



# **The Gulf of Tonkin Events - Fifty Years Later: A Footnote to the History of the Vietnam War**

*John White*

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The war in Vietnam essentially began in 1964 in response to what the American government claimed was an unprovoked attack upon two U.S. naval ships, the destroyers USS Maddox (DD-731) and USS Turner Joy (DD-951), while they were steaming peacefully on the high seas in the Gulf of Tonkin off Vietnam. Although there was a U.S. military presence in Vietnam before that, the Tonkin events led to congressional action which allowed President Lyndon Johnson (and, later, President Richard Nixon) to escalate our military presence enormously and to wage war not only in Vietnam but also covertly in Southeast Asia. Among the many books written on the Vietnamese war, half a dozen note a 1967 letter to the editor of a Connecticut newspaper which was instrumental in pressuring the Johnson administration to tell the truth about how the war was started. The letter was mine. It became, in the words of one author, “a national sensation.” Actually, that was an understatement. It became an international sensation. On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Gulf of Tonkin events, this is an account of my role and its aftermath, both personal and political. – From the Foreword

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