

*The Tonkin Gulf Incident – The United States’
Involvement in the Vietnam War:
Triumph for President Johnson, Tragedy for America*

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For years historians have debated the direct involvement of the United States in a seemingly hopeless Asian conflict. Prior to the Vietnam War, America suffered several set backs in its war against Communism. During the Kennedy Administration, Cuba, the Berlin Wall, and military losses in Laos represented victories for the expansion of Communism throughout the world. To that extent, the United States was losing the Cold War, and the groundwork was being established for its next battlefield – Vietnam. If North Vietnam was victorious, the rampant expansion of Communism would become evident. America had to not only assist South Vietnam to victory, but also had to collaborate in a manner that would never allow the United States to be portrayed as a military aggressor. As friction escalated, it became apparent that South Vietnam did not possess the ability to wage a successful war against North Vietnam. Robert McNamara, Secretary of Defense under President Johnson, “urged . . . that plans be made for “new and significant pressures on North Vietnam” since the . . .government of General Nguyen Khanh was considered unable to improve the outlook in South Vietnam.”¹ In order to offset its previous debacles against Communism which escalated with the Kennedy Administration, President Johnson deemed it necessary to dispatch increasing numbers of military advisors and aid to the South in order to contain the spread of Communism. President Johnson stated, “The United States, at the request of the Republic of South Vietnam and in accord with our obligations under the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, is helping South Vietnam defend its freedom with military advisors, ammunition, and material. It is not engaged in the war and does not intend to be.”² Since the President did not want to appear to the American public and the international community as the aggressor of the looming military conflict, it became necessary for Johnson to interpret any and all North Vietnamese actual, as well as supposed, actions to his political advantage. As these events intensified, Johnson and his Cabinet manipulated the Gulf of Tonkin Incident in order to obtain Congressional approval for giving President Johnson sole power to escalate American involvement in Vietnam. By reviewing historical records,

¹ E.W. Kenworthy et al., *The Pentagon Papers as published by The New York Times* (New York and Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971), 242.

² Eric F. Goldman. *The Tragedy of Lyndon Johnson* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), 175.

previously written accounts, and recently declassified government documents, research will reveal that President Johnson's actions in reference to the Gulf of Tonkin Incident were not consistent with the flawed and misleading information presented to Congress and to the American public which enabled him to ultimately gain the desired authority to declare war on the Republic of North Vietnam, while undermining the core principles of the United States Constitution. In essence, the President's triumph did not produce a victory for South Vietnam, President Johnson's initial objective for declaring war. In fact, Johnson and South Vietnam endured tragedies. Johnson did not seek another term in office, and South Vietnam collapsed.

The reporting of the particulars of the early August, 1964 Tonkin Gulf incidents, by the Johnson Administration, was critical to gaining the Congressional authority Johnson sought. According to Robert Mann, a veteran United States Senator's aide, during the attack, Johnson indicated that "the United States [would] not tolerate unprovoked and illegal armed attacks on its forces and [would] take such measures as may be necessary to prevent future attacks."³ Mann revealed that the President "invited Congress to give him broad authority to fight a war against the Communists in Southeast Asia."⁴ This authority was the ultimate goal that Johnson hoped to attain because it granted him total discretion as to the degree of military involvement America would pursue. Rather than Congress declaring war, the President suddenly possessed total control of the country's military operations against North Vietnam. Initially, at the time of the attacks, the United States government adopted the position that it had done nothing to provoke North Vietnam into a naval confrontation. Even though the Johnson Administration appeared to have shown tolerance and informed the American people that the country would only act after being acted upon, Johnson's underlying motive was to attack North Vietnam directly. Throughout this facade, the President maintained that the military and the government demonstrated utmost restraint by refusing to respond to

³ Robert Mann. *A Grand Delusion: American's Descent into Vietnam* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 353.

⁴ Ibid, 353.

the initial North Vietnamese naval attack in the Tonkin Gulf on August 2, 1964.⁵ The Administration rationalized that retaliatory air strikes were ordered only after the supposed second naval attack against the USS Maddox and C. Turner Joy on August 4, 1964. This scenario presented the United States as a victim rather than as the aggressor, thus never allowing the American people to know that the United States was truly the instigator in this incident. Director of Central Intelligence John McCrone proved that the United States was the true antagonist when he stated, “The North Vietnamese [were] reacting defensively to our...attack on their off-shore islands. They [were] responding out of pride...”⁶

Although Johnson’s administration allowed the public to believe that the military did not provoke an attack on American ships in the Tonkin Gulf, these assertions were far from the truth. The naval engagement between the destroyer, USS Maddox, and three North Vietnamese torpedo boats on August 2, 1964 occurred immediately after two maritime raids, called OPLAN 34A, on North Vietnamese coastal targets and on two offshore islands, Hon Me and Hon Ngu.⁷



Gulf of Tonkin and Ho Chi Minh Trail

Source: *BBC News*

When questioned about the naval raids, Secretary of Defense McNamara vehemently stated that the raids were strictly South Vietnamese naval missions and that the United States had no involvement in them. In

⁵ Daniel Ellsberg. *Secrets: A Memoir of Vietnam and the Pentagon Papers* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2002), 8.

⁶ Ellsberg, 16.

⁷ Earle Rice, Jr. *Point of No Return: Tonkin Gulf and the Vietnam War* (North Carolina: Morgan Reynolds Publishing, Inc., 2004), 83.

reality, these missions were controlled by the United States. The boats, supplied and maintained by the United States Navy, attacked targets selected by the CIA. Overall, the entire operation was fully funded by the United States.⁸ The Maddox, located in the Tonkin Gulf, was eavesdropping on enemy shore based communications, especially those in China, North Korea, and North Vietnam. In fact, these secret missions, implemented in January, 1964, were code named DeSoto patrols. The first mission was conducted off the North Vietnamese coast in February, 1964, but it was not until July that these patrols were expanded to encompass the 34A missions. The purpose of this secret operation was to gather information from radar installations that had been located in various coastal areas ranging from the North Vietnam city of Vinh Son to the islands of Hon Me and Hon Ngu.⁹ Because of the proximity to the 34A attacks, it was extremely easy for North Vietnam to have been mistaken in thinking that the Maddox was actually part of the raid that had taken place early in the day on August 2, 1964. At a State Department briefing for the news media, spokesman Robert J. McCloskey stated, “[The Maddox was] patrolling on...international water...[and, the United States had] no knowledge of any such attacks being made by anyone.”¹⁰ Even though the United States strongly denied any direct involvement in the DeSoto missions, the reality was that America was involved, and President Johnson was aware of the overall mission. The United States was operating a system of covert communication missions to identify North Vietnamese military targets. This secret information gathered became essential to South Vietnam in order to limit the sphere of influence that the Vietcong exercised, thus circumscribing the further spread of Communism.

The President demonstrated restraint by not immediately retaliating against the attack on an American war ship on international waters, thus highlighting the position of the United States as a victim.

⁸ Marvin Kalb and Elie Abel. *Roots of Involvement: The U.S. in Asia 1784-1971* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1971), 175.

⁹ Stanley Karnow. *Vietnam, A History: The First Complete Account of Vietnam at War* (New York: The Viking Press, 1983), 367-368.

¹⁰ Joseph C. Goulden. *Truth is the First Casualty: The Gulf of Tonkin Affair – Illusion and Reality* (New York: Rand McNally & Company, 1969), 28.

This allowed the President to manipulate the public's view and to advance his own covert policies. Nevertheless, two days later, on August 4, 1964, the Maddox, escorted by another destroyer, the C. Turner Joy, returned to the Tonkin Gulf area to continue with the DeSoto patrols. The two destroyers were cruising approximately 42 miles off the Communist coast when, in the middle of the night, four unidentified ships were spotted on their radar screens. Because of their speed and proximity, the Navy decided the ships had "hostile intent" and fired upon the enemy.¹¹ This supposed attack occurred at night and in poor weather. No wreckage or bodies was discovered although two attacking torpedo boats were claimed to have been sunk by the United States. Furthermore, the aircraft carrier, USS Ticonderoga, offering air support reported no gunfire, no PT boat wakes, and no burning ships.¹² Immediately following the supposed confrontation, Commander Herrick of the Maddox questioned the authenticity of the attack. He stated, "The entire action [left] many doubts" [and urged] "a thorough reconnaissance in daylight from the air."¹³ Regardless, the White House reported that a second unprovoked attack on its war ships occurred, and retaliatory actions in the form of air strikes were underway. This left no doubt in the public's mind that America was truly the victim in this attack.

Because of this scenario, it was not difficult for Johnson to meet with Congress and to request his long sought resolution giving him the authority to engage North Vietnam to whatever degree he deemed necessary. When he met with Congressional leaders, he informed them that because of the second unprovoked attack, he launched immediate reprisal air strikes against the North. He gave no indication of the United States' responsibility for and command of the covert 34A raids. Nor did he describe the broader purpose of the deployments of the war ships.¹⁴ Without verifying all the pertinent facts, Johnson committed to these strikes even though the military and his personal advisors questioned the authenticity

¹¹ Warren Unna. "Critics See Phantom in Tonkin Incident." *Washington Post*, 24 September 1964, A19.

¹² Karnow. *Vietnam, A History*, 370.

¹³ *Ibid*, 371.

¹⁴ Kenworthy, 271.

of the information they received. Congress accepted the President's explanation without reservation and agreed to the Tonkin Gulf Resolution on August 7, 1964. Almost unanimously, Congress passed the Resolution allowing the President "to repel any armed attacks against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression... [and] to assist any member...of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty requesting assistance in defense of its freedom."¹⁵

In essence, President Johnson obtained the right to declare war and to fight Communism without revealing all pertinent facts and information to Congress and the American people. According to Secretary of State Rusk, "Public opinion on our Southeast Asia policy was badly divided in the United States at the moment and . . . therefore, the President needed an affirmation of support."¹⁶ By presenting the United States as an innocent party patrolling international waters, Johnson maneuvered the opinions of the country to meet his agenda. Furthermore, as noted in recently declassified documents, the President's actions were not based upon integrity and honesty; rather they were based upon questionable facts and information.

President Johnson signing Tonkin Gulf Resolution

(Source: National Archives)



NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND
RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

At an August 5, 1964 White House Staff Meeting, McGeorge Bundy, Presidential national security advisor, stated, "The evidence of the first attack [on August 2, 1964 was] pretty good, [but the

¹⁵ *Congressional Record*, 88th Congress, 2nd session 1964, Public Law 88-408.

¹⁶ Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States: 1492-Present* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1980), 476.

evidence for the second attack on August 4, 1964 was] less today than we had yesterday.”¹⁷ This statement revealed that the action on the night of August 4^h was controversial. Regardless, Johnson proceeded with his predetermined agenda and ordered retaliatory air strikes. No sufficient evidence existed to substantiate that an attack had actually occurred. President Johnson met with his advisors selecting appropriate targets to attack in North Vietnam before actually receiving notification that the Maddox and C. Turner Joy were attacked on August 4, 1964. It is now known from *The National Security Archive* Press Release of 2003 which acknowledged that at 1:27 P.M. on August 4^h, President Johnson received the message from Captain Herrick on the Maddox that cast doubt on the veracity of the attack.¹⁸ Commodore Herrick of the Maddox reported: “Review of action makes many recorded contacts and torpedoes fired appear doubtful. Freak weather effects and overeager sonar men may have accounted for many reports. No actual visual sightings by Maddox. . .”¹⁹ This report had no effect on the actions of Washington officials.

Prior to the receipt of Herrick’s message, the President agreed to a swift retaliatory strike at a specific set of targets. Furthermore, shortly after 5:00 P.M., Johnson approved an official Pentagon statement on the supposed attack even though only twenty minutes earlier Defense Secretary McNamara had met with the Joint Chiefs of Staff to overcome the lack of clear and convincing evidence showing that an attack had occurred. It was during this meeting that McNamara approved a message ordering the execution of the retaliatory bombing. The message was sent out at 5:19 P.M. When the President met with Congress at 6:45 P.M, he did not brief them about the fact that the attack on the American ships might be questionable ; rather he presented his draft of the resolution -- The Tonkin Gulf Resolution. The actual statement Johnson made to the American public occurred at 11:36 P.M. which was approximately

¹⁷ White House Staff Meeting, *Memorandum for Record*, 5 August 1964.

¹⁸ John Prados, “LBJ Tapes on the Gulf of Tonkin Incident.” *The National Security Archive*, Press release 2003, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB132/tapes.htm> (10 January 2006), 8-9

¹⁹ Eugene G. Windchy. *A Documentary of the Incidents in the Tonkin Gulf on August 2 and August 4, 1964 and Their Consequences* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1971), 211.

one-half hour before the actual air strikes reached the targets in North Vietnam.²⁰ This time frame provided by the National Security Archives presenting actual taped conversations between Johnson and his advisors demonstrated to the public that the President had manipulated a series of events placing him in a position to totally control the military actions in Vietnam.

Johnson's plan was established prior to the August attacks. According to a taped conversation between McNamara and Johnson, they discussed "retaliatory" action against North Vietnam even though no attack had yet occurred. Johnson stated to McNamara that "the United States should pull one of these things that you've...been doing...one of their bridges or something," thus providing a clear reference to the OPLAN-34A raids. The President suggested a measure that would increase Hanoi's incentives to fight.²¹

President Lyndon Johnson inherited a difficult fight against Communism. As noted in the 1964 Joint Chiefs of Staff's Memo, "[the United States'] fortunes in South Vietnam [were] an accurate barometer of ...fortunes in all of Southeast Asia...[Furthermore,] the failure of [American] programs in South Vietnam would [have a] heavy influence on the judgments of Burma, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Japan, Taiwan, the Republic of Korea, and the Republic of the Philippines with respect to United States' durability, resolution, and trustworthiness...It [was] not unreasonable to conclude that there would be a corresponding unfavorable effect upon [this] image in Africa and Latin America."²² These political ramifications contributed to Johnson's reasoning for forcing direct, rather than covert American involvement in Vietnam to continue to escalate. Not only did he have to oppose North Vietnam, but he also had to portray and justify his actions in a manner that did not present him as the aggressor. The first Tonkin Gulf attack did occur, but with mitigating circumstances including covert military operations. The second attack probably never materialized, and the President was definitely aware of its

²⁰ Prados, 8-9.

²¹ Prados, 7.

²² Kenworthy, 282-283.

questionability. By reviewing recently declassified records, it was apparent that the Johnson Administration manipulated Congress and America to directly fight a war in Southeast Asia. Many believed his allegation that America was attacked and had to defend itself. This was not entirely accurate because it was Johnson, with the CIA's help, who selected North Vietnamese targets prior to the adoption of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution and the actual attacks against the USS Maddox.. The President placed a higher priority on disclosing his actions than on the safety of the American Air Force by announcing on television his actions before the retaliatory air strikes in North Vietnam commenced, thus providing the catalyst for years of fighting and for thousands of additional American deaths. Johnson triumphed as Commander-in-Chief while adhering to his own agenda and relying on the resolution as the legal basis for his military policy in Vietnam.

Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources

Central Intelligence Agency. *Probable Consequences of Certain US Actions with Respect to Vietnam and Laos*. 25 May 1964 Report, SNIE 50-2-64, TS #0038277.

This CIA document provided me with recently declassified information regarding probable consequences as a result of President Johnson's actions. I classified this as a primary source because it was helpful to understand Johnson's motives for the covert actions in Vietnam.

Congressional Record, 88th Congress, 2nd session 1964, Public Law 88-408.

I utilized this document as a primary source because it actually detailed the Congressional session which passed, signed, and adopted the Tonkin Gulf Resolution. This document enabled me to understand the overall meaning and intent of this resolution.

Defense Intelligent Agency. *Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense*. 13 December 1967.

This memorandum which was declassified on October 27, 2005 was utilized as a primary source because it released information regarding the United States intercepted encrypted North Vietnamese communications in regard to the attacks on the USS Maddox on August 2, 1964 and August 4, 1964.

Ellsberg, Daniel. *Secrets: A Memoir of Vietnam and the Pentagon Papers*. New York: Viking Penguin, 2002.

Ellsberg was the author who leaked secret highly classified Department of Defense's official history of the American government's policy and involvement in Vietnam to the New York Times. I used this book as a primary source because Ellsberg possessed actual government documents that allowed him to present a detailed look at the how's and whys the United States changed from an advisory role in Vietnam to actively participating in the conflict. I was able to see exactly how untruthful official government statements were regarding the situation in Vietnam. The administration lied to the American people by informing them that the United States was not going to participate in the Southeast Asia conflict. In fact, the government was undergoing covert missions in order to escalate its involvement in the war.

Johnson, Lyndon Baines. *The Vantage Point: Perspectives of the Presidency 1963-1969*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971.

Johnson focuses on the domestic and foreign accomplishments that helped to shape his presidency. He reveals the struggles he endured during the conflict in Vietnam and the actions that ensued. In essence, he attempts to portray himself as a man of action, rather than a crooked politician. Although Johnson was responsible for America's escalated involvement in Vietnam, this autobiography instilled in me a sense of respect for his actions. I believe this primary source provided me with additional background information about the man – Lyndon Baines Johnson.

McNamara, Robert S. *Argument Without End: In Search of Answers to the Vietnam Tragedy*. New York: Public Affairs Publishers, 1999.

As United States Secretary of Defense for seven years, McNamara revealed a first hand account of the events leading up to the Vietnam War, as well as the military actions undertaken during the years of actual combat. This book became a primary source because he portrayed misperceptions by both the United States and the Vietnamese in regard to the other's motives which ultimately resulted in gradual escalation and declaration of war. McNamara provided me with my basic thesis – the war was really about preventing the spread of Communism, rather than helping the Vietnamese people.

Memorandum for the Deputy Secretary of Defense. *Analysis of SIGNIT in the Tonkin Gulf Operation*. 19 August 1964.

This memorandum analyzing the military intelligence garnered by interception of electronic signals was declassified on December 20, 2005. I utilized this as a primary source document because it discussed the precise timing between the dynamics of the attacks and the need to make announcements to the general American public. In essence, this memorandum enabled me to understand the timeline President Johnson adhered to when deciding when to inform the United States about the supposed attacks in the Tonkin Gulf and the corresponding retaliatory air strikes.

Memorandum for the President. *Chronology of the Gulf of Tonkin*. 4 September 1964.

This top secret document which was declassified on February 14, 2006 detailed the exact time chronology of the Tonkin Gulf incident, thus becoming one of my primary sources. The memo also revealed not only the exact time that the United States was supposed to mount air strikes, but also the precise time that announcements should have been made to the general public informing America of the supposed Vietnamese attacks on the United States military ships.

United States Navy Report. *Tonkin Gulf NSA Intercepts*. NLF/RAC 01-116 (2003).

This Naval report was used as a primary source because it substantiated the questionability and authenticity of a non-existent second naval attack against the United States by the North Vietnamese.

Unna, Warren. "Critics See Phantom in Tonkin Incident." *Washington Post*, 24 September 1964, A19.

This Washington Post article was used as one of my primary sources because Unna reinforced the speculation regarding the questionability and authenticity of the North Vietnamese's second attack on the United States naval vessels in the Tonkin Gulf.

U.S. Government. *21st Century Documents – Vietnam and the Gulf of Tonkin Incident, Newly Declassified National Security, Agency (NSA) Documents, Signals Intelligence, Histories and Reports (CD-ROM)*. Washington: Progressive Management, 2006.

This collection of documents was utilized as an ultimate primary source because it divulged previously classified information regarding the Gulf of Tonkin incident. The United States government released articles, chronologies of events, oral histories, interviews, reports, memorandums, and intercepted

translations, thus providing a thorough source of information without proving or disproving the ongoing controversy and debate relating to the Tonkin incident.

“U.S. Ships Sail Out of Tonkin Gulf.” *Christian Science Monitor*, 23 September 1964, 14.

This article became one of my primary sources because it specifically detailed the events that occurred during the Desoto patrol attacks against the American ships – USS Maddox and C Turner Joy. These facts provided basic background information regarding the Tonkin Gulf Incident.

White House Staff Meeting. *Memorandum for Record*. 5 August 1964.

This White House staff meeting transcript was utilized as a primary source because it presented the actual discussions that occurred between President Johnson and his advisors, McNamara, and Commander Herrick regarding the validity of the August 4, 1964 attack and possible repercussions as a result of the retaliatory air strikes.

Windchy, Eugene G. *A Documentary of the Incidents in the Tonkin Gulf on August 2 and August 4, and Their Consequences*. New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1971.

I used Windchy’s documentary because he depicted in detail the actual events that transpired on August 2 and August 4, 1964, as well as the consequences the United States encountered as a direct result of President Johnson’s and Robert McNamara’s decision for ordering retaliatory air strikes against the North Vietnamese following the supposed second attack. Also, this documentary discussed the overall repercussions America faced as a result of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution and the impact the War had on the United States’ fight against Communism.

Secondary Sources

Andradé, Dale and Kenneth Conboy. “The Secret Side of the Tonkin Gulf Incident.” *Naval History*, August, 1999.

Andradé and Conboy provided detailed accounts of the Desoto covert missions in Southeast Asia, as well as the President’s and Congress’ reactions to the supposed attacks on the USS Maddox and C Turner Joy. I used this article as a secondary source because it supported my basic premise that the President Johnson and Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara knew that the supposed attacks were questionable; however, they never revealed this information to Congress or the general American public because the President’s main intent was to provide his administration with a greater latitude in expanding the war in Vietnam.

Appy, Christian G. *Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered From All Sides*. New York: Viking Penguin, 2003.

Appy provided an oral history of the Vietnam War by including testifiers such as war hawks, peace activists, poets, novelists, and former government officials. He included statements from both sides of the

conflict. For me this history provided first hand background information regarding the longest and most controversial overseas war in American history.

Davidson, Philip B. *Vietnam at War: The History: 1946-1975*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Since Davidson was chief of military intelligence in Vietnam from 1967 to 1969, he is able to present a first hand United States military perspective on the war. He provides information relating to the inefficiency of South Vietnam's government and armed forces, as well as background data relating to the overall military superiority of the United States. I believe Davidson's writing provides insightful information regarding the military strategies of the war.

Ford, Captain Ronnie E. "New Light on Gulf of Tonkin." <<http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/54/106.html>> (15 December 2006).

With new evidence available, Captain Ford revisited the Tonkin Gulf incident in 1997 and questioned whether or not the attack was in fact provoked by the United States. He further questioned Robert McNamara's overall motives in allying with President Johnson when requesting Congressional adoption of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution. I chose to use Ford's article as a secondary source document because he firmly believed that at a crucial moment in history, American intelligence agencies provided the President and the general public with raw data, rather than ensuring that the information presented was thoroughly analyzed and accurate.

Goldman, Eric F. *The Tragedy of Lyndon Johnson*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969.

I used Goldman's book as a secondary source because it provided useful first hand insight into the actual motives that possessed and drove President Johnson to pursue covert military operations in Southeast Asia, thus ultimately leading to military actions against North Vietnam.

Goulden, Joseph C. *Truth is the First Casualty*. New York: Rand McNally & Company, 1969.

Goulden thoroughly examined and analyzed the events of August 1964, thus contributing to my overall understanding of what happened on the Southeast Asian seas. I used this book as a secondary source document because Goulden explained that the supposed Tonkin Gulf attack was a convenience and an excuse for escalating the war in Vietnam. Furthermore, Goulden demonstrated that the government, especially President Johnson wanted war, and they were only looking for the right justification.

Greenstein, Fred I. *The Presidential Difference: Leadership Style from FDR to George W. Bush*. New York: The Free Press, 2000.

Professor Greenstein spent a chapter on each president. The chapter dealing with Lyndon Baines Johnson was extremely insightful, thus resulting in me using this book as a secondary source. I believe that Greenstein not only explained Johnson's motives for involving the United States in the Vietnam conflict, but also his motives for encouraging Congress to grant him ultimate authority to declare war in Southeast Asia.

Kalb, Marvin and Elie Abel. *Roots of Involvement: The U.S. in Asia 1784-1971*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1971.

Kalb and Abel thoroughly rendered the necessary background information regarding the conflicts in Southeast Asia, thus permitting me to fully comprehend the reasons for the United States involvement in the Vietnam War. Since the authors detailed several hundred years of history and the impact these events had on the entire world, I used this book as a secondary source.

Karnow, Stanley. *Vietnam, a History: The First Complete Account of the Vietnam at War*. New York: The Viking Press, 1983.

Karnow's book became one of my secondary sources because he clarified and analyzed the events of the Vietnam War without providing any bias. He based his facts on declassified secret government documents, as well as interviews with participants of the war, such as diplomats, government officials, journalists, military commanders, and soldiers. He explained the events and decisions that led to American involvement in the Tonkin Gulf and in Vietnam.

Kenworthy, E.W., et al. *The Pentagon Papers as published by The New York Times*. New York and Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971.

Kenworthy and his co-authors questioned the credibility of statements made by government officials before, during, and after the Vietnam War. They illustrated that differences existed between what President Johnson was saying to the public and what was actually happening in Vietnam. It appeared as though the administration lied to the American public. Speeches made by government officials, such as Johnson and McNamara, did not coincide with declassified White House memos, transcripts, and meeting notes. I used this book as a secondary source because the original "Pentagon Papers" became the one of the catalysts for the American public to question the plausibility of the Tonkin Gulf incident. Overall, the authors provided a discerning collection of the most important documents on United States policymaking in the Vietnam War.

Lind, Michael. *Vietnam: The Necessary War: A Reinterpretation of America's Most Disastrous Military Conflict*. New York: Simon & Shuster, Inc. 1999.

Lind justified America's involvement in war in Southeast Asia while examining American military responses to North Vietnamese aggression. In essence, Lind believed that the conflict was an unavoidable confrontation. I utilized this book as a secondary source because it helped me to fully comprehend the various preconceptions that surrounded the most controversial military conflict in American history.

Mann, Robert. *A Grand Illusion: America's Descent into Vietnam*. New York: Basic Books, 2001.

Mann offered a well-researched account of the Vietnam War, beginning with the Cold War. Mann's book became one of my secondary sources because it illustrated that the government, in general, agreed to fight this War because it was overly concerned about battling communism and was determined not to lose Vietnam, as it had in China and North Korea. Also, Mann uncovered information that cast doubt if any attack on American ships ever took place on the Southeast Asian Seas.

Moise, Edwin E. *Tonkin Gulf and the Escalation of the Vietnam War*. North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1966.

Moise divulged that the Tonkin Gulf attack “caused the outbreak of the large scale war in Vietnam.” During August of 1964, while the war in Southeast Asia escalated, the United States was already planning its intervention. Moise’s book became a secondary source because he provided a minute-by-minute chronology of the events that took place in August, 1964. He also analyzed the American government’s decision to become involved in the Vietnam War. Furthermore, his research supported my own theory – the USS Maddox was not an innocent vessel patrolling international waters; rather it contained eavesdropping equipment that was to be used for its covert Desoto missions.

Porter, Gareth. *Perils of Dominance: Imbalance of Power and the Road to War in Vietnam*. California: University of California Press, 2005.

Porter reviewed and researched day by day logs of President Johnson and examined relevant notes, memoirs, and meeting transcripts kept by key staff members. Because he provided a thorough review of the inner workings of Johnson’s administration while utilizing the daily logs, Porter’s book was included in my secondary source listing. He also indicated that many key staff members influenced Johnson’s decision to encourage Congress to pass the Tonkin Gulf Resolution and to ultimately declare war against the North Vietnamese.

Prados, John. “LBJ Tapes on the Gulf of Tonkin Incident.” *The National Archive*. Press release 2003. <<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB132/tapes.htm>> (10 December 2006).

Prados’ research became one of my secondary sources because he delved into the information President Johnson actually divulged secretly to his military advisors and officials. His data questioned the President’s credibility and his staff’s truthfulness in regard to updating the general American public about the events in Vietnam.

Rice, Earle Jr. *Point of No Return: Tonkin Gulf and the Vietnam War*. North Carolina: Morgan Reynolds Publishing, Inc., 2004.

Rice explained clearly and concisely the controversies that surrounded American involvement in Vietnam. I utilized this book as a secondary source because Rice offered a detailed examination of the events that occurred in the Tonkin Gulf. He elaborately described the covert operations that the United States was involved with on the waters off North Vietnam and the events that supposedly occurred on the nights of August 2, 1964 and August 4, 1964. This source was also useful to me because Rice objectively explained President Johnson’s motivation to become involved in the North Vietnamese conflict.

Siff, Ezra Y. *Why the Senate Slept: The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution and the Beginning of America’s Vietnam War*. Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1999.

This book was one of my secondary sources because Siff analyzed the causes of America’s involvement in the Southeast Asian conflict. Through his writings, I was able to gain a much better understanding of how the actual tragedy began. Siff also explained Robert McNamara’s involvement in the adoption of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution and the impact his advice had on the President’s actions.

Tollefson, James W. *The Strength Not to Fight: Conscientious Objectors of the Vietnam War – in Their Own Words*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company: 1993.

I used Tollefson's book as a secondary source because it conveyed the emotions and experiences of men who had the courage to question the American government and the overall war. It helped me to realize that President Johnson was not truly concerned about the well-being of America or its soldiers; rather he was attempting to meet his own personal agenda while also prohibiting the further spread of Communism.

Warner, Roger. *Shooting at the Moon: The Story of America's Clandestine War in Laos*. Vermont: Steerforth Publishing, 1996.

Warner provided a chronicle of the covert operations that occurred in Laos which ultimately devastated its own allies in Southeast Asia. This secondary source enabled me to gain further insight into the overall fighting and guerrilla warfare utilized during the Vietnam War.

Westerfield, Donald L. *War Powers: The President, the Congress, and the Question of War*. Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1996.

Westerfield analyzed the use of military force in foreign conflicts. I believed this book was an important secondary source because I was able to review the communications that should occur between the Executive Branch and Congress prior to the declaration of war. After reading excerpts, I realized that President Johnson deceived Congress when the Tonkin Gulf Resolution was signed and adopted.

Wiest, Andy. *The Vietnam War: 1956-1975*. Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2002.

Wiest portrayed the Vietnam War as a brutal conflict entered into by the United States in order to save the world from the advance of Communism. This secondary source further substantiated my thesis that President Johnson's ultimate motive for the Tonkin Gulf Incident was to ensure that Communism would not continue to spread worldwide.

Howard Zinn. *A People's History of the United States: 1492-Present*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1980.

Zinn portrayed, not only the primary participants in the Vietnam War, but also the opinions of the ordinary enlisted men and civilians regarding the validity of the Tonkin Gulf attacks. This became a secondary source for me because Zinn revealed historical facts from the point of view of the common man, and presented their own words, rather than the words of high ranking government officials.