

29 FEB 68

A Tonkin 'Secret' Told By Morse

Washington

Senator Wayne Morse (Dem-Ore.) disclosed yesterday what he said was a secret Navy message that showed the United States, "out to bloody North Vietnam's nose," deliberately provoked the attack on two U.S. destroyers in the Gulf of Tonkin three years ago.

In urging the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to pursue its investigation of the incident which led to the first U.S. bombing of North Vietnam, Morse told the Senate that the destroyers Maddox and Turner Joy received the message from the commander of their carrier task force before they were attacked August 4, 1964. He quoted it as saying:

"It is apparent that the DRV (Democratic Republic of Vietnam) has thrown down the gauntlet and now considers itself at war with the United States. It is felt that they will attack U.S. forces on sight with no regard for cost. U.S. ships in 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 the first detection and must consider themselves as such . . ."

In his Senate speech Morse did not name the officer who sent the message, but his office said later it was Captain John J. Herrick, who commanded the two-vessel force.

United Press