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INFORMATION

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Thursday, February 29, 1968 - 2:30 pm

*for file*

Mr. President:

Herewith Westy's Khe Sanh report:

- weather pretty good;
- some effective bombing;
- resupply 252 tons (excellent);
- enemy digging trenches closer and trying to get on out of the B-52 bomb line, which Westy has moved closer to the base.

W. W. Rostow

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WWRostow:rla

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Authority *OSD la 10-18-78*

By *4/13*, NARA, Date *3-3-92*

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Thursday, February 29, 1968, 10:30 AM

TEXT OF CABLE FROM GENERAL WESTMORELAND

This is report number twenty-five on the situation in the Khe Sanh/DMZ area and covers the 24-hour period of February 28, 1968.

Favorable weather conditions continued yesterday at Khe Sanh with visibility recorded up to five miles. Light winds and scattered clouds provided optimum flying conditions for fixed and rotary wing aircraft. Logistic resupply of Khe Sanh was executed without difficulty.

For the most part, enemy activity against Khe Sanh again consisted of shelling. A total of 186 rounds of mixed artillery, rockets and mortars were received in the area. Incident to the shelling, artillery rounds struck an ammo bunker, destroying 36 - 106 MM high explosive and 30 - 106 MM armor piercing rounds. Injuries resulting from incoming rounds were nine wounded (minor).

Ground contacts during the reporting period were limited to small unit contacts. At 9:30 AM two rounds of recoilless rifle were received at positions held by the 1st Battalion, 26th Marines, injuring one Marine. At 11:10 AM Marines fired a 106 MM mission at an North Vietnamese Army bunker located 800 meters southeast of Khe Sanh resulting in the destruction of the bunker. At 2:00 PM, Marines observed one secondary fire and heard small arms ammo exploding as a controlled air strike destroyed an enemy 50 caliber position one kilometer south of Hill 881. A bridge located three kilometers southeast of Khe Sanh was damaged as a result of an air strike. An air observer controlled air strike on an enemy automatic weapons position about three kilometers southeast of Lang Vei and destroyed the weapon. Another air strike was run on an enemy bunker located about the same location; it was destroyed, one secondary explosion was observed, and one North Vietnamese Army killed. At 4:00 PM an air observer spotting a group of North Vietnamese Army gathered at one kilometer southeast of Khe Sanh, ran an air strike and killed one. An artillery mission fired on three North Vietnamese Army manning an anti-aircraft position, two kilometers northeast of Khe Sanh village, destroying the position and confirming three enemy killed. All available arms were employed to suppress enemy fire and to destroy their positions as 2074 rounds of mixed artillery and mortar were expended during the period in support of the Khe Sanh area.

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

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Small unit contacts and enemy incoming comprised the bulk of significant activity reported in areas neighboring Khe Sanh. Elements at Camp Carroll received 10 rounds of mortar during the period. Gio Linh and A-3 shared 15 and 32 rounds of artillery respectively. No casualties or damages were reported in either instance. The 3rd Battalion, 1st Marines in Operation Saline received 32 rounds of enemy artillery with three additional artillery rounds of enemy artillery falling on the 1st AMTRAC Battalion positions. One Marine received minor injuries resulting from nine artillery rounds falling at Dong Ha. Twelve rounds of enemy artillery fell one kilometer west of C-4 inflicting negative casualties and damage.

Significant ground activity in northern Quang Tri Province included activity in Operation Napoleon as a combat patrol from K Company, 3rd Battalion, 1st Marines engaged an enemy force in a fortified position six kilometers west from the mouth of the Cua Viet. Utilizing available air, naval gunfire and artillery support, they succeeded in destroying five bunkers while killing an equal number of North Vietnamese Army. In the contact one Marine was killed and 16 wounded; activity ended at 5:00 PM. In Operation Kentucky, a small unit from a company, 1st Battalion, 4th Marines engaged three North Vietnamese Army manning a machine gun position. When action closed, three North Vietnamese Army were killed and three crew served weapons were captured. No friendly casualties were recorded.

Enemy attacks on convoys continued yesterday as two convoys were fired upon north of Dong Ha, resulting in two sailors killed and 16 wounded. At 12:30 PM yesterday, four kilometers southwest of the rock pile, a helicopter received heavy ground fire and exploded upon contact with the ground. Latest reports indicate that of 23 passengers aboard, there was only one survivor.

There were two COFRAM missions fired as follows: three rounds resulting in five killed. Thirteen rounds were fired on North Vietnamese Army massing in Operation Scotland, good target coverage but with undetermined results .

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A total of 329 tactical air sorties were flown in support of Khe Sanh. The Marine aircraft wing flew 129 sorties. Bomb Damage Assessment included one secondary explosion, three secondary fires, one automatic weapons position destroyed and one damaged, and six North Vietnamese Army killed. The Air Force flew 143 sorties and the Navy flew 57, with damage listed as 17 secondary explosions, 20 road cuts, three trucks destroyed, two guns silenced, 16 secondary fires, one automatic weapons position destroyed, 41 military structures destroyed, and two North Vietnamese Army killed (15 probable). B-52, ARC LIGHT, flew eight strikes (48 sorties) in the Niagara area. Headquarters 3rd Marines reports that strikes on one target produced three large secondary explosions. Another target produced continuous secondary explosions for two hours after the strike. Four of the ARC LIGHT strikes scheduled for February 29 are emergency targets and are less than the normal three kilometers from friendly forces. The close-in strikes are proving to be most profitable as the enemy has concentrated forces within the three kilometer sanctuary. Headquarters 3rd Marines reports that the shock waves created by the close-in strikes do not damage structures in friendly areas. On the basis of four close-in drops so far, the risk to personnel is negligible.

Air resupply during the period amounted to 252 short tons. Medical supplies amounted to three short tons. In addition, 112 passengers were landed at Khe Sanh. Air delivery sorties totaled 39 on February 28, sixteen C-130 aircraft completed 10 air drops, and six air-landed at the airfield. One C-123 aircraft landed at the field. Twenty-two Marine helicopters delivered passengers and cargo.

For the next period there are 282 tactical air sorties scheduled in support of the Khe Sanh area. There will be seven ARC LIGHT strikes (42 sorties) flown in the Niagara area.

Shortly after noon on February 28, cloud ceilings raised to 2500 feet and visibilities improved. Clouds became scattered after 2:00 PM and visibility increased to 10 miles. Low clouds and fog again formed after midnight producing ceilings at 1000 feet or less and visibilities of from zero to four miles. These persisted through 9:00 AM February 29. The forecast is for continued cloudy conditions with fog during the morning hours of February 29 with cloudiness decreasing rapidly and visibility improving after noon. Low clouds and fog will form after 10:00 PM and persist into the early morning hours of March 1.

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