

Monday, Feb 5, 1968
12:00 noon

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Mr. President:

Herewith Bus Wheeler's first daily report on Khe Sanh.

"Gravel munitions," in para. 7, are the small anti-personnel mines developed for the barrier.

Pres file

W. W. Rostow

~~TOP SECRET~~ attachment

(CM-2968-68 5 Feb 68)

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4(b)
White House Guidelines, Feb. 24, 1983
By hgl, NARA, Date 1-30-92



TOP SECRET
THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

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CM-2968-68
5 February 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Subject: Situation in the Khe Sanh Area

1. At the present time, the situation in the Khe Sanh area is quiet. No enemy contacts have been reported in the area since the attack on Hill 861 ended yesterday at 6:25 PM EST, the details of which are described in the succeeding paragraphs.

2. At 3:00 PM EST yesterday, the Khe Sanh combat base began receiving heavy concentrations of enemy rocket, artillery and mortar fire. Twenty minutes later a force of from 200 to 300 enemy, supported with rocket and mortar fire, launched a ground attack against the US Marine company position on Hill 861, three and one-half miles northwest of the Khe Sanh airstrip. As the fighting grew in intensity, the Khe Sanh combat base provided artillery support, which included the delivery of chemical munitions (GS tear gas) on the enemy. At 4:20 PM EST a small group of the enemy succeeded in penetrating the defensive wire on the perimeter of the position, but the Marine defenders held their positions and drove the enemy off. Approximately thirty minutes later the enemy resumed the assault on Hill 861 while continuing to deliver mortar fire on the Khe Sanh combat base. Approximately one hour later the mortar fire on the Khe Sanh base ended and the attack on Hill 861 began to diminish in intensity. At 6:25 PM EST all action had ended and the Khe Sanh airstrip was open. In the attack on Hill 861, the enemy lost approximately 108 killed; eight of the dead were found inside the perimeter and numerous enemy dead were hanging from the barbed wire on the perimeter of the Marine company position. US Marine casualties, all from the company on Hill 861, were placed at seventeen killed and 44 wounded. Marine units in the Khe Sanh area expended a total of 2,800 rounds of various calibre artillery and mortar rounds in response to enemy shelling of the Khe Sanh base and surrounding area.

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3. Yesterday, US Air Force B-52 bombers flew 45 sorties against enemy targets in the Khe Sanh/DMZ area. This brings the total number of B-52 sorties flown in that area since 15 January 1968 to 566, with approximately 16,980 tons of bombs delivered on the enemy. In these strikes a total of 426 secondary explosions have been observed.

4. US tactical aircraft flew 216 strike sorties in support of US Marine units at Khe Sanh during the past 24 hours (79 US Air Force, 94 US Marine Corps, and 43 US Navy). Bomb damage assessment of the foregoing sorties included three structures destroyed, seven bunkers destroyed and three secondary explosions. Weather prevented complete bomb damage assessment.

5. Airlanded resupply during the period amounted to 12.8 tons.

6. No COFRAM was used during the period; however, these munitions are available and will be considered for use at the appropriate time.

7. General Westmoreland told me this morning at 9:30 AM EST that gravel munitions were emplaced yesterday in areas northeast of Khe Sanh.

8. The weather observation at 3:00 AM EST today in the Khe Sanh area reflects cloudy conditions with visibility at 15 miles. The outlook for the next 15 hours is cloudy with low ceilings, poor visibility, drizzle and fog. From 10:00 PM EST today until 7:00 AM EST tomorrow the outlook is improved, cloudy, but with higher ceilings and visibility at seven miles.

9. Planned operations in support of Khe Sanh:

a. During the next 24 hours a total of 45 US Air Force B-52 aircraft are scheduled to bomb six targets near the Demilitarized Zone. Four of the targets are in the vicinity of Khe Sanh while two targets are adjacent to the Demilitarized Zone approximately 20 miles northeast of Khe Sanh.

b. For the period ending 11:00 PM EST today, 156 tactical sorties are planned in the Khe Sanh area. Some 192 additional sorties are available on call to augment the planned effort. Should the situation require it, additional sorties up to a theoretical total of 623 could be diverted. The actual number which could be employed depends upon the weather in the area and the ability to control the strikes. ~~In addition, the aircraft carrier KITTY HAWK has been alerted to provide additional close air support when requested.~~

10. Enemy units in contact are unknown at this time, but it is believed that the 95C Regiment is targeted on Hills 881 and 861 and the 101st Regiment on Khe Sanh. The exact location of other enemy units believed to be in the area is unknown.

Earle G. Wheeler
EARLE G. WHEELER
Chairman
Joint Chiefs of Staff