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INFORMATION

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Pres file

Friday, March 8, 1968 -- 9:05 a.m.

Mr. President:

At Khe Sanh:

- a second consecutive good weather day;
- 3204 rounds friendly artillery;
95 enemy;
- 321 sorties; 42 B-52's;
- 221 tons delivered;
- 5 U.S. wounded.

W. W. Rostow

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WWRostow:rlm

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By ip/ry, NARA, Date 3-3-92

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Friday, March 8, 1968, 8:45 AM

TEXT OF CABLE FROM GENERAL WESTMORELAND

This is report number thirty-three on the situation in the Khe Sanh/DMZ area for the 24-hour period of March 7, 1968.

Excellent flying conditions continued at Khe Sanh for the second consecutive day, with seven mile visibility. High ceilings and broken clouds favored fixed and rotary wing aircraft support. Fire support elements, suppressing enemy firing positions and firing on targets of opportunity, expended a total of 3204 rounds of mixed artillery and mortar with excellent target coverage reported. Enemy anti-air incidents continued yesterday with eight aircraft fired on and two receiving hits.

Enemy activity was comparatively light at Khe Sanh. Enemy incoming artillery, rocket and mortar rounds comprised most of the enemy activity. A total of 95 rounds of mixed incoming fell during the 24-hour period, causing injuries to five Marines, four of whom required evacuation. As a result of a rocket round impacting on the airstrip, the runway was temporarily closed to fixed wing aircraft. Repairs were completed by 9:00 AM. At 1:45 PM, an air observer spotted several North Vietnamese Army in bunkers and trenches 17 kilometers north of Khe Sanh. A controlled air strike succeeded in killing five North Vietnamese Army.

Elsewhere within northern Quang Tri Province enemy incoming slackened somewhat, but ground activity increased. A total of 10 rounds of mortar fell near Camp Carroll during the period, causing injuries to five. At 11:00 AM yesterday, the Marines in Napoleon/Saline received 12 rounds of artillery, resulting in two killed and six wounded and evacuated. At 8:30 AM this morning, the Dong Ha combat base received 80 rounds of mixed rocket and artillery resulting in 13 killed and 26 wounded.

Significant ground contacts were recorded yesterday in northern I Corps as the Marines, working in conjunction with ARVN elements, made

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contact with an estimated three company size enemy force, 4 1/2 kilometers north of Dong Ha. Contact continued until 7:00 PM with artillery and air strikes being employed. Initial casualty amounted to 115 killed. Initial casualty figures are two killed and 76 wounded.

In a similar all day contact, the Marines engaged an unknown size enemy force on the south bank of the Cua Viet river. Preliminary friendly casualties are 13 killed and 48 wounded. Enemy casualties are unknown. Fifteen North Vietnamese Army bodies were discovered in what appears to have been an enemy first aid shelter just north of the Cua Viet river.

At 10:10 AM yesterday, the Marines fired 23 rounds of mortar on a known enemy firing position 1500 meters north of Con Thien, and observed three secondary explosions. An air observer spotted an enemy active mortar position with North Vietnamese Army occupying trenches and bunkers, 1 1/2 kilometers northeast of Con Thien. A controlled air strike on the position resulted in 13 North Vietnamese Army killed. The mortar position was destroyed along with 200 meters of trench line. Another air observer controlled air strike four kilometers north of Camp Carroll destroyed two mortars and killed three North Vietnamese Army. At 3:10 PM, an air observer adjusted a fire mission on enemy mortar positions, at approximately the same location, resulting in the complete destruction of the mortar positions and the killing of four North Vietnamese Army.

One COFRAM mission was fired expending ten rounds with undetermined results.

Marine aircraft flew 134 sorties in support of Khe Sanh, the Air Force flew 117, and the Navy 70 for a total of 321 sorties. Bomb damage included four gun positions destroyed, 13 secondary explosions, 28 secondary fires, 35 bunkers destroyed, 21 structures destroyed, one mortar position destroyed, six road cuts, and one armored vehicle damaged. Seven ARC LIGHT strikes comprising 42 sorties were flown. Two of the strikes were against close-in targets. From the previous period additional bomb damage includes 14 secondary explosions, 100 foxholes destroyed, and several trench lines destroyed.

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During the period 221.5 short tons of supplies and 21 passengers were flown into Khe Sanh. Fifty-three resupply sorties were flown on March 7. C-130's flew 11 air drops, 42 helicopters air-landed.

For the next 24 hours 268 tactical air sorties are scheduled to support Khe Sanh. Three ARC LIGHT strikes, 18 sorties, are scheduled. The remainder of the force will hit targets in Thua Thien against suspected enemy concentrations. However, the scheduled Thua Thien strikes can be diverted to the Khe Sanh area on two hours notice.

The weather forecast for Khe Sanh is for continued good visibility from late morning on March 8 with skies clear to scattered.