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Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

TEXT OF THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE
TO THE UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES
IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

The relief of the forces which have held the base at Khe Sanh is an occasion for me to express the pride and confidence I feel in those who are carrying forward the Nation's struggle against aggression in Southeast Asia.

Side by side with your South Vietnamese comrades -- and our other fighting allies -- you have taken the full initial weight of the enemies winter-spring offensive; and you have now seized the initiative.

The enemy intended to destroy the Constitutional government of South Vietnam and its armed forces. In this he failed.

The enemy intended to over-run the base at Khe Sanh. For this purpose he emplaced around that base at least two divisions of North Vietnamese regulars. Less than 6,000 U. S. Marines and South Vietnamese Rangers -- backed by our tremendous air capacity -- pinned them down, kept them away from the populated areas at the peak of the winter-spring offensive; and imposed heavy casualties.

Now the seige of Khe Sanh is lifted.

But clearly the fighting in South Vietnam is not yet at an end.

The enemy may throw new forces into the battle.

You, I know, intend to continue to move forward.

But by your gallant and skillful support for the brave people and armed forces of South Vietnam, you have brought nearer the time of peace in that suffering land and in all of Southeast Asia.

As we seek now to find through negotiations an honorable peace in Vietnam, I wish you to know that we are grateful for what you have already accomplished and will be counting on you more than ever, until the blessed day when the guns fall silent.

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