



Tonkin Gulf and the Escalation of the Vietnam War

By Edwin E. Moise

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Retracing the confused pattern of planning for escalation of the Vietnam War, Moise reconstructs the events of the night of August 4, 1964, when the U.S. Navy destroyers *Maddox* and *Turner Joy* reported that they were under attack by North Vietnamese torpedo boats in the Gulf of Tonkin. Using declassified records and interviews with the participants, Moise demonstrates that there was no North Vietnamese attack; the original report was a genuine mistake.

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Download and Read Free Online *Tonkin Gulf and the Escalation of the Vietnam War* By Edwin E. Moïse

Editorial Review

From Kirkus Reviews

An illuminating, almost minute-by-minute reconstruction of the events that took place in the Tonkin Gulf in August 1964, and an analysis of decisions in Washington that led to the massive American escalation of the Vietnam War in 1965. Moïse (History/Clemson Univ.) offers a massively detailed study of the Aug. 2 and Aug. 4, 1964, incidents in the Tonkin Gulf off the coast of North Vietnam, after which Congress overwhelmingly passed a resolution giving the Johnson administration authority to wage war against Communism in North and South Vietnam. Moïse is careful to point out that the incidents "did not really 'cause' the outbreak of large-scale war in Vietnam." As he shows, in August 1964 the war in South Vietnam was heating up rapidly, and the White House and Pentagon were already making plans for large-scale intervention. Still, the events surrounding the Tonkin Gulf incident--including covert American-supported actions against North Vietnam that had begun in February 1964--as well as the actual incidents themselves deserve close study. That is exactly what Moïse provides in his book, in which he augments a thorough examination of primary sources with interviews with many key players, including former North Vietnamese naval officers. Moïse's readable, if sometimes overly detailed, reconstruction of the events in the water leaves little doubt that the small battle on Aug. 2 was not an unprovoked North Vietnamese attack on "an innocent [American] reconnaissance vessel," as the Johnson administration contended. Rather, North Vietnam attacked the destroyer Maddox, which was loaded with electronic eavesdropping equipment, in retaliation for months of American-supported attacks along the coast. Moïse also convincingly shows that no North Vietnamese attacks on American ships took place on Aug. 4, although he concludes that American action was based on a misunderstanding, not on a provocation "knowingly faked" by the American government. The most inclusive look by far at the portentous Tonkin Gulf incident. -- Copyright ©1996, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

Review

[A] refreshingly welcome addition to the Vietnam War literature, and certainly one for the shelves of serious students."Intelligence and National Security"

Review

All students of the Vietnam War and of recent American foreign policy need to be familiar with this important book. . . . Not every book labeled 'authoritative' deserves the title. This one does.--*Journal of American History*

Moïse separates fact from fiction in an absorbing and entirely plausible account of what actually transpired in August 1964.--*The Northern Mariner*

This book not only illuminates the events of 4 August 1964, but also presents a different view of American planning prior to the Vietnamese conflict. Dr. Moïse's work is a refreshingly welcome addition to the Vietnam War literature, and certainly one for the shelves of serious students of that conflict.--*Intelligence and National Security*

Edwin Moise has written a fine book on an important subject. *Tonkin Gulf and the Escalation of the Vietnam War* is must reading for anyone interested in the events of early August 1964 in both the Tonkin Gulf and Washington.--U. S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*

An illuminating, almost minute-by-minute reconstruction of the events that took place in the Tonkin Gulf in August 1964, and an analysis of decisions in Washington that led to the massive American escalation of the Vietnam War in 1965. . . . The most inclusive look by far at the portentous Tonkin Gulf incident.--*Kirkus Reviews*

In *The March of Folly*, Barbara Tuchman wrote: 'Not a Fort Sumter or a Pearl Harbor, Tonkin Gulf was no less significant.' If any book is to give Tonkin Gulf the significance it deserves, it will be this volume by Ed Moise. After years of painstaking work, this meticulous and fair scholar and interviewer has developed, in depth, the answers to all the questions about what went on in that gulf in that first week of August, 1964.--Admiral James Stockdale

Fair-minded and meticulous. . . . It should prove definitive.--*Economist*

A valuable addition to literature on the Vietnam War. . . . Moise's work is a refreshingly welcome addition to Vietnam War literature, and certainly one for the shelves of serious students of the conflict.--*Vietnam*

A careful and incredibly thorough account. . . .This is an excellent book. . . . Thorough and provocative throughout. . . . It is essential reading for the national security community and those interested in U.S. policy in Vietnam or the U.S. presidency.--*Naval War College Review*

Thoroughly researched and carefully reasoned. . . . Far surpasses in its breadth and detail anything previously written on the Gulf of Tonkin incident.--*American Historical Review*

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