Now -- let me remind the distinguished Representative of Czechoslovakia -- that the Charter he refers to, with such reverence does not condemn the effort of people to preserve their independence from aggressive neighbors -- its purpose -- and the reason this Council exists is to protect independence and freedom.

It is not a cloak -- it is a shield.

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Second Statement:

I also apologize for detaining the Council further, but I must express my appreciation to the Representative of Czechoslovakia for his explanatory remarks. He said, however, that Czechoslovakia had no answer to its question why the United States acted with such haste. The answer is the haste with which our ships were twice attacked. How long do we have to wait? Until one of our ships is sunk and we are all on the precipice of war with all its incalculable consequences?

Secondly, I took note of the remark by the Representative of France, who said -- and I think properly -- that the main problem is the future, and that he had noted with approval my statement the other day that if the United States was forced to take measures they would be limited. That is true. He said, further, that the countries of that troubled area should return to peace and independence assured by scrupulous respect for the accords of 1954. I just want to add, before this meeting concludes, that you will find us ready to cooperate 100 per cent with that proposition. Let North Viet-Nam leave its neighbors alone, let it comply scrupulously with the accords of 1954, and the United States, as well as South Viet-Nam, will have no cause for military defensive measures. And no one will be happier than my Government when peace and independence are restored and assured to South Viet-Nam and to Laos, because the peace and the security and the independence of Southeast Asia is the reason, and the only reason, that there is any United States presence in that area.
TEXT OF STATEMENT BY DEFENSE SECRETARY MCNAMARA
AUGUST 7, 1964

(Mr. McNamara was prompted to issue the following statement after questions were raised over the timing of the U.S. air strike and President Johnson's address to the nation concerning the two attacks on the U.S. vessels and the action being taken in retaliation. Mr. Johnson went on the air at 0340 GMT, August 5, and the strike was made at 0515 GMT, an hour and 35 minutes later.)

I recommended to President Johnson that he schedule his announcement of the retaliatory attack against the North Vietnamese torpedo boats and their supporting installation for 11:40 P.M., August 4 (0340 GMT, Aug. 5) because:

One, by that time U.S. Naval aircraft had been in the air on their way to their targets approximately one hour.

Two, Hanoi, through its radar, had then received indications of the attack.

Three, the time remaining before the aircraft were over their targets would not permit the North Vietnamese to move their boats to sea or to alert their forces.

Four, it was important that the people of our country learn of the manner in which their government was responding to the attacks on its vessels from the President rather than from Hanoi which was expected to announce the attack at any moment.

Five, it was desirable that the North Vietnamese government and others be told as soon as possible of the character of the attack -- "Our response for the present will be limited and fitting. We... know... the risks of spreading conflict. We will seek no wider war."

As you know, the North Vietnamese government did not have time to move their forces, our attacking aircraft found the torpedo boats at their docks; the attack was highly successful.

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My Fellow Americans:

As President and Commander in Chief, it is my duty to the American people to report that renewed hostile actions against U.S. ships on the high seas in the Gulf of Tonkin have today required me to order the military forces of the United States to take action in reply.

The initial attack on the destroyer Maddox, on August 2, was repeated today by a number of hostile vessels attacking two U.S. destroyers with torpedoes. The destroyers, and supporting aircraft, acted at once on the orders I gave after the initial act of aggression. We believe at least two of the attacking boats were sunk. There were no U.S. losses.

The performance of commanders and crews in this engagement is in the highest tradition of the United States Navy.

But repeated acts of violence against the armed forces of the United States must be met not only with alert defense, but with positive reply. That reply is being given as I speak to you tonight. Air action is now in execution against gun boats and certain supporting facilities of North Viet-Nam which have been used in these hostile operations.

In the larger sense, this new act of aggression, aimed directly at our own forces, again brings home to all of us in the United States the importance of the struggle for peace and security in Southeast Asia. Aggression by terror against the peaceful villagers of South Viet-Nam has now been joined by open
aggression on the high seas against the United States of America. The determination of all Americans to carry out our full commitment to the people and Government of South Viet-Nam will be redoubled by this outrage.

Yet our response, for the present, will be limited and fitting. We Americans know, although others appear to forget, the risks of spreading conflict -- we still seek no wider war.

I have instructed the Secretary of State to make this position totally clear to friends, to adversaries, and indeed to all. I have instructed Ambassador Stevenson to raise this matter immediately and urgently before the Security Council of the United Nations.

Finally, I have today met with the leaders of both parties in the Congress of the United States, and I have informed them that I shall immediately request the Congress to pass a resolution making it clear that our Government is united in its determination to take all necessary measures in support of freedom, and in defense of peace, in Southeast Asia. I have been given encouraging assurance by these leaders of both parties that such a resolution will be promptly introduced, freely and expeditiously debated, and passed with overwhelming support. And just a few minutes ago I was able to reach Senator Goldwater and I am glad to report he has expressed his support of the statement I am making tonight.

It is a solemn responsibility to have to order even limited military action by forces whose overall strength is as vast and as awesome as those of the United States of America. But it is my considered conviction, shared throughout your Government, that firmness in the right is indispensable today for peace. That firmness will always be measured. Its mission is peace.

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