

New Tonkin Inquiry To Call McNamara

31 JAN 68

By JOHN W. FINNEY
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Jan. 30 — The Senate Foreign Relations Committee decided today to re-examine the Administration's account of the Gulf of Tonkin incidents by calling Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara for further testimony.

The effect of the committee's action was to elevate what had been a personal staff study ordered by its chairman, Senator J. W. Fulbright of Arkansas, into a formal investigation of an episode that proved to be critical in American involvement in the Vietnam war.

The Gulf of Tonkin incidents, in which two American de-

Continued on Page 7, Column 1

THE 1

Tonkin Inquiry by Fulbright to Call McNamara

Continued From Page 1, Col. 8

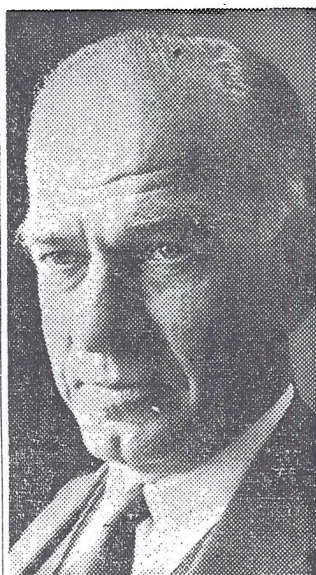
destroyers reportedly came under attack by North Vietnamese PT boats in early August of 1964, became a turning point in the war. In retaliation, the Administration ordered the first bombing raids against North Vietnam and obtained Congressional approval of a resolution endorsing "all necessary measures" taken by the Administration to prevent "further aggression" in Southeast Asia.

Now, three and one half years later, the Senate committee is questioning whether the Administration presented or was aware of all the facts in the reported attacks when it asked Congress for the resolution, which Under Secretary of State Nicholas deB. Katzenbach was later to describe as "a functional equivalent" of a declaration of war against North Vietnam.

The committee is not so much challenging whether the destroyers came under attack, although there are some doubts among committee members about the nature of the second attack, which took place on the night of Aug. 4, 1964, against the destroyers Maddox and Turner Joy. The first attack, about which there is no question, took place in daylight on Aug. 2 against the Maddox.

Rather, the committee is raising questions as to whether the Administration had conclusive proof of the second attack before ordering, some eight hours later, retaliatory raids against North Vietnam and presenting Congress the next day with the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution.

The committee also is concerned over how and why the Administration sent the de-



The New York Times
Senator J. W. Fulbright

stroyers on a sensitive mission off the coast of North Vietnam.

The committee obviously was approaching the Tonkin inquiry, which has been under consideration for several weeks, with considerable caution.

As committee members privately explained, they did not want to place themselves in the position of seeming to impugn the Administration in the midst of a war in Vietnam and another crisis involving the seizure of an American intelligence ship by North Korea.

The caution was reflected in the comments of Senator J. W. Fulbright, the committee chairman, who went to considerable lengths not to say anything that would indicate the committee was questioning the Administration's integrity in its accounts of the Tonkin incidents.

In announcing the commit-

tee's decision, Senator Fulbright said the committee wanted Mr. McNamara to appear to "review certain aspects" of the Tonkin incidents. When pressed by reporters as to precisely what the committee wanted to "review" with Mr. McNamara, Senator Fulbright repeatedly replied: "I don't want to discuss that."

But Senator Eugene J. McCarthy of Minnesota, who is campaigning for the Democratic Presidential nomination in protest against the Administration's Vietnam policies, was less inhibited in discussing the committee's objectives.

Talking to reporters after the meeting, Senator McCarthy said among other things that the committee wanted to find out if the destroyers were on "a routine mission in international waters," as was repeatedly asserted by Mr. McNamara when he testified Aug. 6 in support of the Tonkin Resolution.

While Senator McCarthy declined to elaborate, he was apparently referring to statements by crew members, uncovered in a committee staff study, that shortly before the Aug. 2 attack the Maddox had taken aboard in Taiwan a "black box" of electronic equipment.

Working from logs and messages supplied by the Pentagon, the committee staff study also disclosed that prior to the Aug. 2 attack, the Maddox had been zigzagging in and out of the 12-mile territorial waters claimed by North Vietnam.

The maneuvers of the destroyer, combined with the presence of secret electronic equipment, suggests that the Maddox was on an electronic intelligence mission similar to that undertaken by the U.S.S. Pueblo off North Korea.