

## 0. THE WAR ESCALATES - Story Preface

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## 3. STUDENT PROTESTS

**4. THE WAR ESCALATES**

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In April of 1964 (about a month after LBJ's conversation with Richard Russell), Senator Robert F. Kennedy gave an [oral history](#) to the Kennedy Library about his brother's intentions in Vietnam. The President and his advisors had been concerned about communism taking hold in Vietnam. Their fear was the "Domino Theory."

Lyndon Johnson, as demonstrated by his taped conversations, had very strong initial reservations about sending American personnel to Vietnam. Both he and his long-standing closest advisors were concerned the American people would not support a war in that distant land.

But instead of ending the war, the Johnson Administration sent more than half a million military personnel to Southeast Asia. How - and why - did that happen?

President Johnson had many of the same advisors as President Kennedy. Robert McNamara was still Secretary of Defense. [McGeorge Bundy](#) was still National Security Advisor.

These were men who had recommended (in October of 1963) that the U.S. be out of Vietnam by the end of 1965. One is left to wonder why they radically change their advice months later.

The Johnson Administration wanted a resolution from Congress to handle the situation in Vietnam as the President and his advisors saw fit. Between August 2-4, 1964 events occurred in the Gulf of Tonkin which gave them the power they had sought for months.

According to an [article](#) at the LBJ Presidential Library web-site, American naval ships had been attacked by North Vietnamese ships in the [Gulf of Tonkin](#) on August 2, 1964. The American people were told a second attack had occurred on August 4th.

The cover notes for LBJ's August 4th "Presidential Daily Diary" state the President received a message about the second attack during his mid-morning meeting with Congressman George Mahon:

- The Diary reflects Mahon was with the President between 10:40 and 11:30 a.m., but there is [no specific mention](#) of a call regarding the second attack.
- There is a note of an "Off Record" event that took place during the Mahon meeting.

Between 12:35 and 12:58, the President had a [meeting](#) with his National Security Council where the reported second attack was discussed. He also had a luncheon meeting with his senior foreign policy advisors where the decision was made to respond with a limited air attack. The Diary reflects that meeting lasted 1 hour and 20 minutes.

Immediately afterwards, the President met with Mrs. Johnson's "tea group," sent flowers to friends and submitted judicial nominations to the Senate.

Later in the day, after receiving clarifying information about the second attack, the President met with the National Security Council and the Congressional leadership:

- The Administration wanted a resolution from Congress to give the President power to respond to all North Vietnamese aggression with the force he deemed appropriate.
- Later in the evening, LBJ [told](#) the American people about the second attack in a [live](#) televised report.

- The next day, the President addressed the Congress.

On August 7th, Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. It was as close as America would ever come to actually declaring war on North Vietnam.

Within a week, the President's power in Vietnam had gone from providing military advisor support to doing whatever he thought was necessary.

Full-scale war, with many American casualties, was just around the corner.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/THE-WAR-ESCALATES-Remember-The-Titans>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/THE-WAR-ESCALATES-Remember-The-Titans>

## Media Stream



### McGeorge Bundy with President Johnson

Image online, courtesy the [LBJ Presidential Library](#).

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View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/McGeorge-Bundy-with-President-Johnson>



### Gulf of Tonkin

Image online, courtesy NASA.

PD

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Gulf-of-Tonkin>

Time	Particulars	Remarks
7:00	Woke up in bed	
7:15	Had breakfast	
7:30	Wrote a letter to the President	
7:45	Had a shower	
8:00	Had breakfast	
8:15	Wrote a letter to the President	
8:30	Had a shower	
8:45	Had breakfast	
9:00	Wrote a letter to the President	
9:15	Had a shower	
9:30	Had breakfast	
9:45	Wrote a letter to the President	
10:00	Had a shower	
10:15	Had breakfast	
10:30	Wrote a letter to the President	
10:45	Had a shower	
11:00	Had breakfast	
11:15	Wrote a letter to the President	
11:30	Had a shower	
11:45	Had breakfast	
12:00	Wrote a letter to the President	
12:15	Had a shower	
12:30	Had breakfast	
12:45	Wrote a letter to the President	
13:00	Had a shower	
13:15	Had breakfast	
13:30	Wrote a letter to the President	
13:45	Had a shower	
14:00	Had breakfast	
14:15	Wrote a letter to the President	
14:30	Had a shower	
14:45	Had breakfast	
15:00	Wrote a letter to the President	
15:15	Had a shower	
15:30	Had breakfast	
15:45	Wrote a letter to the President	
16:00	Had a shower	
16:15	Had breakfast	
16:30	Wrote a letter to the President	
16:45	Had a shower	
17:00	Had breakfast	
17:15	Wrote a letter to the President	
17:30	Had a shower	
17:45	Had breakfast	
18:00	Wrote a letter to the President	
18:15	Had a shower	
18:30	Had breakfast	
18:45	Wrote a letter to the President	
19:00	Had a shower	
19:15	Had breakfast	
19:30	Wrote a letter to the President	
19:45	Had a shower	
20:00	Had breakfast	
20:15	Wrote a letter to the President	
20:30	Had a shower	
20:45	Had breakfast	
21:00	Wrote a letter to the President	
21:15	Had a shower	
21:30	Had breakfast	
21:45	Wrote a letter to the President	
22:00	Had a shower	
22:15	Had breakfast	
22:30	Wrote a letter to the President	
22:45	Had a shower	
23:00	Had breakfast	
23:15	Wrote a letter to the President	
23:30	Had a shower	
23:45	Had breakfast	
24:00	Wrote a letter to the President	

### President Johnson's Daily Diary - August 4, 1964

Image online, courtesy the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum [website](#).

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View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/President-Johnson-s-Daily-Diary-August-4-1964>