would recommend that we hold this execute until we have a definite indication that this happened.

McNamara: Well, how do we get that?

Sharp : I think I can -- I think I will have it in a couple of hours.

McNamara: OK. Well, the execute is scheduled for 7 PM our time which is three hours from now, right?

Sharp : Yes, Sir.

McNamara: All right, so if you have it in two hours, we still have an hour.

Sharp : It's 7 O'clock local out there.

McNamara: That's right, and that is three hours from now.

Sharp : Yes, Sir.

McNamara: If you get your definite information in two hours, we can still proceed with the execute and it seems to me we ought to go ahead on that basis: get the pilots briefed, get the planes armed, get everything lined up to go.

Sharp : Yes, Sir.

McNamara: Continue the execute order in effect, but between now and 6 O'clock get a definite fix and you call me directly.

Sharp : I agree, yes Sir, I will do that.

McNamara: OK, very good.

Sharp : Right, Sir. Bye.

QUESTIONS FOR MR. McNAMARA ON THE
TONKIN GULF CHRONOLOGY

~~What did he say to the President at the meeting?~~

- ✓ 1. McNamara's recollection of what the President said about the timing of his announcement at the leadership meeting at 6:45 PM on August 4th.
- ✓ 2. McNamara's recollection of his conversations with Bundy between 9:30 and 10:30 PM, on August 4th with respect to the deletion of the sentence on targets.
- ✓ 3. When was the 7:00 PM launch time first arrived at.
- ✓ 4. When did McNamara find out that it would take approximately one hour to reach the target after the aircraft were launched. —
- ✓ 5. Did the JCS ever firmly confirm the 7:00 PM launch time.
- ✓ 6. Did the President at the lunch meeting ask whether the 7:00 PM launch time could be met. Why didn't McNamara pick up the phone and call the Chiefs directly?
- ✓ 7. Was there any early indication that the CONSTELLATION would not be in position to launch her aircraft by the 7:00 PM launch time. NO
- ✓ 8. What were the details of McNamara's discussion with the President early in the morning of August 4th after he had received the NSA/DIA warning.
- ✓ 9. When does McNamara notify the White House that the first launch occurred at 10:43 p.m.
- ✓ 10. Why does McNamara refer to strike from the CONSTELLATION at his 12:02 AM news conference on August 5th when he had received previous information that the CONSTELLATION would not launch its planes for sometime thereafter.

Smith
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QUESTIONS FOR MR. McNAMARA ON THE
TONKIN GULF CHRONOLOGY

1. McNamara's recollection of what the President said about the timing of his announcement at the leadership meeting at 6:45 PM on August 4th.
2. McNamara's recollection of his conversations with Bundy between 9:30 and 10:30 PM. on August 4th with respect to the deletion of the sentence on targets.
3. When was the 7:00 PM launch time first arrived at.
4. When did McNamara find out that it would take approximately one hour to reach the target after the aircraft were launched.
5. Did the JCS ever firmly confirm the 7:00 PM launch time.
6. Did the President at the lunch meeting ask whether the 7:00 PM launch time could be met. Why didn't McNamara pick up the phone and call the Chiefs directly?
7. Was there any early indication that the CONSTELLATION would not be in position to launch her aircraft by the 7:00 PM launch time.
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CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS
TUESDAY, AUGUST 4
and
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 5, 1964
TONKIN GULF STRIKE

SECOND DRAFT

AUGUST 24, 1964

INTRODUCTION

This is a chronological account of the events of Tuesday, August 4, 1964 and Wednesday, August 5, 1964 as they relate to the attacks on the destroyers MADDOX and C. TURNER JOY in international waters by patrol boats of the North Vietnamese Navy and the subsequently executed retaliatory strikes against the North Vietnamese by naval aircraft from the USS CONSTELLATION and TICONDEROGA.

The chronology has relied substantially on cables, recordings, maps, news releases, minutes of relevant meetings, and discussions with Messrs. McManara, Vance, Bundy, McNaughton and General Wheeler.

All of the times, unless otherwise indicated are Washington, D.C., EDT, times.

The various abbreviations used throughout are these:

CINCPAC - Commander in Chief, Pacific - Admiral Sharp

CINCPACFLT - Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet - Admiral Moorer

COMSEVENTHFLT - Commander, Seventh Fleet - Admiral Johnson

TUESDAYAUGUST 4th, 1964

7:40 AM: (or 7:40 PM, August 4, Saigon Time) -- The MADDOX reports that an attack appears imminent from actions taken by unidentified vessels. The MADDOX in company with the C. TURNER JOY is heading southeast near the center of the Gulf of Tonkin in international waters approximately 65 miles from nearest land. These ships immediately go on the alert. (This report is received at 9:48 AM by the NMCC.)

8:36 AM: (or 8:36 PM, August 4, Saigon Time) -- The MADDOX establishes first radar contacts with two unidentified surface vessels and three unidentified aircraft. At this time, U.S. fighter aircraft are launched from the USS TICONDEROGA to rendezvous with the MADDOX and the TURNER JOY to provide protection against possible attack from the unidentified vessels and aircraft, in accordance with the President's previously issued directives. Here, the TICONDEROGA is located approximately 100 nautical miles ENE of Danang.

8:40 AM: McNamara calls the President and tells him about the intelligence warning he has just received that the MADDOX is on the alert again, with the presence of hostile ships reported.

* * * *

8:45 - 11:30 AM

EARLY MEETINGS AT PENTAGON

McNamara, Vance, and General Burchinal, Colonel Jones, and Admiral Mustin

of the Joint Staff meet at the Pentagon as reports of the attack on the destroyers come in. As the situation grows more intense, possible levels of retaliation are discussed, and folders with potential targets are examined. High on the list are the PT boat and supporting Pol installations, but other targets such as airfields, industrial complexes and bridges are also scrutinized. McNamara, about 10:00 PM, asks that the Joint Chiefs be summoned, and they arrive shortly thereafter. Captain Miller of the Navy, a mine expert, is also asked to join the meeting and the possibility of mining the coast is discussed. Here it is pointed out that the mines would have to be brought into the carriers from Subic Bay, the Philippines. McNamara, during this time, calls the President, informs him that a retaliatory attack is being planned, and will meet with him as soon as possible to permit him to review the proposal.

* * * *

9:08 AM: (or 9:08 PM, August 4, Saigon Time) -- The MADDOX reports that the unidentified aircraft had disappeared from its radar screen but that the surface vessels are still remaining at a distance. The U.S. aircraft from the TICONDEROGA arrive and commence defensive patrol over the MADDOX and the TURNER JOY. (Then NMCC gets this report at 11:04 AM.)

9:21 AM: Wheeler calls General McKurtcheon (CINCPAC J-3) and asks whether he has received any word on an impending attack on the destroyers. McKurtcheon says he has no word, but will check.

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9:26 AM: A message is sent to CINCPAC requesting a combat air patrol over the destroyers, to consist of 2 F-8s, 2 A-3s, and 4 A-1s.

9:30 AM: (or 9:30 PM, August 4, Saigon Time) -- Additional vessels are observed on the MADDOX radar screens, and these vessels begin to close rapidly on the destroyer patrol at speeds in excess of 40 knots. As the attacking craft continue to close rapidly from the west and south, the MADDOX evaluates their intentions as hostile. (The NMCC receives this message at 11:20 EDT)

9:52 AM: (or 9:50 PM, August 4, Saigon Time) -- The destroyers report that they are under continuous torpedo attack and are engaged in defensive counterfire against North Vietnamese patrol boats. (The NMCC receives this message at 11:39 & 11:42 AM.)

10:04 AM: -- McKutcheon calls Burchinal, who is then in Mr. McNamara's office. Burchinal tells him that the Pentagon has just received a "Flash" that the destroyers are under attack. McKutcheon replies that he has not seen it yet, but indicates that the fleet and the Carrier Task Force have been alerted. The TICONDEROGA, about 15 minutes away from the destroyers by air, is alerted. So is the CONSTELLATION, which had left Hong Kong yesterday and is headed south. Burchinal indicates that the CONSTELLATION will be ordered to move into position off South Vietnam, in the vicinity of the TICONDEROGA. He also tells McKutcheon that a possible retaliatory strike is being considered against North Vietnamese bases and asks him to take a look at some of the possible targets if, in fact, an attack is made on the destroyers.

10:15 AM: (or 10:15 PM, August 4, Saigon Time) -- The destroyers report that they have avoided torpedoes and have sunk one of the attacking craft. (The NMCC receives this at 11:52 AM.)

10:19 AM: -- McNamara calls Sharp and asks whether he has seen the messages regarding a possible attack on the MADDOX. Sharps says he has just arrived at the Command Center and that the messages are in. They discuss the "kill" capability of the MADDOX and the TURNER JOY. McNamara is particularly interested in assuring that the destroyers have whatever they need in the way of air support.

10:33 AM: -- A message is sent from the JCS to CINCPAC outlining the rules of engagement for the destroyers. It is personally signed by McNamara. Under the rules, the closest approach to the North Vietnam coastline for the destroyer patrol will be 11 nautical miles, and in the event of a hostile attack, aircraft only are authorized to pursue and attack the hostile forces up to the three mile limit of the North Vietnamese coast line. The message also directs that the CONSTELLATION be moved into the area off South Vietnam, with the exact location at the discretion of the commander. (Note: The CONSTELLATION was ordered from Hong Kong on August 2nd, 1964.)

10:42 AM: -- (or 10:42 PM, August 4, Saigon Time.) -- The destroyers report that they have evaded additional torpedoes and have sunk another of the attacking craft. Other protective aircraft have arrived overhead, but weather and darkness are hampering their activities. (The NMCC receives this message at 11:37AM.)

10:52 AM: (or 10:52 PM, August 4, Saigon Time.) -- The MADDOX reports that the destroyers are still under attack. (The NMCC receives this message at 12:24 PM)

10:59 AM: -- Sharp calls Burchinal, who is in McNamara's office, and a discussion of possible targets for a retaliatory strike ensues. Sharp suggests HON ME, HON ME, BEN THUY, and QUANG KHE. Burchinal indicates that a number of options along these lines are being considered. Sharp says that a strike could be carried out on "your say so", states that an armed reconnaissance along the North Vietnamese coast would be advantageous, and points out that the CONSTELLATION, about 350 miles from the task group, is coming in to provide support. There is also talk of providing the carriers with a mining capability, which McNamara feels is important. Sharp says that it might take about 48 hours to achieve the capability. He also reports that he has a message indicating that the destroyers are under continuous torpedo attacks. (Note: Since actual work of this situation had not yet reached Washington, Sharp is filling in McNamara on the details.)

11:18 A.M.: -- Sharp calls Burchinal and provides him with the latest situation report on the attack on the destroyers. According to Sharp, the destroyers were exchanging fire and the MADDOX had dodged at least five torpedos. Sharp then suggests that the LOC CHOU estuary be added to any list of targets since he now has information it is being used as a hiding place for the PT boats. When Sharp again mentions the desirability of an armed reconnaissance along the coast line, Burchinal makes it absolutely clear that severer action is being seriously considered

by McNamara. He tells Sharp that the Secretary of State is on his way to the Pentagon, and that meetings will be held later at the White House. Again, Sharp reiterates that it will take about 48 hours to attain a mining capability.

11:30 AM: (11:30 PM, August 4, Saigon Time) -- Carrier CONSTELLATION receives a preliminary alerting message stating that for planning purposes "there is a strong possibility you will be directed on short notice to lay on armed reconnaissance at sea against Swatows or reprisal attack against Swatow bases such as QUANG KHE, HEM THUY or PHUC LOI." At this time, the CONSTELLATION, heading in a SSW direction, is proceeding to join the TICONDEROGA.

* * * *

BUNDY AND RUSK ARRIVE AT THE PENTAGON

THE OPTIONS ARE DEVELOPED

At 11:40 AM Bundy and Rusk arrive at the Pentagon to meet with Vance and McNamara. In the meantime, the Joint Chiefs of Staff have gathered in an adjoining room to recommend a course of action. In his meeting with Bundy and Rusk, McNamara is clear on one point: the strike must be accomplished promptly, for a fast response is part of the lesson to be driven home. McNamara and Bundy discuss a sharp, limited blow, such as air strikes as opposed to the unremitting pressure of mining the coast line. After some discussion, five options are developed. The first is an air strike against the PT boats and their bases; the second is an attack on petroleum installations; the third is an attack on bridges;

the fourth is a raid on prestige targets, such as airfields; and the fifth is mining the waters around Vietnam. In the course of the discussion it becomes apparent that the real issue centers on the development of a basic strategy toward Vietnam. Finally, the five options are narrowed to three - strikes against the PT bases and the PoI installations including VIDHI and HAIPHONG; continuing pressure through mining the coast; and a combination of the two. These are the three options presented a short time later to the President during a lunch-meeting.

At this time, the sending of additional forces to the area is also considered, the point being that we would not be content to rest only on a sharp, limited strike but would look beyond it, to the next related step, a possible escalation, if required. An attack carrier group, an ASW Group, additional vessels, fighters, interceptors, and bombers, as well as ground forces, among the additional elements that could be deployed.

At about 11:20 AM, McNamara enters the Joint Chiefs meeting, says he has talked to the President who wants a quick response capability, and outlines the three options to the Chiefs. The Chiefs continue to meet as McNamara, Bundy and Rusk leave for the White House. In the meantime, McNamara has asked the Chiefs to decide a future course of action aimed at the next 22-44-68 hour period, with special emphasis on reinforcements, such as the introduction of B-57 aircraft.

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12:40 - 3:00 PM
NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING
LUNCH WITH THE PRESIDENT

A regularly scheduled National Security Meeting centering on the Cyprus situation is in progress when McNamara, Rusk, and Bundy arrive at the White House to brief the participants, including the President, on the attack on the destroyers. Vance has remained at the Pentagon to ask the Joint Chiefs if it would make any difference whether the retaliatory strikes were conducted at first light. According to the Chiefs, such an attack would make no difference from a military standpoint, although fewer people might be there. With this information, Vance leaves for the White House.

At a lunch following the NSC meeting, the types of response and the targets are discussed. Rusk, McNamara, McCone, Bundy, and Vance are present. The President agrees that a firm, swift retaliatory strike must be carried out. Here, he receives the three options proposed by McNamara, and considers the strikes against the PT boat bases and the Vinh Pol depot to be appropriate. The mining operation as well as an attack on Haiphong are not adopted. The President asks how long it would take to execute the strike. McNamara, according to Bundy, estimates from the advice he has received from the Chiefs that a strike could be launched at first light (7:00 AM local time) or 7:00 PM Washington time. The President asks McNamara to call the Chiefs to confirm the time, but McNamara says he will check it out on his return to the Pentagon.

* * * *

12:22 PM. -- Sharp called Burchinal and gives him the latest situation report on the torpedo firings at the destroyers. Estimates are that 3-6 PT Boats are engaged, with two reported sunk, no enemy aircraft are reported in the area, and aircraft from the CONSTELLATION are on station over the destroyers. Sharp asks that the destroyers be given permission to pursue PT Boats to the three-mile limit, and that aircraft be permitted to engage in hot pursuit. Burchinal advises him that the rules of engagement are being considered by McNamara and the Chiefs. Burchinal advises Sharp to dig out target material on PHOC LOI, QUANG KHE, and the VINH Pol complex.

12:32 PM. (12:32 AM Saigon time, August 5th) -- The destroyers report that at least two enemy craft have been sunk, but that low ceilings continue to hamper the aircraft operations.

12:54 PM. (12:54 AM Saigon time, August 5th) -- In addition to the torpedo attack, the TURNER JOY reports that during the engagement she was fired upon by automatic weapons while being illuminated by searchlights.

12:57 PM. (12:57 AM Saigon time, August 5th) -- A CINCPAC message to JCS recommends that authority be granted to conduct punitive U.S. air strikes as soon as possible against BEN THUY, HON ME, QUANG KHE, and LOC CHAO.

1:01 PM. -- Sharp calls Burchinal and reports two jet aircraft have been sighted flying out of HAINAN as far south as DANANG. Sharp says that we cannot afford to permit hostile aircraft to fly over carriers.

Sharp then quotes a proposed message on rules of engagement for aircraft which would grant authority to declare hostile and engage any North Vietnamese/ChiCom aircraft whose actions show within a "reasonable certainty" that an attack on U.S. Forces is intended. Burchinal agrees that the message should be sent if needed for the security of CINCPAC Forces, and notes that a meeting is now going on at the White House.

1:03 PM. -- The White House situation room calls the Pentagon Command Center and advises that the National Security Council meeting has just broken up. McNamara, McCone, Rusk, and Bundy have now gone to lunch with the President. The situation room wants to be sure that the latest reports from the destroyers are forwarded at once.

1:24 PM. -- McNamara, still at the White House, calls Burchinal at the Pentagon. Burchinal tells him that Sharp had reported the presence of hostile aircraft (probably IL 28's) flying out of HAINAN and was issuing a "to engage" order if the security of his forces was threatened by enemy air (see the 1:01 PM entry above). McNamara is insistent that faster situation reports be obtained from the MADDOX and asks that Sharp try to contact the destroyer by radio. Burchinal advises that the JCS had been considering 3 courses of action, each progressively higher in its level of intensity, and recommended the second unanimously. This consisted of air strikes against the PT Boat bases at PHOC LOI, QUONG KHE, LOC THOI, and the VINH oil complex. Rejected was the first option, a strike only at VINH, and the third, not only the PT Boat bases but other targets such as HAIPHONG.

1:28 PM. -- Following up McNamara's request, Burchinal calls Sharp and

asks for a status report on the engagement. Sharp reports that two PT Boats have been sunk but is uncertain as to the total number involved and says that some 13 torpedoes have been launched. Also, he reports that there is some indication of enemy aircraft in the area but says that aircraft both from the TICONDEROGA and CONSTELLATION are on the scene. Burchinal asks Sharp to obtain a direct radio report from the ships engaged.

1:30 PM. (1:30 AM Saigon time, August 5th) -- The destroyers report that the attacking craft had apparently broken off the engagement. The MADDOX and TURNER JOY are directed to resume their patrol in the Gulf of Tonkin at daylight on the 5th of August.

1:59 PM. -- Sharp calls Burchinal and says that he cannot contact ships by voice radio, but tells him that he has sent a message requesting that the situation reports be expedited. The last message from the ships reports that freak weather is affecting radar performance, with many contacts and torpedo runs doubtful. Sharp says that the MADDOX itself has reported no visual sightings, and over anxious sonarmen may have accounted for what they erroneously thought to be torpedoes.

2:08 PM. -- Sharp advises Burchinal that the latest situation report indicates that three PT's have been sunk, and that the weather is deteriorating and hampering aircraft operations. Sharp expresses the view that there is no doubt that a torpedo attack did occur, but adds that many of the reported torpedo attacks may have been due to inaccurate sonar reports. "Whenever they get keyed up on a thing like this, everything they hear on the sonar is a torpedo," says Sharp.

* * * *

3:00 PM - 5:15 PM
MEETINGS AT THE PENTAGON
THE STRIKE EXECUTE MESSAGE IS DRAFTED

Here, the Joint Chiefs have just begun their meeting. McNamara says that the President wants the strikes to take place at 7:00 PM Washington time, and at the following targets: QUANG KHE, PHUE LOI, PORT WALLU, HON GAY, VINH, and LOC CHAO. There is no dissent on this proposal. At 4:42 PM, McNamara and Vance return to the Joint Chiefs and indicate that the time of the strike is important, for there will be no announcement until the strike gets under way. McNamara reviews the strike message which originally reads "By 0700 local time 5 August or as soon thereafter as weather permits conduct attack" and it is thereafter changed to "By 0700 local 5 August conduct a one-time maximum effort attack". The weather portion is placed in another part of the message, and states that "if weather precludes meeting the above time of attack, proceed soonest, and notify JCS ASAP". The major part of the message is quoted in the 5:19 PM entry below.

3:30 PM. --- Rear Admiral Mustin of the Joint Staff calls Sharp and tells him to be on the alert, for a strike execute message is being prepared and would be transmitted as soon as released.

3:34 PM. -- Mustin calls the (General Smith) Deputy Director for Operations, Joint Staff and informs him that the Joint Chiefs are in session, that a strike execute message is now being typed up and that Sharp knows it is coming. Mustin asks that a transmission line be kept open.

4:05 PM. -- McNamara discusses the latest situation report with Sharp and requests that definite confirmation be obtained from the Fleet Commander of the attacks on the destroyers. McNamara notes that the time is three hours away from the scheduled execution and directs that preparations proceed for the strikes.

4:14 PM. (4:14 AM, August 5th, Saigon time) -- CINCPACFLT transmits an alert message to COMSEVENTHFLT and the TICONDEROGA and CONSTELLATION to be prepared to strike targets at 7:00 PM (7:00 PM Saigon time). The designated targets are the PT Boat bases at QUANG KHE, BEN THUY, HON NE Island, and SONG MA Estuary, HON GAY and PORT WALLUT: any identified North Vietnamese PT Boats located at sea; and the VINH Petroleum Storage Depot. The latter is labelled the number one target priority. The message indicates that it would be "desirable" that all targets be struck simultaneously, and adds that authority is granted to recycle aircraft as necessary and strike the two southern targets (QUANG KHE and BEN THUY) with a second launch if the Forces on the TICONDEROGA and CONSTELLATION are inadequate. It concludes by specifying that this was a preparatory order, and that launching should not be accomplished until an execute order was received.

4:35 PM. (4:35 AM, August 5th, Saigon time) -- CINCPAC transmits an official (alert) message to CINCPACFLT to prepare to execute air strikes at 7:00 PM (7:00 AM local time), against (1) PORT WALLUT, (2) BEN THUY (VINH), (3) HON GAY, (4) QUANG KHE, and (5) LOC CHAO.

4:40 PM. -- Sharp calls Burchinal and is informed that the JCS strike execute message is in the Secretary of Defense's Office ready to go, but that there is still a slight amount of doubt whether the destroyers were in fact attacked. Sharp will try to get more definite information from Admiral Moorer. Burchinal then asks Sharp whether the launch could be accomplished at 7:00 PM. Sharp responds that "it will be tight" but "I think so." He adds, however, that it may be just as well to wait an hour or so, if we have to, to be certain an attack had occurred. Sharp then suggests it might be necessary to recycle some of the aircraft for a second strike against VINH and Burchinal says "this will be all right", if needed. Sharp estimates that about 70 aircraft in all will be involved in the strikes.

4:49 PM. -- The JCS strike execute message to CINCPAC is transmitted by direct teletype from the NMCC to the CINCPAC Command Center.

4:55 PM (4:55 AM, August 5, Saigon time) -- TICONDEROGA receives the CINCPACFLT alert message directing COMSEVENTHFLT to be prepared at 7:00 PM to strike the PT Boats at designated locations. The TICONDEROGA is already on an alert status as a result of the PT Boat attacks on the destroyers. Upon receipt of alert message, its pilots and Weapons Planning Board commence to plan for the strikes. A message is also sent to Naval Air Station at Cubi Point, Philippines (some 500 miles away), directing all up-status A-1 and A-4 aircraft to return to the TICONDEROGA as soon as possible. This is necessary because the complement of aircraft on the TICONDEROGA has to be augmented by additional strike aircraft for the maximum strike effort. A number of the aircraft on the TICONDEROGA have been used previously for

reconnaissance (Yankee Team) efforts over Laos, and could not appropriately be used for the strike.

5:00 PM. -- Colonel Jones of the Joint Staff, in the JCS conference room, calls the NMCC Pacific desk (Commander Hathaway) and says that the Chiefs would like a forecast of the weather over the target area at 7:00 AM local time.

* * * *

5:15 PM - 6:00 PM

JCS-SECRETARY MEETING TO DETERMINE
IF ATTACK ON DESTROYERS OCCURRED

One of the recurrent problems throughout the afternoon was a lack of clear and convincing showing that an attack on the destroyers had in fact occurred. McNamara, Vance and the Chiefs, at this point marshal the evidence and conclude that an attack had taken place. In this regard five factors are considered: First, that the TURNER JOY was illuminated when fired on by automatic weapons; Second, one of the destroyers observed cockpit lights; Third, a PGM 142 shot at two enemy planes; Fourth, a North Vietnamese announcement that two of its boats were "sacrificed", and Finally, Sharp's determination that there was an attack. It is here that LeMay indicates that the 7:00 PM strike time will not be met because, as Wheeler relates, the carriers are operating on a time which makes it 8:00 PM here and 7:00 AM their time.

5:19 PM -- The JCS strike execute message is retransmitted flash precedence via normal channels as JCS 7720 to CINCPAC. It states that by 7:00 PM EDT

(0700 local time) a one-time maximum effort attack against the following targets should be conducted: PT Boats located at PORT WALLUT (later cancelled because of weather), HON GAY, PHUC LOI and QUANG KHE and at LOC CHAO. The specified targets are boats, Pol at VINH, and an armed reconnaissance against PT Boats beyond the three-mile limit. The message cautions that if the weather preclude meeting the above time of attack, the commander is to "proceed soonest" and to notify the JCS as soon as possible.

5:23 PM. -- Sharp calls Burchinal and says there is no doubt that an attack on the destroyers had occurred, for he has intercepted a North Vietnamese message stating that two of its PT Boats were "sacrificed". Sharp is now satisfied with all the evidence, what with several additional reports from the TURNER JOY. Sharp then mentions that the attack will be coming off at 8:00 PM Washington time not 7:00 PM but still at 7:00 AM local time. The reason is that the CINCPAC execute message used "HOTEL" time, whereas the carriers were shooting for the operation on "GOLF" time (giving them an extra hour).

5:29 PM. --Mustin calls the NMCC (General Smith) and indicates that some confusion exists over the time in the Gulk of Tonkin. He asks Smith to get on the teletype and straighten out the matter. Smith, at 5:33 PM, calls General McKutcheon at CINCPAC and asks for a breakdown of the times between the carriers (in the South China Sea and on "HOTEL" time), SAIGON and the targets (on "GOLF" time) and Washington. McKutcheon replies that

at "GOLD" time, the Washington time would be 8:00 PM and the local time 7:00 AM, a 13 hour difference, at "HOTEL" time, the Washington time would be 7:00 PM, with the local time still 7:00 AM, a 12 hour difference. McKutcheon then adds that CINCPACFLT went on GOLD time, realizing that the carriers could use the extra hour to get ready.

5:39 PM. --- Sharp calls Burchinal and says that the indications are that launch time will be 0700 local or 8:00 PM Washington time.

6:00 PM - 6:45 PM
NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING

The National Security Council, with The President, McCona, Ball, Bundy, and _____, is convened as McNamara, Vance and Wheeler arrive at the White House. McNamara makes three proposals. First, that the strike be carried out against the PF boat bases and the supporting installations, Second, that as part of the retaliatory strike reinforcements be sent to the area, an expression of our will to escalate, and Third, that the President announce these actions to the American public, and ask congress to pass a joint resolution supporting him. There are no objections, and the President is told that the previously estimated 7:00 PM launch time will not be met, with the launch time now estimated to be 8:00 PM. Bundy has a draft of a joint resolution and a proposed Presidential statement.

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6:07 PM. -- Sharp calls Burchinal and repeats that he is satisfied that the destroyers were attacked. He now has the JCS strike execute message. Burchinal says that McNamara, now at the White House, is also satisfied that the attacks on the destroyers have occurred and had made the statement just a short time ago that the "show is now on the road." After agreeing that suppressive fire "was part of the game", Sharp then states that the press should not get the story at 7:00 PM. Burchinal replies that we will insure that nothing gets out until "we know that you're off target" Sharp estimates this to be 9:00 PM. Burchinal emphasizes that any announcement will be delayed so that there is "no possibility of anyone reading" the strike. The matter of deploying additional forces to the theater is also discussed.

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6:45 PM - 7:15 PM
CONGRESSIONAL LEADERSHIP MEETING

[Bundy to supply details]

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6:56 PM. (6:56 AM, August 5th Saigon time) -- CONSTELLATION receives the JCS strike execute message.

7:22 PM. (7:22 AM, August 5th Saigon time) -- The carrier TICONDEROGA receives the CINCPACFLT execute message.

7:30 PM. (7:30 AM August 5th, Saigon time) -- The carrier CONSTELLATION receives the CINCPAC message which passes the JCS strike message with instructions not to execute until directed.

7:49 PM. (7:49 AM August 5th, Saigon time) -- The carrier CONSTELLATION receives its target assignments.

7:50 PM. (7:50 AM, August 5th Saigon time) -- The carrier CONSTELLATION receives the CINCPAC strike execute message.

7:59 PM. -- General Wisman, NMCC Pacific Desk calls the CINCPAC Duty Officer, Lt. Colonel Lindsey, and asks for the off-times, numbers and types of the carrier strike. Lindsey replies there is nothing yet on the strikes, although there is some combat air patrol activity in relation to the earlier attacks on the destroyers.

8:05 PM. -- General Wheeler, in the Cabinet room at the White House, calls Burchinal at the Pentagon and asks if anything is happening.

Burchinal says that he has a clear line open, but no word has been received. Wheeler wants to know as soon as the word arrives that the aircraft have been launched.

8:39 PM. -- McNamara, back from the White House, calls Sharp and asks whether the carriers have launched their aircraft. Sharp replies that he has received no word yet, but probably because the carriers will provide a coordinated report when the launch is completed. McNamara, however, says that the launch is already 40 minutes after the ordered time of take-off and wants Sharp to contact the carriers directly by radio. McNamara stresses that he must get an immediate statement since the President wants to go on the air and inform the American people. This, says McNamara, is being held back pending word of the launch with more than 40 minutes having already elapsed past the launch time given to the President. Sharp estimates, although he does not have the launch plan, that it would take the aircraft about an hour to reach the target. McNamara asks Sharp to find out when they are launching and when the first flights will be over targets.

9:00 PM. -- (Give picture of air situation at 9:00 PM as soon on hostile radar.)

9:09 PM. -- Sharp calls McNamara at his office and says that one carrier (perhaps both) would not be able to launch for another 50 minutes (10:00 PM Washington time). "In other words, they couldn't make the time," reports Sharp. Sharp explains that the compression of time and the

communications lag are the reasons, and thinks that the last estimated times over target, with a 10:00 PM launch will be about 12:00 midnight, Washington time. McNameara then asks how serious a Presidential statement would be about the time of launch that would say this: "At this moment air execution is now in execution against gun boats and supporting facilities in and near four ports of North Vietnam which have been used in support of hostile operations." Sharp thinks it would not be a "good idea" because it will alert the enemy. "No doubt about it." McNameara says that the enemy would be alerted as soon as the aircraft start coming into the coast. Sharp says "They won't know where they they're going. Of course they will be alerted as soon as they get in the air because Hainan is going to pick them up and so will the other people. But they won't know where they are going. I wouldn't recommend it."

9:22 PM. -- Sharp tells McNameara that PT Boats (presumably those returning from attack on the destroyers) were taking sanctuary within the three-mile limit. McNameara recommends that the aircraft proceed to hit designated targets, but authorizes striking any boats sighted on way in. He says "Get them off, that is the main thing."

9:28 PM. (9:29 AM, August 5th Saigon time) -- The CONSTELLATION submits its strike plan for approval to the Carrier Task Force Commander.

10:06 PM. -- After trying to reach Senator Goldwater for several hours, the President finally gets through and informs him of the decision to retaliate.

10:26 PM. -- McNamara calls Sharp and asks whether the aircraft are launched yet. Sharp says he has no firm word, but is sure one carrier (TICONDEROGA) had launched at 10:00 PM. According to Sharp, however, the other carrier (CONSTELLATION) will not be able to launch one of its groups (the slower propeller driven A-1 aircraft) until 1:00 AM and the other (the jets) until 2:30 AM, with a time over target for both groups estimated around 3:15 AM, apparently because "She is not able to get in position in time." Sharp explains this by stating that the CONSTELLATION was coming from the north and had to get into position by coming around Hainan. In order to get into position she had to use a good many of her aircraft for refuelers. Sharp repeats that the TICONDEROGA should have launched at 10:00 PM, but McNamara wants him to make ^{sure} absolutely/by getting in touch. As to the CONSTELLATION, McNamara asks how long it would take its aircraft to reach the target. Sharp replies the farthest target will be reached in about 5 hours. McNamara then says that no announcement here "is going to influence what they think about those aircraft coming in because you will already have launched about a half hour ago against the other targets. Sharp agrees; "as long as they don't know what the targets are.. McNamara states that "I have cut that out of the statement," and Sharp says "there will still be the element of surprise, as long as you don't say what [the targets] are."

10:40 PM. (10:40 AM, August 5th Saigon time) -- CONSTELLATION recovers the last group of A-1 aircraft from combat air patrol over the destroyers.

10:43 PM. (10:43 AM, August 5th Saigon time) -- TICONDEROGA launches four A-1 strike aircraft with instructions to orbit overhead. This is necessary so that the carrier deck could be free for the landing of A-4 aircraft from Cubi Point then orbiting overhead and to permit coordination of prop and jet strikes to ensure a simultaneous arrival time over the target. The A-1 launching marks the beginning of the attack, and within the hour these four A-1's depart for VINH.

NOTE: The question may be raised as to why the TICONDEROGA did not meet the expected launch time of 7:00 PM EDT. These are some of the reasons assigned: First, the CINCPACFLT "Prepare to strike message," designating specific targets was received on the TICONDEROGA at 4:55 PM. The JCS strike execute message containing additional guidance was received at 6:10 PM. This did not permit sufficient lead time to conduct the strike at 7:00 PM. Second, the TICONDEROGA had been conducting continuous intensive air operations, including combat air patrol and reconnaissance, for 29 hours prior to and overlapping the first strike. Third, all up-status aircraft (A-4's and A-1's) had to be flown in from Cubi Point, and the TICONDEROGA was in transition between its reconnaissance role and its strike posture.

10:46 PM. -- McNamara calls Sharp again, seeking confirmation of the launch times. Sharp says no word has yet been received, and McNamara suggests he radio in the clear, asking the TICONDEROGA if it did what it said it would do at 10:00. McNamara states that the President wants to go on the air at 11:15, but should not go on unless he has a confirmation

of the launch. McNamara then wants Sharp to secure half-hourly post-strike reports.

10:48 PM. -- Clifton at the White House calls General Wisman, the Deputy Director for Operations, Joint Staff and states that new launch times for the CONSTELLATION have been received which are considerably later than the TICONDEROGA's, that the President is shooting for an 11:15 PM statement, and asks how much would be revealed at the announcement. DDO states that Sharp agrees with a Presidential announcement now that McNamara has recommended the deletion of specific positions dealing with the targets.

11:05 PM. -- Wisman calls Burchinal and reports that nothing is airborne yet, that the CONSTELLATION is not in position, and that several more hours would be required for its first launch. There is now the possibility, according to Wisman, that because of weather, the CONSTELLATION may have to scrub its operation. He recognizes this would tip our hand if one force goes in, and says that there can be no scrubbing of the mission until the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs are first notified, per the JCS strike execute message.

11:11 PM. -- McNamara calls Sharp, and is told "It is just that I don't think that there is any question that they have launched. It is just a question of getting the report." McNamara, with regard to the weather conditions and possible cancellation of the CONSTELLATION strikes, states

that "we cannot sit here as a nation and let them attack us on the high seas and not do something." McNamara says the CONSTELLATION could be diverted to hit southern targets including the oil depot where the weather is better.

11:20 PM. -- Sharp calls McNamara and says it is now confirmed. Planes were launched from the TICONDEROGA 50 minutes ago, at 10:43 PM (10:43 AM Saigon time). It will take the aircraft about an hour and fifty minutes to reach their targets. The attack will be in two waves, both scheduled to arrive at the same time.

11:27 PM. -- Commander Henson of the NMCC Pacific Desk notifies the White House Situation Room that the TICONDEROGA launched its first aircraft at 10:43 PM, with an estimated time over the target at 1:10 AM.

11:35 PM. (11:35 AM, August 5th Saigon time) -- CONSTELLATION advises the Carrier Task Force Commander of intended launch position for strikes for simultaneous time over target 3:45 AM.

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11:40 PM
PRESIDENT GOES ON THE AIR

On the recommendation of McNamara, Vance, and Wheeler, the President goes on the air and states that "Repeated acts of violence against the armed forces of the United States must be met not only with alert defense, but with positive reply. That reply is being given as I speak to you. Air action is now in execution against gun boats and certain supporting facilities of North Vietnam which have been used in these hostile operations."

* * * * *

The recommendation to go on the air is based on these considerations: First, that by 11:34, U. S. Naval Aircraft had been in the air on their way to the targets approximately one hour; Second, that Hanoi through its radar, had then received indications of the attack; Third, that the time remaining before the aircraft arrived over the targets would not permit the North Vietnamese to move their boats to sea or to alert their forces; Fourth, that it was important that our country learn of the manner in which their government was responding to the attacks on its vessels from their President, rather than from Hanoi which was expected to announce the attack at any moment; Fifth, that it was desirable that the North Vietnamese government and others be told as soon as possible the character of the attack and finally

11:51 PM (11:51 AM, August 5th Saigon time) -- Sharp calls Wheeler and they discuss the possibilities of a restrike against VINH, with Wheeler saying that he will discuss it with McNamara.

11:54 PM (11:54 AM, August 5th Saigon time) -- CONSTELLATION receives a message that TICONDEROGA had launched aircraft at 10:43 PM with scheduled arrival over target at 1:10 AM.

WEDNESDAY
August 5, 1964

12:00 Midnight (noon, August 5th Saigon time) -- Wheeler calls Sharp and they discuss the recycling of the VINH strike. Sharp also tells Wheeler

that both carriers had been conducting air operations all night before in supporting the MAIDOX, and with this continual series of launchings and landings and getting into proper position, they simply launched the current strikes somewhat later than originally forecast. Sharp indicates that the CONSTELLATION would have to scrub only the northernmost target (Port Wallu) and this because of a combination of factors: the target's distance, its close proximity to China, and the adverse weather.

NOTE: The question may arise as to why all of the strikes from all of the carriers could not be simultaneously accomplished, as initially envisaged. There are three basic operational considerations: The TIGCHEROGA aircraft were launched first. (1) The time element - It was important to launch a maximum first strike effort at 7:00 AM local time or as soon thereafter as possible. (2) The CONSTELLATION launch time - The CONSTELLATION was conducting flight operations in support of the destroyer patrols and could not arrive at its launch station until 1:00 AM EDT at the earliest. (3) The TIGCHEROGA targets - The VIII target was the most important and the weather over the area was better in rating.

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12:02 AM - 12:30 AMMcNAMARA PRESSE CONFERENCE

Secretary McNamara holds a press conference in which he states that some of the action "has already taken place". He goes on to add that "U.S. Naval aircraft from the carriers TICONDEROGA and CONSTELLATION . . . have already conducted air strikes against the North Vietnamese bases from which these PT Boats have operated. Our naval aircraft have also conducted strikes against certain other targets which have directly supported the operation of the PT Boats."

12:15 AM: (12:15 PM, August 5th, Saigon Time) -- Six A-4's and six F-8's are launched from the TICONDEROGA flying to VINH at an altitude of 25,000 feet. The target is 320 NM away.

12:32 AM: (12:32 PM, August 5th, Saigon Time) -- TICONDEROGA's six A-4's and six F-8's penetrate the enemy radar screen.

12:34 AM: (12:34 PM, August 5th, Saigon Time) -- TICONDEROGA launches six F-8's which depart for QUANG KHE, flying at an altitude of 25,000 feet. Target is 250 miles away.

1:00 AM: (1:00 PM, August 5th, Saigon Time) -- CONSTELLATION launches four A-1's which depart for HON GAY, flying at an altitude of from 1,000 - 5,000 feet. HON GAY is 360 miles away. CONSTELLATION also launches four A-1's which depart for LOC CHAO, flying at an altitude of 1,000 - 5,000 feet. LOC CHAO is 330 NM away.

1:15 AM: (1:15 PM, August 5th, Saigon Time) -- TICONDEROGA's six F-8's launched at 12:34 AM strike QUANG KHE with 20 mm shells and 5" rockets. The base is caught by surprise. There is no AA fire. Seven boats are sighted, four are severely damaged and one moderately. There are no U.S. losses.

1:25 AM: (1:25 PM, August 5th, Saigon Time) -- TICONDEROGA's four A-1's launched at 10:43 PM, six A-4's launched at 12:15 AM and six F-8's launched at 12:15 AM strike at the VINH - BEN THUY - PHUC LOI complex. They report moderate AA fire. Overall, the defenses are neither strong nor alert during this first attack. Of the six boats sighted, four are moderately damaged and two lightly. Eight Pol tanks and two AA guns are destroyed. There are no U.S. losses. The ordnance used ranges from 1,000 lb. bombs to 5" Zuni rockets to 2.75 mm rockets.

2:30 AM: (2:30 PM, August 5th, Saigon Time) -- The CONSTELLATION launches ten A-4's and two F-4's which depart for HON GAY at an altitude of 25,000 - 30,000 feet. The CONSTELLATION also launches five A-4's and three F-4's which then depart for LOC CHAO, flying at an altitude of 25,000 - 30,000 feet.

3:25 AM: (3:25 PM, August 5th, Saigon Time) -- CONSTELLATION's four A-1's launched at 1:00 AM and its five A-4's and three F-4's launched at 2:30 AM strike LOC CHAO. They report moderate AA fire (20 mm from the boats). The boats are not underway and thus had not been alerted. Of the five PT boats sighted, two are damaged seriously and three moderately. One A-1 aircraft (Sather's, third in the column) is shot down. One A-1 is damaged, but is later recovered. The attack lasts 25 minutes. 2.75" rockets

and 20 mm strafing attacks utilized.

4:03 AM: (4:03 PM, August 5th, Saigon Time) -- TICONDEROGA launches four F-8's and eight A-1's and depart for the restrike against VINH.

4:15 AM: (4:15 PM, August 5th, Saigon Time) -- TICONDEROGA launches two A-1's which depart for HON ME at an altitude of 25,000 feet.

4:45 AM: (4:45 PM, August 5th, Saigon Time) -- TICONDEROGA's four F-8's and eight A-1's, all launched at 4:03 AM, strike VINH. They report heavy AA fire from the additional AA guns brought into position after first strike, but they destroy two to four Pol tanks and six AA guns. There are no U.S. losses.

5:15 AM: (5:15 PM, August 5th, Saigon Time) -- TICONDEROGA's two A-1's launched at 4:15 AM strike HON ME with 20 mm shells and rockets. They report no AA fire, and surprise is achieved. Of the six boats sighted, three are destroyed, three moderately damaged, and one is forced to beach. There are no U.S. losses while the boats may have been alerted, their defenses were ineffective. Thus ended the 59 aircraft, 64 sortie "Pierce Arrow" retaliatory attack during which:

- About 25 patrol boats are destroyed or damaged
- An estimated 90% of the petroleum storage facilities at VINH are destroyed
- seven AA installations in the VINH area are destroyed

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TRANSCRIPT OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATIONS
4-5 AUGUST

Recorded conversation, General McCutcheon to General Burchinal at 1004 AM, EDT, 4 August.

General McCutcheon, sir.

GEN MCCUTCHEON: Good morning, sir, this is McCutcheon in CINCPAC.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes.

GEN MCCUTCHEON: In response to the previous request to General Wheeler, I'll give you an interim report as to what I've found out. Admiral Moorer is in his Command Post. Fleet and the Task Group are alerted and aware of these messages and the threat. As far as measures to be taken, they have the two DD's that are on station there, the TURNER JOY and MADDOX. The TICO with her three DD's is 15 minutes away by air. She is alerted. The CONNIE came out of Hong Kong yesterday and is headed south. I haven't got an ETA yet, but she's headed to rendezvous with the TICO.

GEN BURCHINAL: We just had a flash that that outfit is under attack now. Do you have anything on that?

GEN MCCUTCHEON: No, sir. I haven't seen that one yet.

DECLASSIFIED

Authority RAF 139-044-7-1

By Jow, NARA, Date 12/13/05

GEN BURCHINAL: For your information, the message is coming telling you take the CONNIE and put it off SVN, maybe in the vicinity of the TICON, but bring it on down into that area. We'll leave the deployment position up to you. Got that?

GEN MCCUTCHEON: That action has already been done. She's headed south.

GEN BURCHINAL: On Admiral Sharp's request for Rules of Engagement.

GEN MCCUTCHEON: Right.

GEN BURCHINAL: We're sending a message which says stay at eleven. He asks for eight. It just says stay at eleven. It says aircraft only up to 3-mile limit.

GEN MCCUTCHEON: Okay.

GEN BURCHINAL: Is authorized.

GEN MCCUTCHEON: Right.

GEN BURCHINAL: You want to pass that by phone, fast.

GEN MCCUTCHEON: Okay. Aircraft up to three but the boats stay at eleven.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right.

GEN MCCUTCHEON: Right.

GEN BURCHINAL: And we're taking a look at some possible re-taliatory type points that we might want to take out. You might be thinking of it and come in if you've got any particular ideas on where we might go, inside the places, bases, etc., to womp them back if they do, in fact, make this attack.

GEN MCCUTCHEON: Right.

GEN BURCHINAL: Okay, if you get any word on the attack, results etc., keep them coming just as fast as you can get them.

GEN MCCUTCHEON: Yes, sir. Will do.

GEN BURCHINAL: Thank you.

EMERGENCY ACTIONS: General Burchinal.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes.

EMERGENCY ACTIONS: Would you go to Mr. McNamara's office please, sir.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right.

EA: Thank you, sir.

A recording, Mr. McNamara to Admiral Sharp at 1019 AM, EDT, 4 August.

MR. MCNAMARA: Hello.

ADM SHARP: Yes, sir.

MR. MCNAMARA: Hello Ollie, Bob. Sorry to awaken you tonight. Have you seen these messages regarding the MADDOX and a possible attack on her?

ADM SHARP: No, sir. I just got into Headquarters but they're all here and my Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations has read them.

MR. MCNAMARA: Okay, good.

ADM SHARP: I just got in.

MR. MCNAMARA: Well, we have a slight change in Rules of Engagement going out to you. I understand it has been sent by telephone,; we're confirming it by cable. It accepts, partially, your recommendation to pursue to the 3-mile limit except it's for aircraft only. But that isn't really the reason for my call. The reason for my call is to suggest that you examine the kill capability of the MADDOX and its associated aircraft to be sure that we've done everything we possibly can to assure destruction of any attacking craft and use whatever carrier force, flaeships, fighters, anything else you need in terms of numbers and weapons to obtain that objective.

ADM SHARP: All right, sir. Now when I talked to Keith McCutcheon about 15 minutes ago, he was talking about flaeships and flaeships are the one thing that I'm not sure about right now.

MR. MCNAMARA: You mean you don't know whether they have them or whether it would be wise to use them.

ADM SHARP: Well, no, we'll use them if we have them but the question is, are they ready and we have already told the fleet to get them ready.

MR. MCNAMARA: Yes.

ADM SHARP: But there is a question in my mind right now whether they're there or not. And of course, these people --- these aircraft have a limited night attack capability anyway.

MR. MCNAMARA: Yes.

ADM SHARP: But when we get the flaeships there, we're all right. In the meantime, of course, I think the two destroyers can handle themselves pretty doggone well anyway.

MR. MCNAMARA: Well, do you think the two destroyers could destroy the attacking craft -- the Swatows.

ADM SHARP: Yes, sir.

MR. MCNAMARA: At night?

ADM SHARP: Yes, sir. They should be able to.

MR. MCNAMARA: Make perfectly clear that's the objective.

ADM SHARP: Oh, yes sir, they know that.

MR. MCNAMARA: Just use whatever force you need to accomplish that, air and sea.

ADM SHARP: Right. Well, we've got two F-8's and two A-4D's right now up and 4 A-1H's will be up shortly.

Now -

MR. MCNAMARA: Why not put 20 more in the hole. I'm just going to an extreme here. I just want to understand why it's only 4.

ADM SHARP: It's not 4, it's 8.

MR. MCNAMARA: All right, why 8, why not 20?

ADM SHARP: Well, I think that until an attack happens - -

MR. MCNAMARA: Oh, yes, surely, I understand that, but after the attack happens, you wouldn't feel limited to 8 or 10 or anything like that.

ADM SHARP: We'll put everything on deck up, sir. Ha! Ha!

MR. MCNAMARA: Alright Ollie. If any question arises, just pick up the phone and call me.

ADM SHARP: All right, sir, certainly will.

MR. MCNAMARA: "Buzz" Wheeler is on his way to New York. This is one of the reasons I'm calling you. Dave Burchinal is here in my office at the present time.

ADM SHARP: All right, sir. Well, we're organized now. I think we have everything we need here - - the TICO has 3 destroyers with her including 1 DDG and then the other 2, the MADDOX and JOY - now the TURNER JOY has got a good battery and should be able to handle these things pretty easily, I think.

MR. MCNAMARA: Is the TURNER JOY's battery better than the MADDOX's?

ADM SHARP: Yes, sir; yes, sir. She's an after World War II destroyer and has these very fast firing 5"/54's.

MR. MCNAMARA: I see. Thanks very much, Ollie.

ADM SHARP: You're welcome, sir. Nice talking to you.

MR. MCNAMARA: Righto. Bye.

A recording, Admiral Sharp to General Burchinal at 1059 AM, EDT, 4 August.

GEN BURCHINAL: Hello.

ADM SHARP: Dave, --- Ollie.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes.

ADM SHARP: We're just thinking about what we might hit in reprisal.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes.

ADM SHARP: HON ME Island. HON ME.

GEN BURCHINAL: Significant?

ADM SHARP: Huh. Significant that the PT's have been working out of there. Apparently they've been going in there to fuel.

GEN BURCHINAL: There is a base there, then, for them.

ADM SHARP: Yes. They've been working out of there, we've noticed.

GEN BURCHINAL: HON ME, huh.

ADM SHARP: Yes, and then there's another little island called HON NE which is up ---

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes, now we've been doing those you know.

ADM SHARP: Huh?

GEN BURCHINAL: We've been hitting those with other things, you know.

ADM SHARP: Yes -- yes. That's right, but a good air strike on them would do a hell of a lot more than those other things.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes.

ADM SHARP: And can be done rather easily and right now, the CONSTELLATION will be -- she's within 350 miles of the Task Group right now.

GEN BURCHINAL: Uh huh. So you give her what -- about 12 hours; how much --

ADM SHARP: Oh well, she could make -- she could go in there right now and support them. No strain.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes.

ADM SHARP: That's stretching a little now but, she's going that way all the time and it's real easy.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right.

ADM SHARP: And we've speeded her up to get her down there as fast as possible.

GEN BURCHINAL: Good.

ADM SHARP: But she -- in other words, we've got two CVA's now that are ready to go. Now there are two other Swatow bases are QUANG KHE.

GEN BURCHINAL: Got that.

ADM SHARP: And BEN THUY.

GEN BURCHINAL: BEN THUY --- our info is that it has been replaced by PHUC LOI.

ADM SHARP: By what?

GEN BURCHINAL: PHUC LOI.

ADM SHARP: How do you spell it.

GEN BURCHINAL: PHUC LOI -- it's just down the river.

ADM SHARP: Yes.

GEN BURCHINAL: Down closer to the coast.

ADM SHARP: Yes --- yes.

GEN BURCHINAL: And there are five altogether. Hear they eliminated the one near the big city HAIPHONG.

ADM SHARP: Yes.

GEN BURCHINAL: And kept four in and what Mr. McNamara wants is for you to move to assemble, move, and get on the TICO as quickly as you can, a mining capability as an option for these four. This was the purpose of the call to your people asking them to get a hundred Mark 50's with assembly teams to the TICO as quickly as possible and let us know when.

ADM SHARP: Okay. We might put them on the CONSTELLATION instead.

GEN BURCHINAL: Okay. Either way.

ADM SHARP: Okay. We can do that. I still --- you know how we feel about -- mining, don't you.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes. The other thing --

ADM SHARP: Did you see the message I sent you yesterday? Our evaluation of the vulnerability of a certain place down south?

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes -- yes.

ADM SHARP: You've seen that one, have you?

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes. The other thing is we're just developing a number of options.

ADM SHARP: Yes.

GEN BURCHINAL: The other thing would be air, of course, against the bases and the boats themselves.

ADM SHARP: Well, how about an armed recco which would sort of fly up and down between HON ME and up around HON NE and hit any of this kind of craft we see --- either in the bay or at sea?

GEN BURCHINAL: I think that would be a good one.

ADM SHARP: Well, we can put that one on and all you have to do is say go.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right. The other is we're looking at the POL associated with the BEN THUY or PHUC LOI; there are two right there.

ADM SHARP: Uh huh, yes. There's that one at VINH.

GEN BURCHINAL: Uh huh, yes. That one and then there's one down river, a smaller one or about the same size actually it appears to support the base itself. Right at PHUC LOI.

ADM SHARP: Well, we can -- all these things -- we can do and all you have to do is say so.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right. Your people, I understand, are moving on the mining as Mr. McNamara wants that capability as fast as he can get it.

ADM SHARP: Okay. It'll take that -- let's see, I think we estimated 48-hours.

GEN BURCHINAL: 48 hours.

ADM SHARP: But, yes, it takes time.

GEN BURCHINAL: Can you fly them there?

ADM SHARP: Oh, we can fly them, yes, but, see the only thing you can fly aboard a carrier are these COD things and they don't carry too many.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes, yes.

ADM SHARP: And so, it'll be a little slow.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right.

ADM SHARP: Of course we can -- here's another thing we could do, we could carry quite a few of them in A-3D's from Subic.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes. Sure.

ADM SHARP: So, that can always be done. Okay, we'll have both those capabilities cranked up then.

GEN BURCHINAL: Fine. I'll suggest these other two.

ADM SHARP: Yes. Okay. Okay, Dave. Tell Mr. McNamara that we've -- that the CONSTELLATION will be -- is close enough now pretty quick.

GEN BURCHINAL: To provide support if needed. Right, and understand things are a little tight out there at the moment.

ADM SHARP: We just -- we just got a report saying that DESOTO Patrol is under continuous torpedo attack. Did you get that?

GEN BURCHINAL: No.

ADM SHARP: We just got it.

GEN BURCHINAL: Keep them coming on the reports of action.

ADM SHARP: Okay.

GEN BURCHINAL: Okay, Ollie. Right. Thank you.

A recording, Admiral Sharp to General Burchinal at 1118 AM, EDT, 4 August.

GEN BURCHINAL: Hello.

ADM SHARP: Hello, Dave.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes, Ollie.

ADM SHARP: I guess you know they've started shooting at them.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yep.

ADM SHARP: Both ways. One of them is -- said they've dodged five torpedoes and he's firing on the PT and one -- we had one message that said he was going to try to ram one. So they must be pretty close.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right.

ADM SHARP: Now, on this uh --

GEN BURCHINAL: Your air doing anything yet, or can you tell.

ADM SHARP: Can't tell yet, we haven't anything on that.
Now on this mining deal. You know about this one?

GEN BURCHINAL: Yep.

ADM SHARP: What we ought to do with this is airlift these things to DANANG.

GEN BURCHINAL: Uumhuhum.

ADM SHARP: And then from there we can COD them out to the carrier --

GEN BURCHINAL: Right.

ADM SHARP: Which would not be the TICONDEROGA but the CONSTELLATION probably, and then in addition, we'll get some ready over there at Subic for the A-3's.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right.

ADM SHARP: That's a long flight. But this is not the way to do this job. The way to do this job is with air.

GEN BURCHINAL: Understand. He just wants an option.

ADM SHARP: Yep. Okay, we'll get the option ready but this option, you know, is roughly 48 hours.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right.

ADM SHARP: So it's not something that's going to happen right away.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right.

ADM SHARP: And that constitutes a quick answer on when this is going to happen. About 48 hours.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right.

ADM SHARP: Now, have you seen -- here's one from DIRNSA to a lot of people out here. 041441.

GEN BURCHINAL: No.

ADM SHARP: Dave.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes.

ADM SHARP: This talks about a place where the -- where these people are going into to hide.

GEN BURCHINAL: Oh, name -- you got a name there.

ADM SHARP: Yea, LOC CHAO Estuary.

GEN BURCHINAL: Uh huh. Okay, we'll run that one down.

ADM SHARP: It's 19.46 North.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right.

ADM SHARP: That'll give you a lead.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right.

ADM SHARP: So -- what we ought to have done -- this idea of an armed recco, running up and down between HON ME and HON NE, would cover this place.

GEN BURCHINAL: They want to do something that's -- probably -- maybe that to, but more severe than going right in and picking up secondaries.

ADM SHARP: Well, what we ought to do as soon as it gets light is put up an armed recco to go in and take these people because it would be reasonably simple with a good strong armed recco up there.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right.

ADM SHARP: Well, it's not simple but -- because these people are kind of hard to hit, running around 50 knots and turning fast.

GEN BURCHINAL: Okay.

ADM SHARP: But, I would -- that's the first thing to do. If we want to really get them as soon as it ---

GEN BURCHINAL: At the first light background.

ADM SHARP: Well, right now if we can. If its open season on these boys which I think it is, we'll take it from there.

GEN BURCHINAL: Okay. Any word we can get we're going to have a meeting with SECSTATE, White House, directly.

ADM SHARP: Okay.

GEN BURCHINAL: Okay. Thank you and any more report of action out yonder, tune us in.

ADM SHARP: Okay.

GEN BURCHINAL: Thank you.

A recording, White House Situation Room to Pacific Desk, NMCC at
1213 PM, EDT, 4 August.

COL BUCKLEY: Pacific Desk, Col Buckley.

WHITE HOUSE: This is Werner, Sit Room. Tell me, we had a message earlier saying of the launch of some aircraft. What happened to the CAP. Weren't they --- Our last conference call there was no CAP, what's the --

COL BUCKLEY: Right, sir. I think the only thing we can draw conclusion here that they may of had to refuel, run out of gas or time, possibly.

MR. WERNER: So you think that they're back down on the carrier then?

COL BUCKLEY: I think this is probably right. It says no air support at present. In other words, it looked like he might have had some but they may have had to refuel somewhere.

MR. WERNER: Okay. Thank you.

COL BUCKLEY: We should have some more clarification on this and we'll give you a call as soon as we get something different.

MR. WERNER: Right.

COL BUCKLEY: Okay.

A recording, Admiral Sharp to General Burchinal at 1222 PM, EDT, 4 August.

ADM SHARP: Dave.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes, go ahead.

ADM SHARP: There apparently have been at least 9 torpedoes in the water. All missed and apparently 2 of the boats have been sunk as far as we can tell.

GEN BURCHINAL: Good. How many were engaged? Do you know?

ADM SHARP: Let's see, there must of been a total of six engaged, I think. Not sure on that yet.

GEN BURCHINAL: Any aircraft?

ADM SHARP: You mean enemy?

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes.

ADM SHARP: No, I don't --- wait a minute now. I'm not so sure about this number of engaged.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right.

ADM SHARP: We've got to check it out here. It may not be that high. NO. No report on - we did have a report on bogies at one time but we haven't any confirmation of that.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right. Were they sunk by gunfire or air attack? Do you know?

ADM SHARP: By gun I think. TURNER JOY.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right.

ADM SHARP: Now the CONSTELLATION has six A-4's and two F-4's on the scene. She launched them at 2300 H which, of course, is an hour and a half ago, and she sent in another four A-1's at 2315. Her present position is 18-07 N and 112 E, and she is closing 77.5. The CVA's have flare aircraft up there. There are also some C-123's at DANANG which we are telling them they can use if they want to.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right.

ADM SHARP: I told PACAF to send four F-102's to either of two fields, either DANANG or TAN SON NHUT.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right.

ADM SHARP: And I told him to get 12 F-102's down to Clark - as back up.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right.

ADM SHARP: And that's about it. The two carriers are close enough now that they can support each other.

GEN BURCHINAL: Are they still exchanging fire?

ADM SHARP: I've been so busy doing other things that I haven't looked at the last - whether they're still shooting each other or not.

GEN BURCHINAL:

(UNREADABLE)

ADM SHARP:

I can't - I don't see that they have. Here's another one now, just got it. Let me see - The MADDOX says she has evaded about 10 torpedoes. Two craft are sunk. No casualties to us and they got some AD's and A-4D's on the scene but they're having trouble with illumination. The TURNER JOY or one of the two was giving star shell illumination for the planes. As far as we can tell there were only three boats. But that doesn't count up to that many torpedoes I don't think. It sounds to me like there are more boats than just three. Well that's about the size of it, Dave. Now I have sent out one telling them to take care of them in the general area of the problem. It's open season on PT's and Swatow's. I've also told MACV to keep those ones down, you know in DANANG, in port so that they don't get mixed up in this thing.

GEN BURCHINAL:

Right. So you're calling them off for three or four days.

ADM SHARP:

I've called them off, yes. That's just about it Dave.

GEN BURCHINAL:

Okay. Ollie.

ADM SHARP: Of course, we would like to see that 11 miles changed to three.

GEN BURCHINAL: Understand. We're working on it.

ADM SHARP: Okay. And also we would like to do hot pursuit with aircraft.

GEN BURCHINAL: Understand. We're working on that.

ADM SHARP: I'm sending a message to you now suggesting an armed recco between HON NE and HON ME.

GEN BURCHINAL: For your info Ollie you might dig out the target material to be sure that the boys in the CVA's have them.

ADM SHARP: Target material?

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes. On two southern Swatow bases. QUANG KHE and PHUC LOI.

ADM SHARP: QUANG KHE and PHUC LOI.

GEN BURCHINAL: PHOC LOI, I guess it is. PHOC LOI plus the VINH and PHOC LOI POL.

ADM SHARP: VINH and PHOC LOI?

GEN BURCHINAL: POL.

ADM SHARP: Thats PHUC LOI?

GEN BURCHINAL: It's PHOC LOI, I think. It's just down the river from BEN THUY.

ADM SHARP: BEN THUY.
GEN BURCHINAL: Yes, just down the river from BEN THUY base.
ADM SHARP: Okay, Dave.
GEN BURCHINAL: You might have those target materials on hand.
ADM SHARP: Okay, thanks a lot.

A recording Adm Sharp to Gen Burchinal at 1:01 PM EDT 4 Aug

ADM SHARP: Dave?
GEN BURCHINAL: Yes.
ADM SHARP: We need to give these people some rules of engagement on aircraft and here is what I am suggesting. I would say to CINCPACFLT/7th FLT "Authority granted to declare hostile, and engage, any DRV/CHICOM aircraft whose actions and behavior indicate within reasonable certainty that an attack on US forces is intended".
GEN BURCHINAL: Yes. Do you have any indication of those screwing around out there?
ADM SHARP. Yes. There have been a couple which flew down south of HAINAN, that went down almost, as I recall, to DA NANG - out at sea.
GEN BURCHINAL: Do you know what kind they were?
ADM SHARP: No. They were Jets - their speeds were, as I recall, about 400 kts.
GEN BURCHINAL: From HAINAN down as far as DA NANG?

ADM SHARP: What?

GEN BURCHINAL: HAINAN down as far as DA NANG?

ADM SHARP: Yes.

GEN BURCHINAL: When did that happen - last night?

ADM SHARP: Yes. I don't - (Do you have that piece of paper we had about the two aircraft we saw flying around?) Dave, we've got quite a few aircraft on HAINAN you know, roughly 50, something like that.

GEN BURCHINAL: 28's and what else? Do you know?

ADM SHARP: T28's and MIG 17's, 15's. There is a total of 79, I have here. So there is a considerable force there and these CVA's are too close right now to let these fellows fly over us.

GEN BURCHINAL: I understand.

ADM SHARP: And he's got some, matter of fact, he's got some F8's in the air right now with sparrows on them and some F4's. So we've got to have something other - we can't allow these people to fly over our carriers at this point.

GEN BURCHINAL: Understand Ollie.

ADM SHARP: And, do you want me to wait until you give me an OK on it? Or shall I go out with it?

GEN BURCHINAL: Well, all I can do at the moment is note it because we're meeting at the White House. If you think it's necessary for the security of your forces, I think that's your job to put it out.

ADM SHARP: Well, I'm going to go ahead with it.

GEN BURCHINAL: And I'll just note it and tell the Chief that's what you've done. And if anything comes up we'll be in a countermanding position, but I think from the point of view of security of your forces you can't do anything less.

ADM SHARP: Yes - I'm going to go ahead and put it out.

GEN BURCHINAL: OK

ADM SHARP: Right

GEN BURCHINAL: Fine Ollie. Bye.

A recording - White House Situation Room to Command Center Operations
Team Chief at 1:03 PM EDT 4 AUG

MR. HAYS: Col Nickols, this is Bob Hays in the White House Situation Room. The NSC meeting has broken up now. Your Secretary, Mr. McNamara, Mr. Rusk and Mr. McCone are going to be having lunch with the President.

COL NICKOLS: Would you say that again and let me write it down.

MR. HAYS: Right

COL NICKOLS: Now, who's meeting with the President?

MR. HAYS: Well, the NSC meeting has broken up and McCone, Rusk and McNamara will be having lunch with the President along with Mr. Bundy. What we wanted to do was to make sure we were getting all these MADDOX messages on Priority and we will take care

of servicing all four of them upstairs, and with the President.

COL NICKOLS: Okay. They are having lunch in the White House.

MR. HAYS: Pardon me?

COL NICKOLS: They are having lunch in the White House?

MR. HAYS: Yes, they are having lunch with the President.

So if you get anything, shoot it over as fast as you can. I know you have been, but we wanted to let you know his whereabouts.

COL NICKOLS: We'll do it.

MR. HAYS: Fine - thank you. Bye.

A recording - Secretary McNamara to Gen Burchinal at 1:24 PM EDT 4 AUG

SEC McNAMARA: Hello, Dave.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes sir.

SEC McNAMARA: Dave, any further reports?

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes, Well, I talked to Adm Sharp on another matter. He called and said he, for the security of his forces, had to give his air CAP some instructions in case any enemy aircraft showed up - and he's done that. Last night they did spot two that they think were IL28s flown from HAINAN, down off DA NANG, and back again. The Chiefs have considered courses of action, sir. They considered three: the first, was a low level type retaliatory which would take just the

PT base at PHUC LOI and the oil associated with it at VINH. They are all in the same area. The second, was to take the two Swatow bases south of the 20th, plus that estuary which our intelligence says these boats run up in the daytime - with armed recce, and the two oil. The third, was to take all five of the Swatow bases, plus the two oil south there, and HAIPHONG. They are unanimously agreed on the second course of action. That south of the 20th you would take the Swatow bases at PHUC LOI and QUANG KHE, and the estuary at LOC CHAO. With those three PT targets you would also take the oil storages at VINH and PHUC LOI. That is their unanimous recommendation.

SEC McNAMARA:

What further action reports do you have?

GEN BURCHINAL:

I don't have any except for one intercept that came in somewhat garbled form that said that one enemy boat wounded and one enemy airplane seen falling from the sky.

SEC McNAMARA:

Would you call Ollie Sharp and find out from him what his latest information is? Almost an hour has gone by since we last had a report. Has the engagement broken off? and, if so, with what results?

GEN BURCHINAL:

The last I had was that there was no further indication of engagement. I'll get him right back again . . .

SEC McNAMARA: If he doesn't have any further information, ask him to radio to the task force and get it.

GEN BURCHINAL: I will.

SEC McNAMARA: And then call me here over at the Mansion.

GEN BURCHINAL: I will.

A recording - Gen Burchinal to Adm Sharp at 1:28 PM EDT 4 AUG

GEN BURCHINAL: Ollie, Mr. McNamara just called me from the White House. What's your very latest on the engagement?

ADM SHARP: The best we know is two sunk.

GEN BURCHINAL: I've given him that.

ADM SHARP: We don't know how many are involved really. There is some indication that one of our aircraft might have been hit but that is just an indication, nothing else.

GEN BURCHINAL: He wanted to know if you could get on the radio out there and find out really what the latest is. Has the engagement broken off? There is one report we received which said that one of our aircraft was seen falling into the sea.

ADM SHARP: Yes. That's the one I saw. You know what kind that was.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes. Is there any way you can get on the horn to Moore and find out what the status of engagement is?

ADM SHARP: I'll see if PACFLT has a circuit open to him.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes. I'll hold on.

ADM SHARP: It will take some time. No use in holding on, I will call you back.

GEN BURCHINAL: All right. He wants to be called over there on the latest status of engagement if you can get any word.

ADM SHARP: Well, I would say that we haven't had a report of any shooting now - there have been 13 torpedoes launched at the ships. None of them have hit. The aircraft were attacking, and let me see, a total of 12 torpedoes, 2 PTs destroyed. The TICONDEROGA aircraft are illuminating and attacking. The CONSTELLATION has aircraft on the scene now, and also the CONSTELLATION has four F-4's up armed with Sparrows as a CAP.

GEN BURCHINAL: OK. When you get through, call me.

ADM SHARP: I'll get anything I can in addition.

GEN BURCHINAL: Thanks, Ollie.

ADM SHARP: Welcome.

A recording between Adm Sharp and Gen Burchinal at 1:59 PM EDT 4 AUG

ADM SHARP: Dave, we aren't able to contact them by voice. We have sent a message saying expedite your SITREPS. The latest thing we have is one from 72.1 which says he has reviewed the action now, he said, many of the reported contacts and torpedoes fired appear doubtful. Have you seen

this one?

GEN BURCHINAL:

No.

ADM SHARP:

Freak weather effects on radar and overeager sonarmen may have accounted for many reports. No actual visual sightings by MADDOX. Of course, this doesn't take anything away from the other destroyer and, of course, we know that there has been contacts because we got the dope on the destruction, as you know. So there we are, and we can't get them by single side band.

GEN BURCHINAL:

You don't know whether the air attacks are still going on or not?

ADM SHARP:

The latest thing that I have is that we have some A-1s airborne. As far as we know, they still have aircraft up, in fact I'm sure they do.

GEN BURCHINAL:

Do you know if they're attacking, engaging or not?

ADM SHARP:

No, the last indications we have were that they were illuminating and it didn't say whether they were attacking or not, but they had flare ships up.

GEN BURCHINAL:

Okay. Well, I'll tell Mr. McNamara this, and if anything else comes in to you . . .

ADM SHARP:

I'm afraid what's happened is that our Flash

messages have choked up the circuit. I have just told everybody to knock off using Flash. That is from here. That is the best I can give you Dave, sorry.

GEN BURCHINAL: Okay. Many thanks, Ollie.

ADM SHARP: As soon as I get any more I will let you know.

GEN BURCHINAL: Thanks a lot.

ADM SHARP: OK. Goodbye.

A recording - Adm Sharp to Gen Burchinal at 2:08 PM EDT 4 August

ADM SHARP: Dave. We have a more recent one from 77.5. He said three PT's reported sunk now. He talks about the weather. He says weather over De Soto past three hours varied 800 to 3000 broken. And I don't know miles visibility. It is deteriorating which is hampering aircraft in the location of targets. And an EA-1B moved from a middle man position to De Soto to attempt to vector planes to contact. Two F4's are on the scene, and two are about to launch. No torpedo firings in the last 15 minutes. De Soto patrol reports no contacts on the radar screen.

GEN BURCHINAL: And what's the date time group?

ADM SHARP: This was 041732 Z.

GEN BURCHINAL: That's about 1315 our time, about an hour ago, the attack.

ADM SHARP: Not quite an hour ago.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right. OK, that will do it.

ADM SHARP: OK.

GEN BURCHINAL: Thank you.

ADM SHARP: It does appear now that a lot of these torpedo 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 the 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 that maybe one PT was sunk by another PT. But that's - this is still in the conjecture stage.

GEN BURCHINAL: OK, well that's fine. As far as we know then the aircraft are still attempting to maintain contact?

ADM SHARP: They are - they definitely are - right.

GEN BURCHINAL: Thank you, Ollie.

ADM SHARP: Welcome - Bye.

A recording - Adm Mustin to the DDO for Operations B/Gen Smith
at 3:34 PM EDT 4 AUG

ADM MUSTIN: Bob - Jim Miller is getting the execute

message typed up on this thing. Its got a few modifications in it from what I discussed with you, but that's neither here nor there. He's going to bring it up here, and I'm going to take it into the tank for the Chiefs to look at finally before it goes. When they say it's ready to go, then I want it to go on that open line which I trust you are still holding.

DDO: We've just sent them a little message to check it out and they are just bringing the message back. They "Rogerred" for the one I sent.

ADM MUSTIN: OK. I've just been talking to Adm Sharp on the phone and he knows this is expected momentarily and he may call back for it, so keep your tape cutters and whatever else you need right there ready to roll.

DDO: I told him the Joint Chiefs were in session and that we would have something for him shortly.

ADM MUSTIN: Righto.

DDO: All right, sir.

ADM MUSTIN: OK.

A recording - Adm Sharp to Gen Burchinal at 4:40 PM EDT 4 AUG

ADM SHARP: Hi, Dave.

GEN BURCHINAL: The message is up in SECDEF's office now. We should have it on the wire to you directly.

ADM SHARP: I talked to him just a few minutes ago and he

said what's the dope, and I told him that there is still a slight amount of doubt.

GEN BURCHINAL: As to whether he actually had one or not?

ADM SHARP: So he said what do you think, and I said I had told Moore about a half hour before that we had to get some definite information from these characters out there and he's gone out for it. I told him I thought we would have it within 2 hours.

GEN BURCHINAL: One report said no question of that they were illuminated and had guns fired at them.

ADM SHARP: Yes. We have another one here which I am just calling your attention to now.

GEN BURCHINAL: East 11 fires.

ADM SHARP: HMMMMMMMM?

GEN BURCHINAL: The one - there was about -- well -

ADM SHARP: No, this one said certain that original ambush was bonafide. Details of action following present a confusing picture. Have interviewed witnesses who made positive visual sightings. Have you seen that one?

GEN BURCHINAL: No.

ADM SHARP: Of cockpit lights or similar passing near MADDOX. You haven't seen that one?

GEN BURCHINAL: No.

ADM SHARP: Well. This is . . .

GEN BURCHINAL: Hasn't got in yet.

ADM SHARP: This is 041848 from CTG 72.1. That's the latest thing we have. It looks fairly certain. But anyway, I'm to call him and tell him.

GEN BURCHINAL: The minute you get an answer?

ADM SHARP: Yes - and we're not to go until we are confident that we have had one.

GEN BURCHINAL: You think you can launch by seven?

ADM SHARP: Yes, I think so. It'll be tight.

GEN BURCHINAL: And the idea being only to ---

ADM SHARP: But it may be just as well to wait an hour or so if we have to, to be certain.

GEN BURCHINAL: And the only one of course is the one major go at these places, except for the possibility of the recce which may be continued.

ADM SHARP: Well, that's new - now I was figuring on a recycle, if necessary.

GEN BURCHINAL: Oh - well if it's on an as-necessary basis, I think that's probably OK.

ADM SHARP: Yes, because there were quite a few -

GEN BURCHINAL: You get reports on some soft stuff that they didn't get, and there is something to go back again.

ADM SHARP: Yes - well - that's right. Especially on VINH.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes - that one you put enough on initially to really clean it up and if . . .

ADM SHARP: Well - we're going after so many places at once, that it looks like a redo would have to be on one of these.

GEN BURCHINAL: And that would probably be the best.

ADM SHARP: Yes.

GEN BURCHINAL: If you can make that northern one a one go, it would be better too.

ADM SHARP: Right, right. I agree.

GEN BURCHINAL: Because of the reaction possibility.

ADM SHARP: Yes, and I told them a recce is feasible so that we don't necessarily have to go up there. I just want to call your attention to that one message which indicates . . . a little better.

GEN BURCHINAL: OK - well, we'll wait for your call back on the confirmation routine, then we'll have the operator roll.

ADM SHARP: OK.

GEN BURCHINAL: Thanks, Ollie - Bye.

ADM SHARP: Hey, Dave, tell Dave MacDonald that he was about right on 70 total.

GEN BURCHINAL: On both?

ADM SHARP: That's 70 for the two of them. Not 70 each.

GEN BURCHINAL: Right. Right. OK.

ADM SHARP: OK. Right. Goodbye. Thank you.

A recording - Col Jones in the JCS conference room to the NMCC
Pacific Desk, Cdr Hattaway, at 5:00 PM EDT 4 AUG

CDR HATTAWAY: Hello, This is Cdr Hattaway on the Pac Desk.

COL JONES: This is Col Jones, I'm up at the Gold Room. The Chiefs would like to get the forecasters to give us a forecast of the weather as of 0700 local time out at the target area.

CDR HATTAWAY: Forecast as of 0700?

COL JONES: That's right, out there about 2 hours from now.

CDR HATTAWAY: OK, all right.

COL JONES: Over the target area, and we would like the information up here as soon as you get it.

CDR HATTAWAY: All right.

COL JONES: Thank you.

A recording - Adm Sharp to Gen Burchinal at 5:23 PM EDT 4 AUG

ADM SHARP: Dave, reference DIRNSA 041933Z.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes.

ADM SHARP: Have you seen it?

GEN BURCHINAL: No. Well, I'm not sure I have.

ADM SHARP: Well, here now they came out definitely and said they sacrificed two ships and the rest are ok.

GEN BURCHINAL: Oh, yes, we've seen that. I couldn't tell whether they meant ships. They said comrades.

ADM SHARP: No, no, I remember that one. This was a different

one. Now this is where they say they sacrificed two ships and all the rest are ok. You haven't seen that one?

GEN BURCHINAL:

No.

ADM SHARP:

I just got it. You ought to look at it because this pins it down better than anything so far.

GEN BURCHINAL:

Indicates that they were out there on business, huh?

ADM SHARP:

Oh, yes. Very definitely.

GEN BURCHINAL:

OK.

ADM SHARP:

They thought that they shot down a couple of planes. Now we also have one from 7th Fleet recapping and he says that TURNER JOY reports two.

GEN BURCHINAL:

Yes - we got that.

ADM SHARP:

And

GEN BURCHINAL:

SECDEF is satisfied with the evidence.

ADM SHARP:

He is, huh?

GEN BURCHINAL:

Yes.

ADM SHARP:

Well, now - I'm waiting for one more from the TURNER JOY. We're expecting one more. And actually I'm satisfied too. But then another thing. Now this thing is coming off at 2000 your time.

GEN BURCHINAL:

Yes.

ADM SHARP: Because we're shooting on GOLF time. Now we were using - HOTEL time in our message, but we're going to change it. Tom used GOLF in his.

GEN BURCHINAL: So it's 2000 our time.

ADM SHARP: Right.

GEN BURCHINAL: OK.

ADM SHARP: Now I think I'll give you a call pretty soon - I'll talk with Mr. McNamara pretty quick.

GEN BURCHINAL: He's right here with us.

ADM SHARP: OK - well - I'm waiting for one more message then I'll give you the dope.

GEN BURCHINAL: Thank you, Ollie.

ADM SHARP: OK - goodbye.

Recorded conversation, Admiral Mustin to the DDO NMCC General Smith at 5:29 PM, EDT, 4 August.

ADM MUSTIN: Bob, there is again this confusion about what time it is in the Gulf of Tonkin. I wish you'd get on that Teletype circuit or something and get this straightened out once and for all. We want to know not only what time do they keep in Saigon, but we also want to know what time those carriers are keeping at sea up there in the Gulf of Tonkin, in case there is any difference.

DDO: Yes, sir, there should be no. . .

ADM MUSTIN: There seems to be some confusion whether we have a 12 hour difference, 11 hour difference, or what

we have; and we want to know, and we want to know right here in the tank right now. So put somebody through on a wire that will go through for sure, like to CINCPAC's War Room, and ask him to check a little further to resolve the possibility of differences between what's kept in Saigon, which may be an artificial time, and what time the carriers are keeping, and let us know back here, and use whatever it takes to get through at the desk.

GEN SMITH: I'll do that.

ADM MUSTIN: Righto.

Recorded conversation, the Deputy Director for Operation General Smith to General McCutcheon at 5:33 PM, EDT, 4 August.

GEN SMITH: This is Smith at the NMCC. I have just had a call from Admiral Mustin out at the tank and apparently a big discussion has come up over the imte in the Bay of Tonkin that you CVA's are carrying, as opposed to the time in Saigon. Can you straighten this out for me?

GEN McCUTCHEON: That's correct. We had told CINCPACFLT in our message to go on HOTEL time, but they had previously gone out to 7th fleet and used GOLF time. The particular real estate in question is about halfway between GOLF and HOTEL. Realizing that they can use that extra hour, Admiral Sharp has told them to plan on using GOLF time. That would

make it 2000 Washington time if it comes off as scheduled.

GEN SMITH: 2000 at Saigon time would be waht, 1900?
GEN McCUTCHEON: Negative - 2000 Washington time.
GEN SMITH: 2000 Washington time. I am with you.
GEN McCUTCHEON: That would be 1400 here in Honolulu and would be 0700 out there.
GEN SMITH: 0700 out there. Alright now. If they use the HOTEL time what time would it be?
GEN McCUTCHEON: Well, if they went on HOTEL time it would be one hour earlier; it would be 1900 Washington time.
GEN SMITH: Right and 0600 out there. Right?
GEN McCUTCHEON: Negative. If they went on 0700 HOTEL it would be 1900 in Washington. If they go on 0700 GOLF it would be 2000 in Washington.
GEN SMITH: OK, I am with you. That's fine. OK, I'll call that into them. Thank you ever so much.

Recorded conversation, Admiral Sharp to General Burchinal at 5:39 PM, EDT, 4 August.

ADM SHARP: Hi, Dave.
GEN BURCHINAL: Yes - I read that message you referenced.
ADM SHARP: Good.
GEN BURCHINAL: Indicates there may be some other activity under way.
ADM SHARP: Well -
GEN BURCHINAL: They said in the message that they were -
ADM SHARP: They were carrying out the hunt.
GEN BURCHINAL: Yes.

ADM SHARP: Right - Now I just wanted to be sure that we understood each other on this as to the time that will be launch time.

GEN BURCHINAL: At 0700 local.

ADM SHARP: Right.

GEN BURCHINAL: Launch time - that's right.

ADM SHARP: Yes.

GEN BURCHINAL: Now - we were having an argument here with the clocks again. We're on eastern daylight - Saigon is 12 hours - is this different than Saigon?

ADM SHARP: According to our clock here you're on Queen time. What time is it there now?

GEN BURCHINAL: Right now at here it is 5:40 - 1740.

ADM SHARP: Right - that's right - and we check on that. And it's 4:40 in the morning.

GEN BURCHINAL: In that local area, not in Saigon.

ADM SHARP: No, no. It's Saigon's. They're on a special time.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes.

ADM SHARP: 4:40.

GEN BURCHINAL: OK.

ADM SHARP: So we're checked. We got you on, right?

GEN BURCHINAL: Right.

ADM SHARP: OK, Dave - I just wanted to check - I'm still waiting for one more.

GEN BURCHINAL: Did you get that other word on possible things from the North moving down?

ADM SHARP: No, I don't believe I did.

GEN BURCHINAL: NSA stuff again. I haven't seen it. I just heard a report. There is a report that some stuff from the north - north - north would move into the north. . .

ADM SHARP: You mean air?

GEN BURCHINAL: Chi stuff, yes, into Dien Bien.

ADM SHARP: No, I haven't seen that one.

GEN BURCHINAL: We'll keep an eye out for it and be sure.

ADM SHARP: OK, Dave.

GEN BURCHINAL: OK, Ollie.

ADM SHARP: Call you later.

Recorded conversation, Admiral Sharp to General Burchinal at 6:07 PM, EDT, 4 August.

ADMIRAL SHARP: Hey, Dave. A couple things here. I've been waiting for another one from TURNER JOY but she keeps passing them through 77.5 and he interprets instead of sending us the thing, but I'm satisfied myself.

GEN BURCHINAL: We are, too. There will be no change.

ADM SHARP: Alright. Now a couple things -

GEN BURCHINAL: You've got the message that says go?

ADM SHARP: We have it. And that's it, huh? Is that agreeable with SECDEF?

GEN BURCHINAL: He was sitting there listening and he says he's satisfied.

ADM SHARP: OK, OK.

GEN BURCHINAL: He considers you're on the highway, friend.

ADM SHARP: He wanted me to call him and -

GEN BURCHINAL: I didn't realize it.

ADM SHARP: You've been relaying.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes. He was in the meeting with the Chiefs all the time you were calling. I was relaying. He's satisfied and he considers that the show is on the road.

ADM SHARP: Well, you tell him that I'm going ahead.

GEN BURCHINAL: That's correct.

ADM SHARP: Two things now; suppressive fire is part of this game, right?

GEN BURCHINAL: There is no question in my mind about that.

ADM SHARP: Alright, I've told CINCPACFLT that suppressive fire is part of the game.

GEN BURCHINAL: Where you have identified positions that may interfere with your forces, clean them up on the way in.

ADM SHARP: Right. Now the press should not get this story at 1900 your time.

GEN BURCHINAL: We are cognizant of that and will probably not - we will insure that nothing comes out here until we know that you're off target.

ADM SHARP: Alright. That's going to be 2100 your time.

GEN BURCHINAL: We're making plans to have it late.

ADM SHARP: Well, I notice that there is going to be a meeting across the river.

GEN BURCHINAL: It's going on right now, but nothing's coming out of it at the moment. They will delay that until they are sure that there is no possibility of anyone reading it.

ADM SHARP: OK. I'm going to tell CINCPACFLT to GO.

GEN BURCHINAL: Alright - Now - One thing your staff might be thinking of, Ollie - We have in hand, a series of actions out of 37, of alerts and deployments to build up the posture in the area and improve our ability to react. If they clear that across the way, they will send it to you and it will bring in not only your forces, but some outside ones. And it will ask you for any others you need, to put a peak posture out there. And you people might be thinking of it. We're using 37 as the basis. But they can go on from there and anything they think they need. So those will be both alerts and deployments.

ADM SHARP: OK - I'm not going to call you again on this - this is my telling you that I'm going to execute.

GEN BURCHINAL: This is my telling you that that's our understanding here firmly.

ADM SHARP: OK.

GEN BURCHINAL: Fine, Ollie.

ADM SHARP: Thank you, Dave. Goodbye.

Recorded conversation, NMCC PAC desk to the CINCPAC D/O at 7:59 PM,
EDT, 4 August.

LCOL LINDSEY: This is Commander Hattaway, NMCC.

CDR HATTAWAY: Some of the wheels are concerned about this CTG
77.6's 141759Z.

LCOL LINDSEY: Let me get it - just a minute.

GEN WISMAN: Hattaway, you got the PAC D/O there?

LCOL LINDSEY: Yes sire, on.

GEN WISMAN: OK, now what we need is the off-times, numbers and
types ASAP.

LCOL LINDSEY: Yes, sir.

GEN WISMAN: You got anything yet?

LCOL LINDSEY: Not a thing.

GEN WISMAN: OK, now you'll come through on the KY 9, right?

LCOL LINDSEY: Yes, sir.

GEN WISMAN: OK, and the NMCC here is supposed to have a circuit
open for you, a hot line, so you can come right
up on the KY 9 and get it in here to us.

LCOL LINDSEY: OK. I have that one.

CDR HATTAWAY: They want to make sure this has no relation to
the current operation.

LCOL LINDSEY: That's correct.

CDR HATTAWAY: This is just some CAP or effort against the
earlier attack.

LCOL LINDSEY: Yes, sir.

CDR HATTAWAY: That's the way you read it, too?

LCOL LINDSEY: Yes, sir.

CDR HATTAWAY: Thank you very much. Goodbye.

Recorded conversation, General Wheeler to General Burchinal at 8:05 PM, EDT, 4 August.

GENERAL WHEELER: Dave? Anything happening?

GEN BURCHINAL: We're standing by with a clear line. Have heard nothing yet.

GEN WHEELER: OK. Well, I'm in the President's office, the outer office. If you get any word, pass the word to me. They can call me to the phone. I'm in the cabinet room, actually.

GEN BURCHINAL: I will indeed.

GEN WHEELER: OK, Dave. Goodbye.

Recorded conversation, Secretary McNamara to Admiral Sharp at 8:39 PM, EDT, 4 August.

MR. MCNAMARA: Ollie, what have you heard about the launch?

ADM SHARP: We have not heard yet, sir. I think what probably will happen will be that they will give us a coordinated report when the launch is completed.

MR. MCNAMARA: Can't you radio out to them and ask them whether they are taking off, and if not, when they plan to take off?

ADM SHARP: Yes, sir. I'll try it.

MR. MCNAMARA: It's forty minutes after the ordered time of take off.

ADM SHARP: I think what they're probably doing is planning on giving us a coordinated take off report, which they do at the completion of take off.

MR. MCNAMARA: Let's get an immediate statement from them if we can. Part of the problem here is just hanging on this news, you see. The President has to make a statement to the people and I am holding him back from making it, but we're forty minutes past the time I told him we would launch.

ADM SHARP: Alright. I will have CINCPACFLT, who has a direct line to them, see if he can raise an answer from them.

MR. MCNAMARA: How long will it take them after launch to get over the targets?

ADM SHARP: Well, it's going to take some of them a little over an hour.

MR. MCNAMARA: I don't think we need worry - How soon will the first ones be over target?

ADM SHARP: We don't have the plan of their launch. Now, if they let them all go at once, which they may do, then of course they will hit the southern targets quite quickly.

MR. MCNAMARA: See if you can find out when they are launching and when you think their first flights will be over targets.

ADM SHARP: All right, sir.
MR. MCNAMARA: Very good. And then just call me back directly. I will be in my office.
ADM SHARP: All right, sir. Thank you.
MR. MCNAMARA: All right, Ollie. I appreciate it.
ADM SHARP: Yes, sir. Bye.

Recorded conversation, Admiral Sharp to Secretary McNamara at 9:09 PM, EDT, 4 August.

MR. MCNAMARA: McNamara.
ADM SHARP: This is Ollie, Sir.
MR. MCNAMARA: Yes, Ollie.
ADM SHARP: I just got one from one carrier.
MR. MCNAMARA: Yes.
ADM SHARP: He may be talking for both of them because he is the senior one. And he says, "Time of launch is going to be 0200Z," which means not for another 50 minutes. In other words, they couldn't make the time.
MR. MCNAMARA: Oh, my God.
ADM SHARP: And last time over target will be 0400.
MR. MCNAMARA: 0400.
ADM SHARP: 0400Z.
MR. MCNAMARA: Let's see - 0400Z, which would mean. . .
ADM SHARP: Which would mean three hours.
MR. MCNAMARA: Eleven o'clock. Three hours from now.
ADM SHARP: Yes, sir.

MR. MCNAMARA: And that is over target?

ADM SHARP: That is the last one over target.

MR. MCNAMARA: What is the first over target?

ADM SHARP: Well, the first one would be about 0300. He gave this one TOT, which could mean that he is trying to make a coordinated attack. But you see what happened, this compression of time has got him and he has had to delay his launch.

MR. MCNAMARA: Well, now, let's get clear. His time of launch is fifty minutes from now?

ADM SHARP: That's right, yes, sir.

MR. MCNAMARA: Which would make it ten PM Washington time.

ADM SHARP: That is right. Yes, sir. And the TOT would be midnight, your time.

MR. MCNAMARA: Two hours?

ADM SHARP: Yes, sir.

MR. MCNAMARA: Is it two hours to the closest target?

ADM SHARP: We assume that that meant the last TOT.

MR. MCNAMARA: Alright, what is the first TOT for ten PM Washington launch?

ADM SHARP: I don't know yet. We are trying to get an amplifying report. But as I say he could be making a coordinated attack, which would mean that he would try to get them all over at the same time, you see?

MR. MCNAMARA: How serious do you think would be a Presidential statement about the time of launch that would say

this, "At this moment air action is now in execution against gun boats and supporting facilities in and near four ports of North Vietnam which have been used in support of hostile operations"?

ADM SHARP: I don't think it would be good, sir. Frankly. Because it will alert them. No doubt about it.

MR. MCNAMARA: They will be alerted as soon as these planes start coming into the coast.

ADM SHARP: Well. They won't know where they are going. You see. Of course, they are going to be alerted as soon as they get in the air because HAINAN is going to pick them up and so will the other people. But they won't know where they are going. It wouldn't recommend it. I am sorry we can't get it too any faster, but I know what would happen.

MR. MCNAMARA: Sure.

ADM SHARP: It's a compression all along the line, you know, and communications take time.

MR. MCNAMARA: Alright. Keep me informed as the night goes by.

ADM SHARP: Yes, sir. Sure will.

MR. MCNAMARA: Thank you.

ADM SHARP: Yes, sir. Goodbye.

Recorded conversation, Admiral Sharp to Secretary McNamara at 9:22 PM, EDT, 4 August.

MR. MCNAMARA: McNamara.

ADM SHARP: Sir, this is Ollie again.

MR. MCNAMARA:

Yes, Ollie.

ADM SHARP:

We have some indications, in a channel, you know, that we can't talk about, that these PTs are going in close to the shore and they are told to stay close and they are going into these various estuaries. This brings up this three mile prohibition. See, we are going in to hit these various places but we still have to stay outside of three miles; otherwise, and it looks as though we are giving them a three mile sanctuary which they are already taking advantage of. Of course, they wouldn't know it but what they are doing is getting in close to try to hide. This is a . . . Well, I am not sure that you are on this one.

MR. MCNAMARA:

Yes, I am on it.

ADM SHARP:

But on that particular message?

MR. MCNAMARA:

Well, no, but I know basically what you are talking about.

ADM SHARP:

Then I would suggest, sir, that. . .

MR. MCNAMARA:

I think we have enough on our hands at the moment, Ollie. Let's just stay with the targets we have and strike those and worry about the three mile limit later.

ADM SHARP:

Well, I was just concerned that we are apt to run these things in close and then won't be able to do anything about it.

MR. MCNAMARA: Well, I think that is right, but the orders are to hit those targets and as I understand it, you will use your whole force for that.

ADM SHARP: Yes, sir. We will have a . . .

MR. MCNAMARA: We don't need to fight in the three mile limit.

ADM SHARP: Well, here is what I anticipate is going to happen. That some of the ones down south will probably be vacant. There probably won't be anybody there because I think they are up a little farther North and we will find them up there in close to the beach, I think. They will have had time to get there, you see. I think that is what we are going to run into. However, that is. . .

MR. MCNAMARA: I would think that the aircraft going in on these initial strikes, the ones you are launching now or will launch shortly against the bases, could be authorized to attack these vessels where ever they find them.

ADM SHARP: That is what I think to, sir.

MR. MCNAMARA: That is alright. You go ahead and instruct them to that; but after the first strike, I mean after you have launched your first wave and they come back to the ships, then the patrols should attack only outside the three mile limit. Buzz Wheeler and Cy Vance are here and all are nodding their heads.

ADM SHARP: Alright, sir.

MR. MCNAMARA: So that means that on the way in.

ADM SHARP: Go ahead.

MR. MCNAMARA: Go ahead and attack any place you find them

ADM SHARP: Alright, sir, I will tell them that.

MR. MCNAMARA: Very good. Thanks. Get them off though, Ollie -
That is the main thing.

ADM SHARP: Sir?

MR. MCNAMARA: Get them off, that is the main thing.

ADM SHARP: We will get them off.

MR. MCNAMARA: Good night.

ADM SHARP: Good night, sir.

Recorded conversation, Secretary McNamara to Admiral Sharp at 10:26
PM, EDT, 4 August.

ADM SHARP: Sharp.

MR. MCNAMARA: Bob McNamara. Have we had any word that they have
launched?

ADM SHARP: No, sir. We haven't, although I am sure the one
outfit is going to go, or has gone at 0200, I am
quite sure. The other one, however, this is the
one that came down from the North, you know --

MR. MCNAMARA: Yes.

ADM SHARP: - and also is taking the targets that are farthest
away. She is not going to launch until 1300 their
time, with the slow aircraft. And then she is going
to launch the others at 1430. Apparently she is

not able to get in position in time. That is their time. Two and one half hours from now, she launches one set and the other set a four hours from now. You got that, sir?

MR. MCNAMARA:

Yes. ~~My~~ God.

ADM SHARP:

Here is the problem, she is coming down from the North and she had the farthest North targets so she had to come down around that place, you know.

MR. MCNAMARA:

Yes.

ADM SHARP:

And in order to get in there, she had to use a good many of her aircraft for refuelers. So while one of them is going to get off at the time I said, which was the Southern one, you know.

MR. MCNAMARA:

Which got off a half an hour ago, is that right?

ADM SHARP:

It should have gotten off a half an hour ago. We haven't heard yet but we will be hearing any minute, I am sure.

MR. MCNAMARA:

But shouldn't she. . . Why don't you get in touch with her right away and make Damn sure she got off.

ADM SHARP:

Right.

MR. MCNAMARA:

Ollie.

ADM SHARP:

Yes, sir.

MR. MCNAMARA:

Now this other one will get off four hours from now and then how long is it to the target?

ADM SHARP: Let's see - 1545, which will be five hours and fifteen minutes from now. Of course, those are the farthest away.

MR. MCNAMARA: But no announcement here is going to influence what they think about those aircraft coming in because you will already have launched a half an hour ago against the other targets.

ADM SHARP: That's right. As long as they don't know what the targets are.

MR. MCNAMARA: Yes. Well, I have cut that out of the statement.

ADM SHARP: Good. Yes, sir. So I think we are alright on that, as long as you don't say what they are.

MR. MCNAMARA: Yes.

ADM SHARP: There will still be the element of surprise.

MR. MCNAMARA: OK, Ollie. And check with. . .

ADM SHARP: I will give you the word, as soon as we get in touch with them.

MR. MCNAMARA: Well, get in touch with them right away.

ADM SHARP: Yes, sir.

A Recording, Mr. McNamara to Admiral Sharp at 10:46 PM, EDT,

4 August 1964.

ADM SHARP: Yes Sir.

MR. MCNAMARA: Any confirmation of Launch yet Ollie?

ADM SHARP: No Sir. I have just called for it again and I have not had it, Sir.

MR. MCNAMARA: Can't you go in the clear on this and ask "Did you do what you said you were going to do at 10 O'Clock?"

ADM SHARP: We have to go through Sangley on it Sir, and I just told them to go back on it again. But they have not had it. It is just a matter of getting it through this communications system. I will give it to you -

MR. MCNAMARA: How long should it take? The President wants to go on the air at 1115, that is the problem, and he shouldn't go on unless he has a confirmation of launch.

ADM SHARP: I should think we will have it by that time, Sir. I am needling them like mad but it is just a question of getting it through this circuit and apparently the circuit is a little jammed up or something.

MR. MCNAMARA: Well can't you get priority on this?

ADM SHARP: Actually it is coming from the other end and I am sure he got it up to FLASH right now sir.

MR. MCNAMARA: Well, keep after him.

ADM SHARP: I will keep after him.

MR. MCNAMARA: Next Ollie, after you get this out of the way and the launch, be sure that you let them know that we want post strike flash reports promptly. He ought to report every half hour through the night as to what he has done launching, post strike information, any attacks on him, any unidentified aircraft, he just ought to have a half hourly report so that you can keep up to date.

ADM SHARP: All right, I will tell him that.

MR. MCNAMARA: Very Good, Thanks Ollie.

ADM SHARP: All right Sir.

A recording, General Clifton to Deputy Director for Operations, General Wisman, at 10:48 PM, EDT, 4 August 1964.

DDO: Hello.

GEN CLIFTON: Hi.

DDO: General.

GEN CLIFTON: Yes.

DDO: We have the Chairman here now in another conversation with SECDEF and Admiral Sharp, can I help you?

GEN CLIFTON:

GEN CLIFTON: Yes. Let me tell you what my problem is. We are looking over this CONSTELLATION Plan. -

DDO: Yes.

GEN CLIFTON: and I know -

DDO: We have new launch times now that we just received from the CONSTELLATION.

GEN CLIFTON: Right.

DDO: Which is considerable later than the TICONDEROGA.

GEN CLIFTON: Right.

DDO: The TICONDEROGA should have launched at 10 and if we hear differently we will notify you.

GEN CLIFTON: Well. Mr. Bundy and the President are together up there.

DDO: Right.

GEN CLIFTON: And they are talking about 1115.

DDO: For what?

GEN CLIFTON: For their statement, and I am looking at the statement to see whether, . . . let's say that they go with this early launch time, how much are they going to reveal and warn the people?

DDO: Well now Admiral Sharp and Secretary McNamara have discussed that and McNamara has deleted that portion from the message and this is what he told Sharp on the phone.

GEN CLIFTON: He has deleted that portion from the President's message, but even when he makes a statement will he alert them this many hours in advance?

DDO: Admiral Sharp said not so as long as he doesn't give the targets.

GEN CLIFTON: I see. OK.

DDO: That was his conversation with the SECDEF.

GEN CLIFTON: The SECDEF has had it with the President I am sure.

DDO: Right.

GEN CLIFTON: All right. Thank you.

A recording, the Deputy Director for Operations, General Wisman, to General Burchinal at 11:05 PM, EDT, 4 August 1964.

GEN BURCHINAL: Hello.

DDO: General, Wisman, Sir.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes.

DDO: Still nothing from getting airborne get. And also new info from the one that was moving down from up North, not in position yet. So, they will not be launching for a few hours. And the latest deal is that the Chief out there has called the Chief here, and he wants to scrub that ones launching because of bad weather.

GEN BURCHINAL: What does that do to the operation?

DDO: Well, it cuts out some of the targets that they had split up between the two. Of course, the hand will already be tipped if you go in with the one force. That is the only thing that comes to my mind immediately. The Chairman is up with the SECDEF and Admiral Sharp just talked to the SECDEF, with this information that I am giving you.

GENERAL BURCHINAL: Did he tell him which ones they couldn't hit?

DDO: Sir?

GEN BURCHINAL: Did he tell him which ones they couldn't hit?

DDO: No. They didn't go into that but the Chairman just left here and we showed him on the map which was which. So he knows, and he is sitting there with him.

GEN BURCHINAL: What happened to them. Hell, they are supposed to have been together an hour, you know.

DDO: Well the latest guidance was the directive from SECDEF, "Don't scrub anything until you call me back."

GEN BURCHINAL: That is not good.

DDO: No Sir.

GEN BURCHINAL: The other one has no weather problem?

DDO: Well he doesn't think so but it is funny that he can't confirm anything getting airborne. I am beginning to suspect it now.

GEN BURCHINAL: Of course, if he is waiting for a coordinated go, that is one thing that could have held up the other ones.

DDO: Yes Sir, it could have.

GEN BURCHINAL: Call me if you get anything tonight.

DDO: All right Sir, will do.

GEN BURCHINAL: In 10 or 15 minutes I will be coming over.

DDO: All right, Sir.

GEN BURCHINAL: Thank you very much.

A recording, Mr. McNamara to Admiral Sharp at 11:11 PM, EDT, 4 August 1964.

ADM SHARP: Yes Sir.

MR. MCNAMARA: Ollie, if you don't launch against those northernly targets because of bad weather.

ADM SHARP: Yes Sir.

MR. MCNAMARA: Is there any reason why the CONSTELLATION couldn't launch against the southernly targets, including the oil depot?

ADM SHARP: No Sir. That is exactly what we would do.

MR. MCNAMARA: Is the weather ok down there?

ADM SHARP: It is better down ther, Sir. It's not good, it's deteriorating now.

MR. MCNAMARA: I think the point is, that as a Nation we just can't sit here and let them attack us on the high seas and not do something.

ADM SHARP: No Sir.

MR. MCNAMARA: So I think the President has to say that we are going to retaliate.

ADM SHARP: We are going to do it sir. There is no doubt about that, it is just that I don't think that there is any question that they have launched. It is just the question of getting the doggone report.

MR. MCNAMARA: OK.

ADM SHARP: I have just blasted them again.

MR. MCNAMARA: OK Ollie. Thanks again.

ADM SHARP: Doing my best.

MR. MCNAMARA: Right O.

ADM SHARP: Right O.

A recording, the Deputy Director for Operations, General Wisman, to General Burchinal at 11:20 PM, EDT, 4 August 1964.

GEN BURCHINAL: Hello.

DDO: General at the recent conversation the SECDEF called him back and said, "All right now why can't you put Connie down on those Southern targets too if they can't go north so we do something." So that is what they are looking at now. In other words his point to him was that as a nation we cannot sit here and not retaliate.

GEN BURCHINAL: Yes.
DDO: So they are thinking.
GEN BURCHINAL: Do you mean put both out there?
DDO: Yes. If necessary in order to insure success.
GEN BURCHINAL: Nobody go North?
DDO: If the weather absolutely prevents it.
GEN BURCHINAL: Up North?
DDO: Yes Sir. If it does.
GEN BURCHINAL: If the weather up North.
DDO: Yes Sir.
GEN BURCHINAL: How the Hell they going to know that?
DDO: Evidently they got some recon in the area. I don't know.

GENERAL BURCHINAL: OK.

DDO: All right, Sir.

GEN BURCHINAL: I will be leaving in just a few minutes.

DDO: All right Sir.

A recording, Admiral Sharp to Mr. McNamara at 11:20 PM, EDT, 4 August 1964.

MR. MCNAMARA: McNamara

ADM SHARP: Sir, this is Ollie.

MR. MCNAMARA: Yes, Ollie.

ADM SHARP: She got her planes off at 0243. 0243

MR. MCNAMARA: How long ago was that?

ADM SHARP: That is one hour, not quite an hour ago. 50 minutes ago, and they will be over the target at 0510Z.

MR. MCNAMARA: What time? How much is that from now?

ADM SHARP: That is one hour and 50 minutes from now.

MR. MCNAMARA: Well, now, it couldn't have taken off 40 minutes ago or 50 minutes ago; and be one hour and 50 minutes from now.

ADM SHARP: They have taken off in two waves so that they all get there at the same time. And the slow ones took off at 0243 and the fast ones will take off later. They will all join over the target. So they are making a coordinated attack, you see.

MR. MCNAMARA: Right. So they took off about how long ago now?

ADM SHARP: They took off 40 minutes ago.

MR. MCNAMARA: 40 minutes ago.

ADM SHARP: 40 minutes ago. Yes Sir.

MR. MCNAMARA: And they will be over the target when?

ADM SHARP: They will be over the target in one hour and 10 minutes. No, No, one hour and 50 minutes!

MR. MCNAMARA: One hour and 50 minutes.

ADM SHARP: Right.

MR. MCNAMARA: Right O.

A recording, the CINCPAC DO to the NMCC Pacific Desk at 11:23 PM, EDT,
4 August 1964.

CDR HENSON: Military Command Center, Cdr. Henson.

MAJ JONES: Cdr. Henson, this is Maj. Joines CINCPAC Duty.

CDR HENSON: Yes, Major.

MAJ JONES: On the TICO first TOT 0510Z.

CDR HENSON: 0510Z. Now what do we base this on, Major?

MAJ JONES: Off at 0243Z.

CDR HENSON: Off at 0243Z. What was the time again?

MAJ JONES: 0243Z

CDR HENSON: 0243Z

MAJ JONES: Roger. Now this dope has already been given to Mr. McNamara.

CDR HENSON: It has. Well how are we going to get this stuff in here? Is it all going to come in here like this?

MAJ JONES: Well I couldn't say. I am just giving it to you because I didn't think you had it.

CDR HENSON: Well, you are right I didn't have it.

MAJ JONES: So, I just wanted to tell you that it was given just now to Mr. McNamara, and I thought maybe it might have had something to do with your notification.

CDR HENSON: It sure would. Thank you very much, Major. Is that all you have on it?

MAJ JONES: That is all I've got.
CDR HENSON: Where did you get this?
MAJ JONES: This came from CINCPACFLT.
CDR HENSON: OK. Thank you very much.
MAJ JONES: Roger.

A recording, the NMCC Pacific Desk to the ARMY Wr Room, NFP, AFCP, MC
Command Center, State Operations, White House Sit Room, and CIA, at
11:27 PM, EDT, 4 August 1964.

CDR HENSON: This is Cdr. Henson Military Command Center calling.
I am making a Pierce Arrow notification. I repeat
a Pierce Arrow notification. The first aircraft
were launched from the TICONDEROGA at 0243Z
estimated time on target 0510Z. Any questions, over.
No questions White House.
Army copied.
Air Force copied.
Navy copied.
Marines copied.
State copied.

A recording, the Deputy Director for Operations, General Wisman, to
Admiral Mustin at 11:37 PM, EDT, 4 August 1964.

ADM MUSTIN: Admiral Mustin.

DDO: Yes Sir. About two minutes ago we got the word
that they were off.

ADM MUSTIN: Good.

DDO: It may be that the one that was coming down from up
North will put her forces down South also.

ADM MUSTIN: Yes. Oh goodness, are they going to send her up to
the most northern targets?

DDO: Yes Sir.

ADM MUSTIN: It'll give them a long flight.

DDO: It sure did.

ADM MUSTIN: Well, we didn't give them much notice to get
this thing going.

DDO: That is right.

ADM MUSTIN: OK, Bill. Well let me know if you get any news.

DDO: OK Sir.

ADM MUSTIN: Thanks.

A recording, the Deputy Director for Operations, General Wisman, to
General Reaves at 11:38 PM, EDT, 4 August 1964.

GEN REAVES: Hello.

DDO: Kelsey? Wisman. They are airborne.

GEN REAVES: Good.
DDO: OK Kelsey.
GEN REAVES: OK Bill, thanks a lot.
DDO: Right O.

A recording, Admiral Sharp to General Wheeler at 11:51 PM, EDT,
4 August 1964.

GEN WHEELER: General Wheeler.
ADM SHARP: Buzz, this is Ollie.
GEN WHEELER: Yes, Ollie.
ADM SHARP: I talked to SECDEF about coming off of that most
Northern one.
GEN WHEELER: Right.
ADM SHARP: Because of the bad weather and the long distance,
and the fact that we are squeezed for planes.
GEN WHEELER: Right.
ADM SHARP: So, we are going to shift them down to the next one.
GEN WHEELER: I got you.
ADM SHARP: What we want to do here is to send this group back
to the carriers. And, launch another one at that
particular place that we want to be sure is knocked
down.
GEN WHEELER: Right.
ADM SHARP: And, it is pretty hard to tell from you message
whether that means we have to ask for authority
for a second; or whether this is called the second.

GEN WHEELER: No. That is right Ollie. If you are going to recycle then you are going to ask for it.

ADM SHARP: Then I am asking for it right now.

GEN WHEELER: You say you are going to send it back to the carrier and go back and hit which one?

ADM SHARP: Vinh.

GEN WHEELER: OK, I will talk to the SECDEF about it right away.

ADM SHARP: In the quantity that is needed.

GEN WHEELER: In the quantity needed.

ADM SHARP: Right.

GEN WHEELER: OK.

ADM SHARP: And, I would like to get that authority, you see, so that I can get on with the planning. Our plannings are pretty well advanced, and because of the long distances, you see, its pretty necessary to do it.

GEN WHEELER: OK.

ADM SHARP: These are all maximum distance strikes for these people.

GEN WHEELER: I'll go up and talk to him right away Ollie and call you back.

ADM SHARP: OK, fine Buzz.

GEN WHEELER: I think it will probably be all right. But, I'll just have to give you a ring on it.

ADM SHARP: Well, I hope so because otherwise there is some danger of not doing the job properly.

GEN WHEELER: I got your point.
ADM SHARP: OK.
GEN WHEELER: Right O, thanks, Ollie.
ADM SHARP: Right. Bye.
GEN WHEELER: Bye.

A recording, from General Wheeler to Admiral Sharp at midnight, EDT,

4 August 1964.

ADM SHARP: Sharp.
GEN WHEELER: Ollie.
ADM SHARPL Yes Sir.
GEN WHEELER: I practically missed him because he has a pack of avid news hounds on his neck. So, I though I'd just make sure that I got all of this right down to the gnat's eyebrow. Then I'll call you back in a very few minutes, and give you an answer. If I understand it. You are having weather problems to the North.
ADM SHARP: That's right.
GEN WHEELER: Check. Now the second package.
ADM SHARP: Now, here, let me tell you a little more.
GEN WHEELER: All right, good.
ADM SHARP: Not only weather problems but: A. It's a very long distance, ...
GEN WHEELER: Yes.

ADM SHARP: That they've set up there. Apparently the fellow that, the ship that, had to come down from North you know,

GEN WHEELER: Right.

ADM SHARP: It was just joining up.

GEN WHEELER: Check.

ADM SHARP: See, they both ran air ops all last night so that:
A. They are kinda pooped out.

GEN WHEELER: Check

ADM SHARP: B. The one that was coming down from the North didn't make as much headway as she would have because she apparently had to turn in the other direction for a landing and launching.

GEN WHEELER: I got you.

ADM SHARP: So that she is behind her hoped for position.

GEN WHEELER: I got you.

ADM SHARP: So that's the reason she had to launch late.

GEN WHEELER: I got you.

ADM SHARP: Then, the other one is also quite a long run from where she is to these various targets; and she being a small carrier doesn't have as many airplanes either.

GEN WHEELER: Right.

ADM SHARP: So that it's a lot of targets for a one shot job. You see what I mean.

GEN WHEELER: I got you.

ADM SHARP: So they got these fellows kinda thin.

GEN WHEELER: I got you.

ADM SHARP: Now, I'm not happy with the number of airplanes they are getting out.

GEN WHEELER: I got you.

ADM SHARP: Because they are having to use refuelers undoubtedly and this takes away from the strike aircraft.

GEN WHEELER: I got you.

ADM SHARP: It's therefore important, as far as I'm concerned, to let these people recycle, which they can do easily, and go back in.

GEN WHEELER: This will be from both.

ADM SHARP: I think it will only be the TICO.

GEN WHEELER: I got you.

ADM SHARP: But, I'd like to have the flexibility of doing it with both of them.

ADM SHARP: If I have that we can tell them. You see, the problem is it takes so damn long to get word out to them.

GEN WHEELER: I got you.

ADM SHARP: That I'm afraid we'll run through the day, if we are not careful.

GEN WHEELER:

I got you.

ADM SHARP:

If I have permission to use both of them, then we can tell the Task Group Command out there that both of them can go after this place on the second strike, if that's necessary. I'm sure it won't be, I mean I think it won't be.

GEN WHEELER:

Yes.

ADM SHARP:

But, I'd like to have that assurance.

GEN WHEELER:

In other words you're afraid you're just going to be thin on the ones that you can get at.

ADM SHARP:

That's right, thin on the first strike.

GEN WHEELER:

And they do have something to launch against it on the first strike?

ADM SHARP:

Oh yes, definitely.

GEN WHEELER:

But you just want to make sure?

ADM SHARP:

But I want to make sure, that's right.

GEN WHEELER:

OK but you are going to have to lose out on those Northern ones?

ADM SHARP:

Just one. Just the most Northern one. Now for two reasons. It's pretty close to the other country.

GEN WHEELER:

I got you.

ADM SHARP:

The weather's bad and they would have difficulty locating the target and might stray. We also know that we got some people coming down from that other country.

GEN WHEELER: I see. I understand.

ADM SHARP: You know?

GEN WHEELER: Yes, I see.

ADM SHARP: And we've got some opposition to bother about.

GEN WHEELER: Right.

ADM SHARP: So I'd like to concentrate on it a little bit.

GEN WHEELER: I got the picture now.

ADM SHARP: Good.

GEN WHEELER: OK, Ollie.

ADM SHARP: Right O.

GEN WHEELER: I'll call you a little later.

ADM SHARP: Right O.

GEN WHEELER: Bye.

ADM SHARP: Bye.

Telephone conversation between Secretary McNamara and Admiral Sharp:

McNamara: Hello, Ollie, this is Bob McNamara. What's the latest information on the action?

Sharp : The latest dope we have, Sir, is a sort of summation SITREP by CTG 72.1, and it indicates a little doubt on just exactly what went on and we are trying to get a recap of it right now to -- apparently the thing started by a sort of ambush attempt by the PTs.

McNamara: In what respect? Describe that.

Sharp : I can't, Sir, because I haven't got it. That's all it said.

McNamara: OK.

Sharp : It said initial ambush attempt was definite. And that they were bothered by freak radar echos and the sonar men giving these torpedo contacts, and, of course, in that sort of thing, these young fellows are apt to say any noise is a torpedo, so that, undoubtedly, there were not as many torpedos -- you know, at one place there they had 21. There undoubtedly weren't that many. And we had the -- the reports are a little confusing on what happened. Neither ship saw a ship or a wake. The TURNER JOY tracked two contacts and fired on -- that is, tracked them for a considerable period, and fired on, I think, something like 13 contacts. They -- she claims three boats hit and one sunk, for sure -- The Turner Joy. The Maddox, let me see, she doesn't claim a boat -- oh yes, she does, too -- she claims one or two, as I recall it, now. So that is the general picture, Sir.

McNamara: There isn't any possibility there was no attack, is there?

Sharp : Yes, I would say that there is a slight possibility, and that is what I am trying to find out right now, and about 20 minutes ago I told Tom Moore to get in touch with these people and get a definite report on it.

McNamara: OK. How soon do you think it will come in?

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NLJ 82-188
By *scw/paics* NARS, Date 9-16-86

Sharp : Well, it should come in within an hour, but I have a slight doubt now, I must admit, and we are trying to get it nailed down because the Task Group Commander, that is, of the destroyer, says we need a daylight recce of the whole situation and the situation's in doubt, he says. Now I don't -- I am in my office right now, which is just about half a block from the Command Center, as you know.

McNamara: Yes.

Sharp : And that particular piece of paper is down in the Command Center and I don't have it right here. I gave the Date Time Group to Lloyd Mustin when I talked to him.

McNamara: We've got problems on timing here, of course, we don't want to release news of what happened without saying what we are going to do; we don't want to say what we are going to do before we do it.

Sharp : Right.

McNamara: We obviously don't want to do it until we are damn sure what happened.

Sharp : That's right.

McNamara: Now how do we reconcile all this?

Sharp : Well, I would recommend this, Sir. I would recommend that we hold this execute until we have a definite indication that this happened.

McNamara: Well, how do we get that?

Sharp : I think I can -- I think I will have it in a couple of hours.

McNamara: OK. Well, the execute is scheduled for 7 PM our time which is three hours from now, right?

Sharp : Yes, Sir.

McNamara: All right, so if you have it in two hours, we still have an hour.

Sharp : It's 7 O'clock local out there.

McNamara: That's right, and that is three hours from now.

Sharp : Yes, Sir.

McNamara: If you get your definite information in two hours, we can still proceed with the execute and it seems to me we ought to go ahead on that basis: get the pilots briefed, get the planes armed, get everything lined up to go.

Sharp : Yes, Sir.

McNamara: Continue the execute order in effect, but between now and 6 O'clock get a definite fix and you call me directly.

Sharp : I agree, yes Sir, I will do that.

McNamara: OK, very good.

Sharp : Right, Sir. Eye.

QUESTIONS AND POINTS TO BE RESOLVED

1. Copy of the NSA field unit message which arrived at Pentagon at approximately 8:14 a.m., August 4th.

2. Copy of message to CINCPAC sent at 9:26 a.m., August 4th, requesting combat air patrol over the destroyers. When was it sent, by whom, and when was it received?

3. Copy of message directing that mines be transported from Subic Bay to Da Nang. Sent sometime during the morning of August 4th. Who sent it and when was it received at CINCPAC?

4. Where is COMSEVENTHFLT located? What time is it on, as compared to Washington EDT?

5. When did CINCPAC receive the JCS strike execute message (7720) sent at 4:49 p.m. EDT August 4th from NMCC?

6. What is PGM 142 -- one of ours or one of theirs?

7. What was the first indication received at the Pentagon that the initial proposed time over target for the first strike would be 8:00 a.m. (saigon time) or about one hour after the 7:00 a.m. (Saigon time) expected launch?

8. Why was the CONSTELLATION ordered by CINCPAC at 7:30 a.m. (Saigon time) not to execute the JCS strike execute message in view of the fact that the TICONDEROGA at 7:22 a.m., August 5th (Saigon time) had received a CINCPACFLT strike execute message?

9. Times of McNamara's calls to Bundy re revisions of the statement.

10. Who is General Milton?

11. Details of McNamara's calls to the President at 9:12 a.m., 9:43 a.m., 10:53 a.m., and 11:06 a.m.

12. First indication of a 7:00 a.m. (Saigon time) expected launch?

12:57 □

▷ CINCPAC RECOMMEND PUNITIVE ACTION

RCVD 1:27 PM (NMCC)

⇒ 4:49 TRANS → CINCPAC 5:28PM EP7
11:28AM CINCPAC

37/1 15:19
JKS (7720) → CINCPAC 5:52PM EP7
11:52AM CINCPAC

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
NATIONAL MILITARY COMMAND CENTER
MESSAGE CENTER

32

SECRET

PRECEDENCE	
ACTION	IMMEDIATE
INFO	IMMEDIATE

DTG 021725Z AUG 64

FROM: JCS
 TO: CINCPACBy JTB, NARS, Date 5/4/76

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Authority E.O. 11652 SEC. 5(A) and (D)

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INFO: COMUSMACV AMEMB SAIGON
 CINCPACFLT WHITE HOUSE
 COMSEVENTHFLT STATE DEPT
 CNO SECDEF
 CTF SEVEN TWO DIRNSA
 CTG SEVEN TWO PT ONE CIA
 COMNAVPHIL
 COMNAVFORJAPAN
 CTG SEVEN SEVEN PT FIVE
 CTG SEVEN SEVEN PT SIX

~~SECRET~~ JCS 7680

THIS IS A DESOTO PATROL MESSAGE (U)

REFERENCE: A. CINCPACFLT DTG 021104Z (NOTAL)
 B. ADMINO CINCPAC DTG 021255Z (NOTAL)

1. You are authorized to continue the DESOTO patrol in the Gulf of Tonkin area in conformance with routes and times specified in reference A, subject to the following:

- a. Closest approach to the NVN mainland coastline will be 11 miles, repeat 11 miles.
- b. Air patrol CAP will be provided during day-

DATE	02	TIME	Has Cy=
MONTH	July	YEAR	1964
PAGE NO.	1	NO. OF PAGES	2

DRAFTER	TYPED NAME AND TITLE	PHONE	SIGNATURE
	RALPH D. STEAKLEY Colonel, USAF Chief, Joint Reconnaissance Ct	57356	<i>Ralph D. Steakley</i>
			TYPED (or stamped) NAME AND TITLE
			RALPH D. STEAKLEY Colonel, USAF Chief, Joint
SECURITY CLASSIFICATION	REGRADING INSTRUCTIONS		
SECRET	Reconnaissance Co		

DISTR: CJCS-3 DJS-3 SJCS-1 J3-6 J5-1 SACS-5 DIA-11 NMCC-3
 JRG-2 CSA-2 CSAF-2 CNO-2 CMC-10 OSD-15
 (WHITE HOUSE)-3 FILE-1 (73) klh

JCS 7680

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NATIONAL MILITARY COMMAND CENTER
MESSAGE CENTER

~~SECRET~~

light hours, however, CAP will be maintained to the seaward of the two destroyers so as to preclude any possibility of overflight of NVN.

c. Be extremely watchful for any possible action including possible submarine activity either against the DESOTO patrol or the Ticonderoga task force.

d. Avoid close approaches to NVN coast during period when maritime activities related to OPLAN 34A are underway.

GP-4

CONTROL NO.	TOR/TOD	PAGE NO. 2	NO. OF PAGES 2	MESSAGE IDENTIFICATION	INITIALS RDS
REGRADING INSTRUCTIONS GP-4				SECURITY CLASSIFICATION SECRET	

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NATIONAL MILITARY COMMAND CENTER
MESSAGE CENTER

33

SECRET

PRECEDENCE		TYPE MSG (Check)			ACCOUNTING SYMBOL	ORIG. OR REFERS TO	CLASSIFICATION OF REFERENCE
ACTION	FLASH	BOOK	MULTI	SINGLE	DA		
INFO	FLASH		X				

FROM: FROM: JCS

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS
REGULAR JRC DISTRIBUTION

TO: TO: CINCPAC

INFO: AMEMB SAIGON WHITE HOUSE
 COMUSMACV STATE DEPT
 CINCPACFLT SECDEF
 COMSEVENTHFLT DIRNSA
 CNO CIA
 CTF SEVEN TWO
 CTF SEVEN TWO PT ONE
 COMNAV PHIL
 COMNAV FOR JAPAN
 CTG SEVEN SEVEN PT FIVE
 CTG SEVEN SEVEN PT SIX

ZFF-3

~~SECRET~~ JCS **7681** FROM: CJCS SENDS

This is a Desoto Patrol Message (U)

REFERENCE: JCS 7680 DTG 021725Z Aug 64

In event US vessels are attacked in International waters (11 miles offshore or more), you will seek to destroy the attacking forces, however, pursuit into hostile waters or air space is not repeat not authorized.

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GP-4.

Authority E.O. 11652 SEC. 5(A) and (D)

By JB, NAES, Date 5/4/26

O.S.D. Distribution	
SecDef	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
DepSec	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mil Asst	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
AdSec	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
CableC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
SpecAsst	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
I.S.A.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
GenCnn	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
PA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Coms*	<input type="checkbox"/>
MP&D	<input type="checkbox"/>
R & C	<input type="checkbox"/>
ARDA	<input type="checkbox"/>
I & I	<input type="checkbox"/>
Attn*	<input type="checkbox"/>
O.A.S.	<input type="checkbox"/>

DATE	C.C.	TIME
2		2337Z
MONTH	YEAR	
Aug	1964	

WRITER	SYMBOL			SIGNATURE		RELEASES	D.I.A.	
	TYPED NAME AND TITLE (Signature, if required)			TYPED (or stamped) NAME AND TITLE			JCS	
	G. C. FOGLE, Brig Gen, USA						Army	
	PHONE	PAGE NR.	NR. OF PAGES	G. C. FOGLE			Navv	
78322	1	1	Brigadier General, USA		AF			
SECURITY CLASSIFICATION			Deputy Director For		Action=A			
SECRET			Operations (NMCC)		Info=X			
			DTG: 022349Z AUG 64		Has Cy=			

DISTR: CJCS-3 DJS-3 SJCS-3 J3-6 J5-1 SACS-5 DIA-5 NMCC-3 JRG-2
 CSA-2 CSAF-2 CNO-2 CMC-10 OSD-15 (WHITE HOUSE)-3 FILE-1(66)fjo

JCS 7681

REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SECRET

NM C RECEIPT



10:43 pm 0436Z 1236 am Tico launch of A1H0 → Vinh

12:15 pm 0728Z 3:28 am Tico 2nd launch A4 F8 → Vinh

12:34 pm 0728Z 3:28 am Tico launch 6 F8 → Quang Khe

1:00 am 0733Z 3:33 am Connie launch 4 A1 → Hon Bay 4 A1 → Loc Choa

2:30 am 0730Z 3:30 am Connie launch 10 A4 2 F4 → Hon Bay
5 A4 2 F4 → Loc Choa

1:15 am 0720Z 3:20 am Quang Khe SITREP
0841Z 4:41 am
0929Z 5:29 am

1:25 am 0654Z 2:54 am Vinh / Bin Thuy / Phouc Loc SITREP
0832Z 4:32 am

3:25 am 0900Z 5:00 am Loc Choa SITREP

3:40 am 0838Z 4:38 am Hon Bay SITREP
0956Z 5:56 am

4:03 am 1136Z 7:36 am Tico launch 4 F8 8 A4 → Vinh

4:15 am 1157Z 7:57 am Tico launch A4 → Hon Me

4:45am

1005Z
1027Z

6:05am 4FB
6:27am

8A4 → Uink for 2nd Strike

5:15am

1005Z
1027Z

6:05am Tico
6:27am

launch → Hon me

S STEPS IN REMAKING GULF OF TONKIN TAPE

242045 EDT 35

- I. Search master tape and add all entries prior to 1004 (beginning of original small tape). First entry found to be 0919 EDT.
- II. Search master tape and add all entries ~~at~~ from end of original small tape (0111 EDT 5 Aug.) to time last US aircraft was off target.
- III. Study the new log sheet from 042139Z (1739 EDT), ~~summarizing~~ ~~it~~ to 050511Z (0111 EDT) which was remade from a search of the master tape for this time period and add to the finished tape any conversations thereon which were not indicated in red by Mr. Levinson and therefore not placed on the original small tape .
- IV. Search master tape for the period from 1405Z (1004 EDT 4 Aug.) to 042139Z (1739 EDT 4 Aug.) (from which no new log sheet was made because it did not include the period requested originally) and add to finished tape any pertinent conversations not on original small tape.

CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY:

<u>EDT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
0919 to 1004 (4 Aug.)	Search and add to finished tape as Step 1.
1004 to 1739	Search and add as additional items (Master tape not previously searched, no new log made) as Step 4.
0111	
1739 to 0111 (4 to 5 Aug.)	Study new log sheet made from search of master and add any items not already made on original small tape as Step 3.
0111 to last a/c off target(5 Aug.)	Search and add to finished tape as Step 2.

NOTE: The finished product is to be delivered (with recorder) to Mr. Levinson prior to noon 25 Aug. The above priority was established to permit earliest availability of tape with the added goal of getting EVERYTHING recorded, time permitting. Mr. Levinson--56111. Go through Mr. Califano's office to get there. Room 3E-941.

ORIGINAL EA
cc: MRCA Team Chief
Mr. Levinson

ALHISON

Resume of Personnel Present During Secretary of Defense Portions
of Special JCS/SEC DEF/SEC STATE Meeting on Tuesday, 4 August 1964
at 1125 in Secretary of Defense Conference Room

	<u>IN</u>	<u>OUT</u>	<u>IN</u>	<u>OUT</u>	<u>OUT</u>
1. Mr. McNamara (Sec Def)	1120	1204			
2. Mr. Vance (Dep Sec Def)	1120	1204	1220	1225	
3. GEN LeMay, USAF (CSAF)	1120				1349
4. ADM McDonald, USN (CNO)	1120				1349
5. GEN Greene, USMC (CMC)	1120				1349
6. GEN Johnson, USA (CSA)	1120				1349
7. LGEN Goodpaster, USA (OCJCS)	1120				1349
8. LGEN Burchinal, USAF (D/JS)	1120	in & out frequently			1349
9. COL Bottomly, USAF (Asst Secy JCS)	1120				1349
10. RADM Mustin, USN (J-3)	1120				1349
11. BGEN Reaves, USA (J-3)	1120				1349
12. Mr. Rusk (Secretary of State)	1138	1204			
13. Mr. Green (Dep Asst Sec State, Far East Affairs)	1138	1204			
14. Mr. McGeorge Bundy (Spec Asst to President, NSA)	1140	1204			

Resume of Personnel Present During Secretary of Defense Portions of the Special JCS-SecDef Meeting on 4 August 1964 at 1500 in Conference Room 2E-924.

	<u>IN</u>	<u>OUT</u>	<u>IN</u>	<u>OUT</u>	<u>IN</u>	<u>OUT</u>
1. Mr. McNamara (SecDef)	1506	1515	1642	1647	1712	1751
2. Mr. Vance (DepSecDef)	1506	1515	1642			1751
3. General Wheeler, USA (CJCS)	1642					1751
4. General LeMay, USAF (CSAF)	1457					1751
5. Admiral McDonald, USN (CNO)	1458	1608	1610			1751
6. General Johnson, USA (CSA)	1458					1751
7. General Greene, USMC (CMC)	1502					1751
8. LGEN Burchinal, USAF (D/JS)	1500					1751
9. VADM Jackson, USN (OpDep-Navy)	1458					1608
10. MGEN Carpenter, USAF (OpDep-AF)	1458					1608
11. LGEN Palmer, USA (OpDep-Army)	1458					1751
12. MGEN Buse, USMC (OpDep-MC)	1502					1751
13. MGEN Manhart, USA (VD/JS)	1454	1556	1625	1654	1700	1712
14. LGEN Goodpaster, USA (OCJCS)	1501					1751
15. COL Forbes, USA (Secy, JCS)	1456	1710	1715			1751
16. COL Bottomly, USAF (AsstSecyJCS)	1457					1751
17. Mr. Flickinger (JtSect)	1455					1751
18. RADM Mustin, USN (J-3)	1632 1745	1650	1705	1710	1718	1738 1751
19. LGEN Carroll, USAF (DIA)	1745					1751

36-8

Resume of Personnel Present During Secretary of Defense Portions
of the Special JCS-SecDef Meeting on 4 August 1964 at 1500
in Conference Room 2E-924.

	<u>IN</u>	<u>OUT</u>	<u>IN</u>	<u>OUT</u>	<u>IN</u>	<u>OUT</u>
1. Mr. McNamara (SecDef)	1506	1515	1642	1647	1712	1751
2. Mr. Vance (DepSecDef)	1506	1515	1642			1751
3. General Wheeler, USA (CJCS)	1642					1751
4. General LeMay, USAF (CSAF)	1457					1751
5. Admiral McDonald, USN (CNO)	1458	1608	1610			1751
6. General Johnson, USA (CSA)	1458					1751
7. General Greene, USMC (CMC)	1502					1751
8. LGEN Burchinal, USAF (D/JS)	1500					1751
9. VADM Jackson, USN (OpDep-Navy)	1458					1608
10. MGEN Carpenter, USAF (OpDep-AF)	1458					1608
11. LGEN Palmer, USA (OpDep-Army)	1458					1751
12. MGEN Buse, USMC (OpDep-MC)	1502					1751
13. MGEN Manhart, USA (VD/JS)	1454	1556	1625	1654	1700	1712
14. LGEN Goodpaster, USA (OCJCS)	1501					1751
15. COL Forbes, USA (Secy, JCS)	1456	1710	1715			1751
16. COL Bottomly, USAF (AsstSecyJCS)	1457					1751
17. Mr. Flickinger (JtSect)	1455					1751
18. RADM Mustin, USN (J-3)	1632 1745	1650	1705	1710	1718	1738 1751
19. LGEN Carroll, USAF (DIA)	1745					1751

INCOMING MESSAGE

THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

UNCLASSIFIED

37

PRECEDENCE (ACTION) FLASH	PRECEDENCE (INFO) FLASH
------------------------------	----------------------------

Z 041727Z

FM CTG (72.1)

13:27

1:27 PM 4 AUG
FROM Des. Div. (ON MADDIX)

TO RUHLHL/CINCPACFLT

TO CINCPACFLT

INFO RUEKDA/JCS
 RUECW/CNO
 RUHLHQ/CINCPAC
 RUATZL/BVKG/COMSEVENTHFLT
 RUATZY/T5GL/CTF 72
 RUMFZK/J8RM/CTG 77.5
 RUMFZN/H3WX/CTG 77.6

1:27 PM 4 AUG

UNCLAS

REVIEW OF ACTION MAKES MANY REPORTED CONTACTS AND
 TORPEDOES FIRED APPEAR DOUBTFULL. FREAK WEATHER EFFECTS
 ON RADAR AND OVEREAGER SONARMEN MAY HAVE ACCOUNTED
 FOR MANY REPORTS. NO ACTUAL VISUAL SIGHTINGS BY MADDIX
 SUGGEST COMPLETE EVALUATION BEFORE ANY FURTHER ACTION TAKEN

BT

INFO....CJCS-2 DJS-3 SJCS-1 J3-4 J5-1 SACSA-5 DIA-1 NMCC-2 JRG-2 CSA-2
 CSAF-2 (CMC)-2 OSD-15 (WHITE HOUSE)-3 (STATE) (CIA) (NSA)
 FILE-1 (46) SO

ADV CYS TO CJCS DJS DIA NMCC JRG CSA CSAF OSD.

DUTY OFFICER WU/WRO	PAGE OF PAGES 1 1	MESSAGE IDENTIFICATION CITE NO. DTG 041727Z AUG 64
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FORM NO JCS 1 DEC 63 58

REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

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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

ATTENDANCE LIST FOR THE 537th NSC MEETING
AUGUST 4, 1964, AT 12:30 IN THE CABINET ROOM
OF THE WHITE HOUSE

The President of the United States, Presiding

ATTORNEY GENERAL

Robert F. Kennedy

CIA

John A. McCone, Director

DEFENSE

Robert S. McNamara, Secretary
Cyrus Vance, Deputy Secretary

OEP

Edward A. McDermott, Director

STATE

Dean Rusk, Secretary
George W. Ball, Under Secretary
Phillips Talbot, Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern
and South Asian Affairs

Cyrus

TREASURY

C. Douglas Dillon, Secretary

USIA

Carl T. Rowan, Director

WHITE HOUSE

George Reedy
McGeorge Bundy
Jack Valenti
General Clifton
Bromley Smith
Robert W. Komer

JOINT MESSAGEFORM

RESERVED FOR COMMUNICATION CENTER

40

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

~~TOP SECRET~~

04/20492 DTG

TYPE MSG

BOOK

MULTI

SINGLE

X

PRECEDENCE

ACTION

IMMEDIATE

INFO

DTG

FROM: JCS

DECLASSIFIED

Authority

JCS 2/10/77

TO: CINCPAC

By

rmg

NARS, Date

6/30/77

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

Regular JCS Distribution

~~TOP SECRET~~ JCS

JCS sends.

Air Strike Against North Vietnam (TS)

5 August ~~if weather makes this impossible notify~~

1. By 0700 local ~~or as soon thereafter as weather permits~~ ^{a one-time maximum effort}

conduct attack of following targets with objective of maximum assurance of high level of target destruction:

JCS ASAP

APPROVED
MA. McNJmara

a. SWATOWs and PT boats located at bases Port Wallut, Hon Gay, Phuc Loi and Quang Khe and at Loc Chao estuary (19-46N; 105-57E). Targets are boats.

b. POL at Vinh.

c. Armed recce against SWATOWs and PT boats beyond 3 mile limit. For purpose of armed recce ^{outside} of shore islands are considered ~~beyond~~ 3 mile limit.

2. Use CVA aircraft only. ^{if weather precludes meeting above time of attack, notify}

JCS ASAP. proceed

DATE	TIME
4	
MONTH	YEAR
Aug	1964
PAGE NO.	NO. OF PAGES
1	2

DRAFTER

TYPED NAME AND TITLE

J. D. MILLER
Capt, USN
J-3

PHONE

53031

RELEASER

SIGNATURE

JM

TYPED (or stamped) NAME AND TITLE

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

~~TOP SECRET~~

REGRADING INSTRUCTIONS

GP-3

DD FORM 173
1 NOV 63

GPO: 1964 O-721-636

ABBREVIATED JOINT MESSAGEFORM
and/or CONTINUATION SHEET

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

~~TOP SECRET~~

PRECEDENCE	RELEASED BY	DRAFTED BY	PHONE
ACTION IMMEDIATE		Capt. J. D. Miller	
INFO		J-3	53031

3. Armed recon 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. GP-3.

7. If targets not destroyed on first strike, you should request authority for a second strike.

CONTROL NO.	TOR/TOD	PAGE NO.	NO. OF PAGES	MESSAGE IDENTIFICATION	INITIALS
		2	2		

REGARDING INSTRUCTIONS

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

~~TOP SECRET~~

GP-3

DD FORM 173-1
NOV 68