

2847-X

ACTION~~TOP SECRET/BYEMAN~~

March 30, 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR: MR. KISSINGER

THROUGH: GENERAL HAIG

FROM: JOHN H. HOLDRIDGE

SUBJECT: U. S. Naval Penetration of 12-Mile
Limit in Paracels

At Tab B is a memorandum from the National Military Command Center stating that on March 18-20 -- about two days before the question of U. S. Naval penetration of the 12-mile limit in the Paracels surfaced -- both USAF aircraft and a U. S. Navy vessel penetrated to within three nautical miles of the islands. The stated purpose was to surveil the suspect trawler, possibly the same one for which penetration authority was subsequently requested.

In the light of your subsequent disapproval of the request for authority to penetrate the 12-mile limit, it is interesting to note that the question was already moot when it was brought to your attention. At Tab A is a directive to the Secretary of Defense that would clarify the President's intent on this matter.

Most significant is the fact that the PRC has neither issued its usual "serious warning" nor reacted in any other way of which we are aware. (When we checked with General Hamilton of the NMCC, who was standing in for General Hixon and who in turn checked with General Pursley, as to what PRC "allegation" was referred to by the NMCC memorandum, they suggested that we check with you.) Given the PRC's past ability to detect almost all U. S. air and surface intrusions in the Paracels, I am inclined to interpret its lack of reaction in this instance as their decision not to tag us with this intrusion, possibly particularly because it involved a trawler which we suspect to have been of North Vietnamese origin.

NSS, JCS reviews
completed.

Navy, OSD, USAF reviews
completed per C05106243

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Recommendation:

That you sign the memorandum to the Secretary of Defense at Tab A.

TOP SECRET/BYEMANS

ETS-HK94063
THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

TOP SECRET/BYEMAN

April 3, 1972


MEMORANDUM FOR

THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: U.S. Military Penetration of the
Paracel Islands

To clarify the question of future U.S. military surface and air penetrations of the Paracel Islands as it was discussed at the 40 Committee meeting of March 16, 1972, any such penetrations (a) should be directed toward specific, identifiable targets, and (b) should have the prior clearance of the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs.

Sub-surface submarine penetrations of the 12 nautical mile, but not to exceed 3 nautical miles, limit in the Paracels are not affected by the above, and are approved on a continuing basis as militarily necessary.


Henry A. Kissinger

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SECRET

N M C C

THE NATIONAL MILITARY COMMAND CENTER

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301



THE JOINT STAFF

26 March 1972
1425 EST

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

**Subject: Alleged Intrusion Vicinity Tung Island
(South China Sea)**

The following information is furnished in response to an allegation by the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) of an intrusion into PRC airspace and territorial waters in the vicinity of Tung Island between 18 and 20 March 1972:

a. The only known US ships or aircraft in the area specified were in connection with surveillance of a suspected infiltration trawler.

b. The closest point of approach by a US ship, the USS GEORGE M. MCKENZIE (DD 836), during the period was 3.4 nautical miles.

c. The closest point of approach of US aircraft to the island was 3 nautical miles which occurred on three occasions during the period.

Robert C. Hixon

ROBERT C. HIXON
Brigadier General, USA
Deputy Director for
Operations (NMCC)

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