OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

P.L. 86-36

19 SEP 1975

Dear Bill:

This is in response, in part, to Senator Church's 8 August 1975 letter to Secretary Schlesinger requesting certain information and documents relating to the Gulf of Tonkin incident.

The National Security Agency has prepared a specific response to Key Question 2 and has forwarded the documents mentioned in items 10 and 11 of the request. These materials and documents are extremely sensitive, to be handled in COMINT CHANNELS ONLY. I would like to make these materials available to appropriately cleared staff members in my office, according to established procedures.

Sincerely,

Tom

Thomas K. Latimer
The Special Assistant

Mr. William G. Miller
Chief of Staff
Senate Select Committee
on Intelligence
Room G308
Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D. C. 20510

Copy furnished:
Director, NSA

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

SECRET

Serial: D4/SRE 018-75
DATE: 3 September 1975

TO DDO (Mr. [redacted]/Mr. [redacted])

FROM D4/SRE

SUBJECT Tonkin Gulf Inquiry Key Questions/Document Request

P.L. 86-36

NSA25X3

Information given herein is in response to a request from the staff of the Church Committee.

1. Key question 2 on Role of NSA in DESOTO Patrols

NSA operated in an intelligence support capacity. That is to say, NSA and associated field units (including those aboard DESOTO vessels) obtained intelligence on North Vietnamese and Chinese military forces which related to the safety of the vessels or which contributed to U.S. intelligence on those forces.

The Naval Security Group, the Navy's cryptologic agency, provided SIGINT direct support units (DSU's) with personnel and equipment, primarily from a shore station (USN-27) in the Philippines, for the DESOTO series of destroyer patrols. [redacted] the DESOTO patrols lasted from 1962 through the spring of 1965. The unit's primary mission was to provide, through intercept, early warning of attack and tactical intelligence in support of the operational requirements of the embarked commander.

A letter of instruction issued by the commander of the Seventh Fleet outlined the missions of the DESOTO patrols. The patrols would assert the right of the freedom of the seas in international waters and collect intelligence for both the commander of the Seventh Fleet and Washington-level consumers. The objective was two fold - operational and intelligence. To achieve the operational goals, the patrols were to familiarize themselves with the areas patroled and determine [redacted] or North Vietnamese response to the patrols. To achieve the intelligence goals, the patrols were to collect - through SIGINT, photography, and visual sightings - information on such subjects as enemy seaward and air defense postures, including disposition and capability of forces, merchant shipping activity; and other topics as the opportunity presented itself.

The patrol of the USS Craig (DD 885) from 25 February through 12 March 1964 was representative of the DESOTO operations. Aboard the Craig was the SIGINT direct support unit - designated USN-467Y - whose mission it was to provide direct support for the embarked commander and to attempt unique intercept of communications and electronic intelligence

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[redacted] ONLY

(ELINT) signals unobtainable at land-based intercept sites. In addition, the patrol expected to stimulate [redacted] and North Vietnamese communications and perhaps even reactions from [redacted] From such responses the intelligence community could add to its SIGINT knowledge of the surrounding area. The Craig would receive support from U.S. stations in the Philippines (USN-27 and USA-57), [redacted] through special reporting on various intercept targets.

The Craig [redacted] The destroyer proceeded west to the coast of North Vietnam and then northward, coursing the Gulf of Tonkin until 9 March. Its return track was by way of [redacted] The USS Ingersoll (DD 652), which served as back-up vessel for the patrol, apparently was not detected until the latter part of patrol. [redacted] At the time, the Craig was considerably beyond the 12-mile limit.

Special Communications Unit Aboard Maddox

A DSU, USN-467N, was aboard the DESOTO patrol destroyer USS Maddox in the Gulf of Tonkin when North Vietnamese PTF boats attacked the destroyer in early August 1964. The DSU was under the operational control of the Maddox commander. It maintained communications with the Naval Security Group, other associated shore-based units, and NSA in order to exchange intelligence and technical information pertaining to the ship's mission.

2. Documents pertaining to items 10 and 11 (Document Request) are appended.

William D. Gerhard
D4, Staff Research Element

Incl:
a/s

SF

NSA25X3

[redacted]

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SF

ROUTING AND TRANSMITTAL SLIP — SECRET

TO	INITIALS	ACTION
Mr. [ ] Mr. [ ] Mr. [ ]		CIRCULATE
	DATE	COORDINATION
2	INITIALS	FILE
	DATE	INFORMATION
3	INITIALS	NOTE AND RETURN
	DATE	PER CONVERSATION
4	INITIALS	SEE ME
	DATE	SIGNATURE

REMARKS

Following for information concerning attached request/response:

1. Down through the years since Tonkin, the Fulbright Committee repeatedly sought info and documents on the G of T incidents. Dr. Tordella, I am aware, was very much involved. Risk of possible embarassment, exists in giving to Churcn what we may have refused Fulbright.

2. Documents being provided form only a selection of what is available. Two nqtable omissions:

a. A black notebook on the mid-September G of T incident

b. The KIT KAT support plan (SI) for OPLAN 34-A.

Do NOT use this form as a RECORD of approvals, concurrences, disapprovals, clearances, and similar actions

FROM: Bill Gerhard — SECRET — DATE: 3 Sept 75

PHONE: 4656s

HANDLE VIA [redacted] CHANNELS ONLY

OPTIONAL FORM 41 (Rev. 7-76) — 5041-101-01

Attachments to D4/SRE 018-75 dtd 3 Sep 75

1. notebook (minus decrypts)
   m/R: Chronology of Events of 2-5 Aug 64 in the Gulf of Tonkin

2. Reports
   a. Serial 00044P94
      rpt # 10-65
      dated 26 May 65
   b. serial 00044P94
      rpt # 11-65
      dated 26 May 65
   c. serial 00044P94
      rpt # 12-65
      dated 26 May 65

3. Microfiche

a. smo	5 Aug 64	POSS-239-64
b. smo	7 Aug 64	STR J3-08130

c.	smi	151317	JCS 7947
d.	smi	041554Z	CINCPAC
e.	smi	041718Z	CINCPAC
f.	smi	042014Z	CINCPACFLT
g.	smi	14 Aug 64	[redacted]
h.	rpt	042052	3/01[redacted]/R18-64
i.	smo	5 Aug 64	P055-238-64
j.	usm-626J	050435Z	2/611/VHN/R18-64
k.	smo	1 Aug 64	B205-241-64
l.	smo	2 Aug 64	B205-243-64
m.	smo	2 Aug 64	B205-245-64
n.	smo	5 Aug 64	P055-238-64
o.	smi	102339Z Sep 64	JCS 8515
p.	smi 54434	110354Z Sep 64	DIRNAUSECGRUPAC
q.	smo	12 Sep 64	P21-0354
r.	smi	041433Z	fm JCS
s.	smo	16 Sep 64	P214-0374
t.	smo	16 Sep 64	B205-316-64
u.	smo	25 Aug 64	B22-505
v.	rpt	021628Z	3/0[redacted]/R15-64

KITKAT

Released 8-28-95

Carol File?

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TONKIN GULF INQUIRY

KEY QUESTIONS

1. What key individuals were involved in planning the 34-A and DE SOTO programs? What provisions were there for coordination of specific covert operations and intelligence collection missions, if any?

Gaddy Lang Olivier

2. What was the role of NSA in the DE SOTO patrols? Was the special communications contingent which reported aboard the USS Maddox on 30 July 1964 a "department" (completely under jurisdiction of Cmdr. Herrick) or a "detachment" (with separate reporting channels to the Naval Security Group and/or NSA?)

Olivier

3. How did Operation SWITCHBACK affect development of OPLAN 34-A? What form did CIA participation in MAC/SOG take? Was MAC/SOG informed of the schedule and patrol routes of DE SOTO patrols?

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4. What were coordination procedures between CIA and military personnel in the execution of 34-A operations of 30 July 1964 (attacks on Hon Nieu and Hon Me islands) and 3 August 1964 (bombardment of Rhon River estuary and Vinh Sonh radar installation)?

[redacted]

Document Request

10. Any internal NSA directives, reports, or documents concerning NSA's role or interest in DE SOTO patrols of 1964, especially the MADDOX patrol of 31 July.

11. Mission directives to Lt, [redacted] USNR (head of the USS Maddox special communications contingent during the patrol of 31 July 1964) from Naval Security Group, [redacted] and/or from NSA.

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MARTIN MARIETTA CORPORATION

5/14/71

File:
DR [redacted]

AEROSPACE HEADQUARTERS, 1800 K STREET, N.W., WASHINGTON, D.C. 20006 TELEPHONE (202) 833-1900

ALBERT C. HALL
VICE PRESIDENT, ENGINEERING

4 [redacted]

[redacted]

September 1971

Cowell [redacted]

Dear Noel,

This is a belated note of thanks for the enjoyable luncheon on the fourteenth. It was very helpful to have the informal discussion with you and your staff.

I appreciate your arranging to have me briefed in the various areas of your activity. I have spent a very useful afternoon with Dr. Tordella, and I am looking forward to the periodic briefings that you have suggested.

With best regards,

al

ACH:lw

Vice Admiral Noel Gayler, USN
Director
National Security Agency
Fort George G. Meade, Maryland 20755

Rec'd 1229 4 Oct 71

~~SECRET~~
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Serial Number 00044P94
Report Number 10-65

Operational History

1. Subject: DESOTO PATROL, Gulf of Tonkin; USS MADDOX (DD-781)/USN-467N

2. Time Frame: 28 JUL - 23 AUG 64

3. References: Proposed by CINCPAC 100342Z JUL 64
Approved by JCS 7506 DTG 221930Z JUL 64

4. Enclosures: None

5. Responsibility of action personnel: Op-94G (G54)

6. Background narrative: This was 18th DESOTO type patrol (each with NSG DET embarked) conducted since 1962. Itinerary of this patrol similar to the one conducted earlier in 1964. Primary purpose of the patrol was "to determine DRV coastal activity". On 02 AUG, MADDOX attacked by 3 DRV PT boats, repelled attack assisted by carrier aircraft and retired. CINCPACFLT 021104Z AUG 64 ordered MADDOX and TURNER JOY to resume track "to assert right of freedom of the seas". JCS 021745Z AUG 64 7680 approved. Second attack by DRV PT boats executed on 4-5 AUG. Embarked NSG DET effectively warned CO of both impending attacks.

7. Conclusions and Lessons: Use of Marines in NSG DETS questioned, but finally resolved in favor of their use. CRITIC reporting procedures revised for DESOTO patrols to insure immediate availability of information in Washington. OPINTEL broadcast monitored on board plus three intercept positions appeared satisfactory.

8. Recommendations: None

Duplicate

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ENCLOSURE (4)
26 MAY 1965

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Serial Number 00044P94
Report Number 11-65

Operational History

1. Subject: DESOTO PATROL, Gulf of Tonkin; USS MORTON (DD-748)/USN-467P

2. Time Frame: 14 SEP - 21 SEP 64

3. References: Proposed by CINCPAC 080155Z AUG 64
Disapproved and later approved by JCS

4. Enclosures: None

5. Responsibility of action personnel: Op-94G (G54)

6. Background narrative: 19th DESOTO type patrol, similar previous MADDOX patrol. USS EDWARDS in Company. 18 SEP: DESOTO patrol ships opened fire on fast closing targets. Little definite COMINT or visual confirmation of actual DRV attack.

7. Conclusions and Lessons: None

8. Recommendations: Three intercept positions plus OPINTEL terminal appear optimum COMINT configuration to insure early warning tip-off to embarked commander.

ENCLOSURE (5)

08 MAY 1965

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Serial Number 00044P94
Report Number 12-65

Operational History

1. Subject: DESOTO Patrol: Gulf of Tonkin

2. Time Frame:

01 OCT - 15 OCT	USS EDWARDS	USN-467R-1
15 OCT - 14 NOV	USS MORTON	USN-467R-2
08 NOV - 14 NOV	USS EDWARDS	USN-467S
14 NOV - 27 DEC	USS EDWARDS	USN-467R-3
08 FEB - 14 FEB	USS TOWERS	USN-467D
15 FEB - 19 MAR	USS BUCHANAN	USN-467D
19 MAR - 21 APR	USN-27/USS BUCHANAN	USN-467D

3. References: Above DESOTO Patrols on ready duty/standby duty as proposed by COMSEVENTHFLT/CINCPACFLT and by CINCPAC 050255Z FEB 65. JCS 161737Z APR 65 returned patrol forces to normal status.

4. Enclosures: None

5. Responsibility of action personnel: Op-94G (G54)

6. Background narrative: Above patrols remained alerted and active in training operations in the general vicinity of DA NANG. No hostile reaction or enemy contact noted. Intercept portion of embarked DET occasionally stayed ashore with communications personnel remaining embarked.

7. Conclusions and Lessons: Increasing reliability of OPINTEL broadcast indicated communication team vice on-board intercept team may provide best all around support.

8. Recommendations: None

ENCLOSURE (6)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

26 MAY 1965

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