

Allies Move Into Khe Sanh, Giving Marines Needed Rest

KHE SANH, Vietnam (AP) — U.S. air cavalrymen and South Vietnamese paratroopers moved into this combat base Saturday and gave its 6,000 Marine and South Vietnamese defenders their first respite from war since the enemy began its siege Jan. 21.

Newly arrived troops fanned out into the jungled hills around Khe Sanh in search of withdrawing North Vietnamese forces and met virtually no resistance. Hardly an enemy shell fell on the base, which had been pounded daily by mortars, rockets and artillery shells.

Some Marines stripped and gave themselves their first complete washdown in months, under a gleaming sun. Others did their laundry. Work details began cleaning up the messy rubble of structures blasted down by enemy shelling.

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Khe Sanh is still surrounded—but now by friendly forces.

It was not known here whether the enemy withdrawal was a peace gesture by Hanoi. U.S. military men said the pullout was forced on the enemy by the 20,000-man offensive—Operation Pegasus—launched last Monday to relieve the base and continuous pounding from the air.

In Da Nang, Lt. Gen. Robert H. Cushman Jr.

The paratroopers wandered aimlessly about the edge of the base until someone directed them to an emplacement of South Vietnamese rangers on one side of the perimeter.

Little more than an hour after they arrived, the paratroopers were settled in with 1,000 or so Vietnamese soldiers who had weathered the 11-week siege.

Then a company of U.S. Air Cavalry troops was landed on a grassy slope on the far side of the airstrip.

With nothing to disturb them, the Americans pulled off their shirts and lounged in the sunlight.

By Saturday, the air cavalry had air lifted troops onto mountains and ridge lines on the north and west sides of the base.

To the east, Marines were still atop Hills 861 and 881, positions they have long held. To the

south, Marines on Hill 471, for which they fought Thursday and Friday, moved off and were replaced by cavalry troopers.

To many Marines inside the base, this signaled the end of a fearful way of life they had endured since the big guns of North Vietnamese Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap's army opened up on Khe Sanh.

Pic Robert M. Hatfield of Chicago, who has been in Khe Sanh eight months, said: "I don't know what this is going to mean for Khe Sanh, but I hope it means we're getting out of here."

Navy Corpsman Rod Falia of Garden City, N.Y., said: "It's a lot of strain off the base."

Lance Cpl. Henry M. Robinson, 20, of Washington, D.C., about time. This is going to take raised a C ration can to his lips.

"Did you ever drink grapefruit juice to celebrate?" he

Westmoreland, LBJ Huddle On Problems

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In Saigon the U.S. and South

Vietnamese military commands reported this action elsewhere: —Viet Cong gunners shelled three allied airfields and three

government military posts Friday night and Saturday but casualties were light.

—U.S. Air Force B52 bombers

hit Friday night and again Saturday at suspected North Vietnamese positions near Kontum in the central highlands.

April 7, 1968

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Borne to the White House by helicopter just after 8 a.m. EST the American commander in Vietnam was met by Johnson on the White House lawn—a tranquil and sunny spot, seemingly far removed from the second day's looting and arson touched off by the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in Memphis on Thursday.

Another conferee, at a luncheon in which Westmoreland briefed top officials and White House staff men, was a presidential ambassador at large, W. Averell Harriman. As Johnson's personal representative, Harriman would conduct any talks looking toward a cease-fire or settlement in Southeast Asia.

White House press secretary George Christian, in a brief account of Johnson's activities during the day, made no direct

reference to any peace conversations. He did, however, mention that the President and the general discussed, among other military appointments, "the matter of a military adviser or advisers for Ambassador Harriman, for anything he might be called upon to do."

This reference gained meaning for another overseas indication that North Vietnam is preparing for a direct contact. The pro-communist Japanese Denpa news agency said that Hanoi has appointed its representatives to establish contact with United States representatives. Soviet sources in London said two days ago plans were afoot for a meeting in Moscow within a few days.

By Christian's account, much of Saturday's White House parley was devoted to discussion of a successor to Westmoreland, who will step out of the Vietnam command in July to become Army chief of staff, and to the filling of other military posts now vacant or soon to need filling.

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In Da Nang, Lt. Gen. Robert H. Cushman Jr., commander of Marine forces in Vietnam, said he could not discount the possibility the enemy troops had moved to the vicinity of Quang Tri, a provincial capital about 35 miles east of Khe Sanh and near the sea coast.

"We don't know if he will attack Quang Tri or not," Cushman added. "We have the initiative but he always has the capability of hiding in the jungle and then moving out in one night into the flatlands for an attack."

Maj. Gen. John F. Tolsen, commander of the 1st Air Cavalry Division, said he had reports that one of the two North Vietnamese divisions had withdrawn to regroup. Another Army spokesman said this division apparently is the 304th, which is believed to have withdrawn across the border into territory controlled by the pro-Communist Pathet Lao in Laos, after taking a beating from U.S. air strikes.

The enemy withdrawal from the Khe Sanh sector coincided with an apparent slackening off in ground fighting elsewhere in Vietnam.

The number of missions flown over North Vietnam dwindled Friday, with attacks centering in areas 130 miles north of the demilitarized zone. This appeared to be a further curtailment of the already limited attacks ordered by President Johnson.

First friendly troops to reach the Khe Sanh base were about 500 South Vietnamese paratroopers, brought in aboard U.S. Army helicopters.

Then came troopers of the U.S. 1st Air Cavalry Division who had pushed their way along Highway 9 from Ca Lu, 15 miles away.

The first troop-carrying choppers touched down at 1:40 p.m. Six diminutive paratroopers dashed for cover in trenches dug alongside the airstrip. Within minutes other helicopters followed, settling briefly on the strip and discharging troops.

The paratroopers soon got their bearings and realized there was no reason to remain in the trenches.

The incoming artillery, rockets and mortars—which reached 1,300 rounds a day at Khe Sanh—slackened in the past week.

Slowly and in no particular formation, the Vietnamese soldiers gathered up their gear and began straggling through the barbed wire. Long awaited though the relief forces had been, none of the 5,000 U.S. Marines at the base stepped forward to greet them. Some stood atop bunkers and watched silently.

Handshake Symbolizes End Of Marine Job At Khe Sanh

By ROBERT D. OHMAN

KHE SANH, Vietnam (AP) —

There was a noise outside the barbed wire on the perimeter and the two Marines jumped up. Then came the voice.

"We're from the 2nd of the 7th, the Garryowen outfit," it said with a slight Spanish accent.

Sgt. Miguel Santaella of Canovanas, Puerto Rico, was standing there in his air cavalryman's gear.

Lance Cpl. Lawrence Pelletier of Springfield, Mass., and Pfc. Don Chandler of Bell Gardens,

Calif., reached across the wire and shook his hand.

New Assignment Due

The handshake symbolized the end of a job for the Marines at Khe Sanh and a new one for the men of the U.S. 1st Air Cavalry Division, particularly the 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment — Gen. George Custer's old outfit.

Sgt. Santaella was one of the first Army men to reach Khe Sanh by the overland route.

A 4,000-man brigade of the cavalry division will take over Khe Sanh with its troop-carrying and rocket-firing helicop-

ters, which now replace the horses of Custer's day.

One of the helicopters landed inside the perimeter near the command post and there two Floridians talked about the change of command at Khe Sanh, under siege of North Vietnamese artillery since Jan. 21.

Col. Hubert S. Campbell of Coral Gables, Fla., shook hands with Col. David Lownds of Plantation, Fla. Campbell commands the air cavalry's 3rd Brigade. Lownds is the 26th Marine Regiment commander here.

Take Over Monday

Brig. Gen. Oscar E. Davis of

Tucson, Ariz., assistant commander of the cavalry division, said the men are set to take over from the Marines Monday.

A company of air cavalrymen landed at Khe Sanh Saturday by helicopter in the first linkup.

The men who arrived with Sgt. Santaella in the vanguard bedded down outside the Khe Sanh perimeter Sunday night and awaited guidance Monday morning through the base's outer minefields.

Then the 5,000 Marines, who have occupied Khe Sanh since last spring, will be off for another assignment.

The Leathernecks "will be very happy to be out of here," Col. Lownds said. "They are aggressive. They want to get out and go.

DM The Job

"Khe Sanh has been good to me, but I have no particular feeling about leaving as long as they leave me with my regiment. I'll go anywhere they send me.

"If I have any regrets, I'll think of one of the days when we had 1,100 incoming rounds and that should make me lose them....

"My kids have won this battle.

"My mission was to hold. We have held with a minimum of casualties. Now, we've got another mission, and that's our new job."

For security reasons, Col. Lownds could not say what that job is.

No Foreign Planes

Although the Soviet Union has one of the largest air transport systems in the world today, no foreign airliner was allowed to fly to Moscow until 1956, according to the Encyclopaedia Britannica.

Associated Press correspondent Peter Arnett reported from Khe Sanh the first barrage, 12 rounds, wounded three Marines.

Though the sandbagged bunkers are deep, 20 were wounded by enemy shells Friday.

Like Con Thien, which survived a month-long artillery siege last September, Khe Sanh is essentially a defensive position. The Marines are forbidden to invade and engage the North Vietnamese on their home grounds.

The movement of U.S. Army troops to reinforce allied lines in the critical northern sector was the second announced this week.

Military sources disclosed Tuesday the 1st Brigade of the 1st Air Cavalry Division had moved from south of Da Nang to the Hue-Phu Bai area, only about 50 miles below the demilitarized zone.

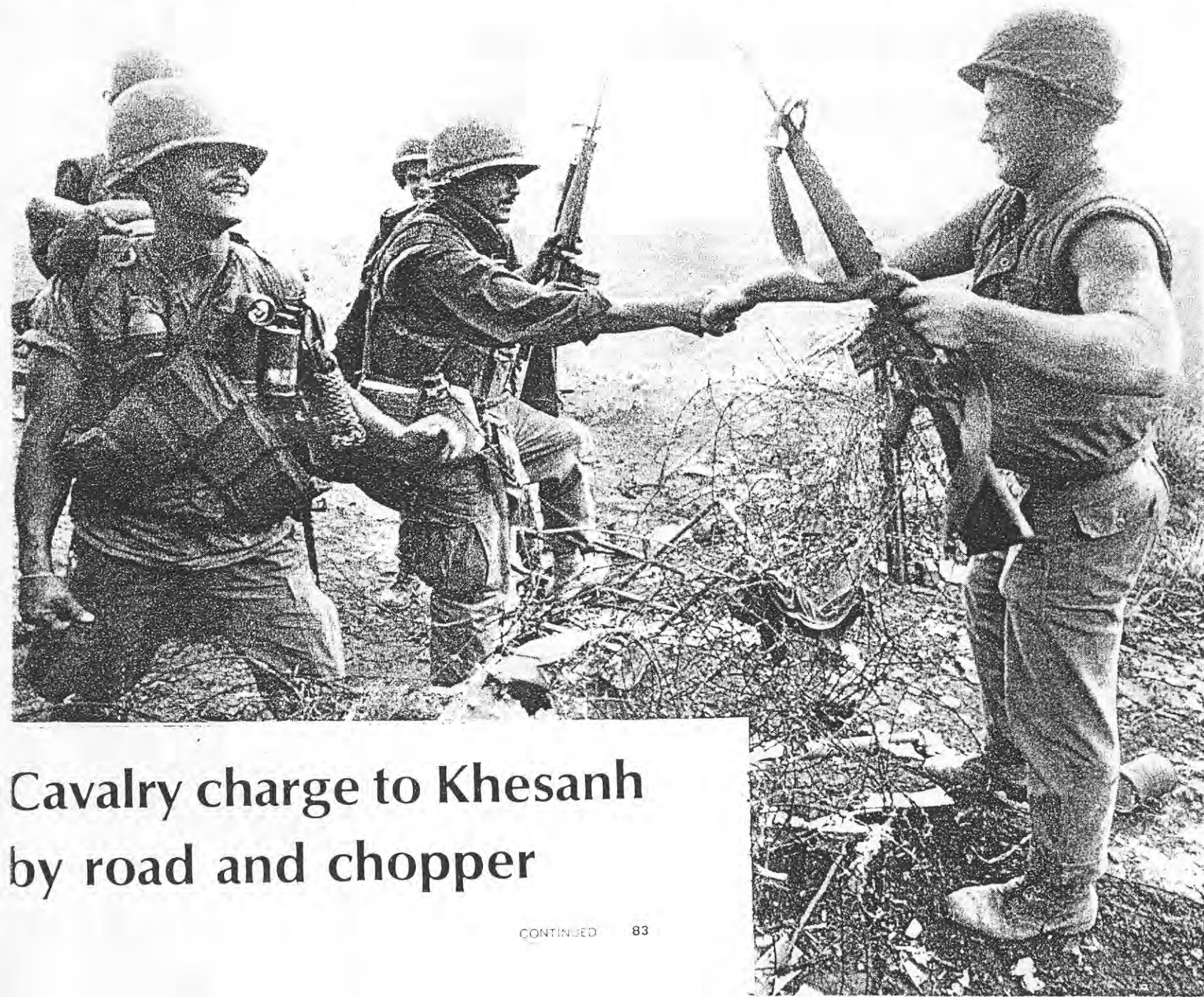
The 3,500 new arrivals are members of the division's 2nd Brigade. Both depend on helicopters for high mobility. Military authorities would not say exactly where the 2nd Brigade was located.

The allies now have about 62,000 men—10,000 GIs, 40,000 Marines and 12,000 South Vietnamese infantrymen—in the critical upper edge of the 1st Corps Area adjoining the DMZ. The Red high command is believed to have from 32,000 to 40,000 in the region.

U.S. Air Force spokesmen said jet squadrons flew strikes against North Vietnam as usual Saturday, though they were again hampered by monsoon clouds. Sixty missions were flown over the North Friday.

It was disclosed belatedly that

Over the wire, the link-up that lifts the siege



Cavalry charge to Khesanh
by road and chopper

Siege Lifted At Khe Sanh

KHE SANH, Vietnam (AP) — The 76-day enemy siege of Khe Sanh was officially declared lifted Friday. U.S. Marines and helicopter-borne Army cavalrymen pushed Saturday toward a reported North Vietnamese regimental headquarters south of the Marine combat base.

The 20,000-man allied relief column that approached almost unopposed to within a mile of the base fanned out on three sides of it in search of vanishing North Vietnamese.

The sweep could take them all the way to the Laotian border, less than 10 miles away, in efforts to root out the 7,000 troops said to remain of an enemy force once estimated at 20,000. North Vietnam uses Laos as a staging area for attacks along South Vietnam's borders.

The U.S. Command said helicopter gunships of the 1st Air Cavalry Division, crisscrossing the skies ahead of the ground troops, killed 50 North Vietnamese late Friday near the town of Khe Sanh, two miles south of the Marine base.

Earlier, cavalrymen fought 150 enemy troops four miles east of the town. Nine enemy and one American were reported killed.

The town was made an enemy command post after South Vietnamese troops and a small unit of U.S. Marines abandoned it last January under heavy siege. Ten thousand civilians, mostly Montagnard tribesmen, fled the town when fighting broke out. Many are in refugee camps in the coastal lowlands.

The allied relief column made no immediate attempt to enter the Khe Sanh base. Enemy gunners zeroed in on the outpost with 110 rounds of artillery and mortar fire.

are pouring down out of the hills, and those sabers want to stop the bombing

41 North Viets Killed in Bitter Bong Son Fight

By AL FASOLDT

S&S Vietnam Bureau Chief

BONG SON, Vietnam—Fighting flared on the Bong Son Plain Wednesday and Thursday as U.S. soldiers clashed with fresh troops of a North Vietnamese regiment. At least 41 enemy regulars were killed.

The bitter fighting appeared to mark the start of a new Communist offensive on the coastal plain between Binh Dinh and Chu Lai.

Early reports on U.S. losses were sketchy. It was confirmed that one American was wounded Wednesday, however.

Three companies of the 1st Air Cav. Div.—one of the veteran U.S. divisions here—battled a force from the 2nd North Vietnamese Army Regt. four miles southwest of Bong Son.

The 1st Cav. troopers also hit a North Vietnamese replacement company previously unknown in the area.

The 2nd NVA Regt., hit hard by 1st Cav. forces last year, had moved to mountains to the north and was believed to be in the northern foothills until Wednesday's fight.

In another action, heavy enemy fire Wednesday pinned down 25th Inf. Div. soldiers for six hours just five miles from their base camp at Cu Chi.

The U.S. troops were lifted into a landing zone shortly after 9 a.m. Viet Cong snipers hit the troops as they landed near the Filhol plantation and enemy reinforcements trapped the Americans until late afternoon.

Troops of another 25th Div. brigade reached the battleground at 4 p.m. and were also hit by enemy fire. The Army said medical evacuation and supply helicopters were forced away by the fire. The Communists withdrew about 7:30 p.m.

Eight Americans were reported killed and 44 wounded. Enemy losses were four killed.

U.S. Marines At Khe Sanh Being Relieved

SAIGON (AP) — American troops combing jungled hills for remnants of enemy forces that had besieged Khe Sanh for 11 weeks reported Monday killing 118 North Vietnamese in a series of fights two to 10 miles from the sandbagged fortress.

Units of the U.S. 1st Air Cavalry Division, with troop-carrying and rocket-firing helicopters, moved up to the base in northwestern South Vietnam on Sunday to relieve the Marines who have been holding it since last spring. The Marines are moving out to fight elsewhere.

Aerial observers near Khe Sanh spotted two enemy truck convoys and a tracked vehicle—presumably a tank, and reported at least four of the trucks destroyed.

With the siege of Khe Sanh broken, fighting developed elsewhere in the northern sector of the country. South Vietnamese rangers said they killed 114 North Vietnamese troops near Hue on Sunday while losing five killed and 27 wounded.

Enemy activity was reported along the cross-country highway leading from the A Shau Valley near Laos to Hue, which U.S. commanders say may be the next target of a North Vietnamese push.

Enemy mortarmen blasted at the airstrip inside the battered Citadel at Hue, while scattered battles were reported around Hue itself and near Da Nang.

GIs, Reds In Shootout

S&S Vietnam Bureau

BONG SON — U.S. cavalry troopers walked into a North Vietnamese army company command post Thursday and shot it out with the surprised enemy soldiers.

"They were standing around smoking cigarettes," said the U.S. point man. "We saw each other at the same time and opened up."

A company of the 1st Air Cav. Div. was led to the command post by a North Vietnamese defector. The defector said he led the Americans to a command post of the 2nd NVA Regt. and a battalion headquarters.

The point man said his company duelled with the more numerous North Vietnamese then "got the hell out."