

Morse Declares Navy Messages Show Intent to Bait

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Senator Wayne Morse charged today that Navy messages prior to the incident in the Gulf of Tonkin on Aug. 4, 1964, demonstrated that the Navy was intent on "bloodying the nose" of North Vietnam.

On the basis of the messages, the Oregon Democrat said in a Senate speech, it is apparent that the United States Navy did not believe that two American destroyers were on a "routine patrol" in the Gulf of Tonkin, as has been repeatedly asserted by the administration.

Renewing his charge that the destroyers, the Maddox and Turner Joy, had engaged in "provocative" actions, Senator Morse made public a previously secret Navy message warning the two ships that North Vietnam had "thrown down the gauntlet and now considers itself at war with the United States." The message went on:

"It is felt that they will attack U. S. forces on sight and with no regard for cost. U. S. ships in the Gulf of Tonkin can no longer assume that they will be considered neutrals exercising the right of free transit. They will be treated as belligerents from first detection and must consider themselves as such."

Message to Commander

The message was sent by the commander of the destroyer task group, Capt. John J. Herrick, to the two destroyers.

It was sent following a North Vietnamese attack Aug. 2 on the Maddox, but, according to Senator Morse, "several hours before the commencement" of the patrol by the Maddox and Turner Joy that led to the second incident on Aug. 4.

It was on the basis of the second incident, which the Administration has described as an "unprovoked" North Vietnamese attack on the two destroyers, that the Administration ordered the first bombing raids against North Vietnam and obtained Congressional approval on the Tonkin resolution. The resolution was later interpreted by the State Department as a "functional equivalent" of a declaration of war.

In view of the message, Senator Morse questioned whether the Administration could "honestly" contend that the two destroyers, when attacked, were on "an innocent, routine patrol, asserting legitimate rights to travel on the high seas."

by Senator Morse, the Defense Department, in rebuttal, said the message was not an order to the destroyers but was a recommendation to higher command that eventually "died" without approval by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

But the Pentagon did not disclose, according to Senate sources who have studied the messages, that on Aug. 3, a day before the Moorer "recommendation," Vice Adm. Roy L. Johnson, commander of the seventh fleet, had already ordered the destroyers to modify their course to the northward.

It was in response to that

order that Captain Herrick sent a message back on Aug. 3 warning that North Vietnam apparently considered the destroyer patrol directly involved with the South Vietnamese 34-A operations and was intending to treat the destroyers as "enemies."

First of Two Speeches

The Herrick message was disclosed last Saturday with the publication of testimony by Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

The Morse speech was the first of two that the Senator plans to deliver in rebuttal to

Mr. McNamara. The main burden of the Secretary's testimony was that the Administration had conclusive proof of the Aug. 4 attack and that the attack was unprovoked since the destroyers were on "routine patrol" in international waters.

But Senator Morse charged that the Administration—and Mr. McNamara—were presenting a "waffly case" intended to "obfuscate" the Aug. 4 incident.

Mr. Morse particularly took issue with Mr. McNamara's assertion last week—repeated over the weekend by Assistant Secretary of State William P. Bundy—that Congress was

'Not Viewed as Routine'

From the message he said, it was apparent that "the assertion of rights of this kind was not viewed as routine by the Navy."

"We were out to bloody their nose," he declared. "We had the chip on our shoulder."

As another indication of the "Navy attitude toward the purpose of the patrol," Senator Morse cited a message sent on Aug. 4 by Adm. Thomas H. Moorer, then commander in chief of the Pacific fleet and now Chief of Naval Operations.

The Moorer message urged that the destroyer patrol be continued in order to "clearly demonstrate our determination to continue these operations."

It went on to recommend, among other things, that the course of the destroyer patrol be changed to the northward so that it might possibly draw North Vietnamese patrol boats away from the area of South Vietnamese naval operations against North Vietnam.

In the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's inquiry into the Gulf of Tonkin incidents, the Moorer message has played a critical part because it indicates that contrary to Administration assertions, there was a connection between the destroyer patrol and the South Vietnamese naval operations, known as "Op 34-A."

When the Moorer message was first disclosed last week

Hanoi in Gulf of Tonkin Incident of '64

"aware" at the time it approved the Tonkin Resolution that the destroyers were engaged in "electronic surveillance" of Communist China and North Vietnam.

Noting that the Tonkin Resolution was considered by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the Senate Armed Service Committee at a secret hearing on Aug. 6, 1964, with testimony by Mr. McNamara, Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Gen. Earle C. Wheeler, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Mr. Morse said:

"There is not a line in those hearings supporting the proposition that members of those

committees, which were the ones constituted to consider the President's proposal, were aware that the Maddox was engaged in electronic surveillance."

Nor, he said, was one word mentioned to the two committees that the destroyers were under specific orders "to stimulate Chicom-North Vietnamese electronic reaction."

The committees were not told, the Senator said, that on Aug. 1, before the first attack, the Maddox had proceeded in the direction of Hon Me and Hon Nieu, two North Vietnamese islands, "coming within four miles of those islands before turning southward."

As a result, he said, the Maddox was near territory that had been attacked only 40 hours earlier by South Vietnamese patrol boats supplied and trained by the United States.

"The Administration would have us believe that this was not provocative," he declared.

Senator Morse called upon the Foreign Relations Committee "to pursue a full-scale investigation of the Tonkin incidents." He also suggested that the time had come for "a thorough study by objective civilians of the operations of the military establishment of the United States."