

Perspectives in Military History

Tonkin Gulf and the Escalation of the Vietnam War

Revised Edition

Dr. Edwin E. Moïse

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On the night of August 4, 1964, two American warships clashed with torpedo boats in the dark waters of the Gulf of Tonkin. The “attack” rapidly pushed President Lyndon Johnson to escalate the tensions between the United States and the communist government of North Vietnam. On Wednesday, August 21, 2019, at 7:15 PM, the U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, will host Dr. Edwin Moïse of Clemson University to present a talk based on the new edition of his book, *Tonkin Gulf and the Escalation of the Vietnam War*. Dr. Moïse will discuss the fateful events of August 4, 1964 by reviewing the extensive primary sources and personal interviews he used, thus concluding no attack on the American ships actually took place.

By August of 1964, the United States government had already sent over 23,000 Soldiers, Airmen, Marines, and Sailors to Vietnam as advisors and security for the South Vietnamese armed forces. On August 4th, the rising tensions came to a head when American Naval forces were allegedly attacked by marauding North Vietnamese torpedo boats. On the 5th, American forces retaliated with airstrikes against military targets in North Vietnam, leading to a rapid escalation of tensions. The information surrounding the events, later called “The Gulf of Tonkin Incident,” led the U.S. Congress and the president to put forth a resolution increasing the American presence to more than 180,000 troops. Looking at the most current evidence and personal interviews, Dr. Edwin Moïse asks, was there really an attack in the first place? Was the escalation based on mistaken intelligence, or was it an excuse for increased American participation in the war?

Dr. Edwin E. Moïse is a professor of history at Clemson University, and earned his B.A. in History from Harvard University. He earned his M.A. in Southeast Asian Studies and his Ph.D. in History from the University of Michigan. Dr. Moïse has published multiple books on the Vietnam War and other Asian topics, including a text book on Modern Chinese History in 2013, *The A to Z of the Vietnam War* in 2005, and *The Myths of Tet: The Most Misunderstood Event of the Vietnam War* in 2017. Dr. Moïse began his academic career as a political and economic historian of China and Vietnam, but has recently specialized in the Vietnam War. Dr. Moïse has spoken for numerous universities, societies, and museums over the past twenty years.

DATE: Wednesday, August 21, 2019

TIME: Doors open at 6:30 PM and the talk begins at 7:15 PM

PLACE: USAHEC, Visitor and Education Center, Multipurpose Room

For updates and any last-minute changes in “Perspectives” lectures, please check:

www.USAHEC.org, our Facebook Page, or call the Information Desk: 717-245-3972.