

00191567

30/100

3480

Ser:

1 JUL 1967

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] upon removal of basic letter

SECOND ENDORSEMENT on CG, 3d Marine Ltr 3/HRB/lms 3100 ser: 284367 of 9Jun67

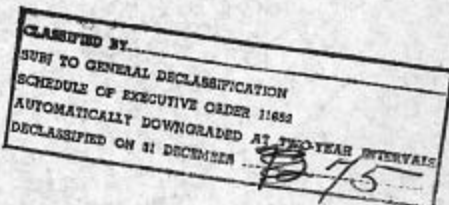
From: Commanding General, III Marine Amphibious Force
To: Commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (Attn: J343)
Subj: Combat Operations After Action Report, Battle of Khe Sanh

1. Forwarded.

2. The Khe Sanh battle was the first major test of the M-16 rifle in combat by the Marine Corps. The vast majority of the officers and men who participated in this battle were unstinting in their praise of the weapon. This Headquarters considers the M-16 rifle to more than meet the requirements that have been shown to exist in Vietnam for a light-weight, hard-hitting, reliable basic infantry rifle.

R. G. OWENS JR.
CHIEF OF STAFF

Copy to:
CFC
CMC
CG FMFPAC
MACJ2
MAC2



RETURN TO CLASSIFIED CONTROL CENTER

MCS LOG # 68792
MCS CPY # 1 OF 1



Copy 6 of 10 copies

298967

3 JUN 67

3480

25 June 1967

(UNCLASSIFIED UPON REMOVAL OF BASIC LETTER)

FIRST ENDORSEMENT on CO, 3d Marines ltr 3/PFB/lws 3100 ser: 284367 of 9 Jun 67

From: Commanding General, 3d Marine Division (Rein), MAF
To: Commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (Attn: 3343)
Via: Commanding General, III Marine Amphibious Force

Subj: Combat Operations After Action Report, Battle of Khe Sanh

Ref: (b) COMUSMACV Inst 535-8 of 2 Apr 66

1. Readdressed and forwarded in accordance with reference (b).
2. The favorable performance of the M-16 rifle in this battle is worthy of note. Comments in paragraph 13.e. indicate that the light weight of the weapon and the ability of troops to carry more ammunition than they could for the M-14 were important factors in the success of the attack.

e. J. ROBINSON JR.

3rd MARINES
10-002015-67

HEADQUARTERS
3d Marines
3d Marine Division (Reinf), FMF
WFO San Francisco, 96602

284367

3/RRB/lws
3100
09 June 1967

From: Commanding Officer
To: Commanding General, 3d Marine Division (Reinf), FMF

Subj: Combat Operations After Action Report

Ref: (a) Maps; Vietnam; AMS Series L7014 1:50,000 Sheets 6942 III, IV

1. Code Name. The Battle of KHE SANH, Search and Destroy
2. Dates of Operation. 240001H April to 131500H May 1967
3. Location. HUONG HOA District, QUANG TRI Province, Republic of Vietnam.
4. Task Organization

3d Marines (-) (Reinf)

Col J.P. LANIGAN (24Apr-13May)

SOP KHE SANH

Col J.P. LANIGAN (26Apr-13May)

Base Defense/Reserve

Company B, 1st Bn, 9th Marines	(24-27Apr)
Company F, 2d Bn, 3d Marines	(27Apr-13May)
Company E, 2d Bn, 9th Marines	(1-12May)
Company C, 1st Bn, 26th Marines	(4-5May)
1st Bn, 26th Marines	(12-13May)

3d Bn, 3d Marines (KHE SANH)

LtCol G. WILDER (25Apr-13May)

Company B, 1st Bn, 9th Marines	(25-27Apr)
Company K, 3d Bn, 3d Marines	(25-27Apr)
Company K, 3d Bn, 9th Marines	(25Apr-13May)
Company M, 3d Bn, 3d Marines	(27Apr-13May)
Company M, 3d Bn, 9th Marines	(27Apr-13May)
Company F, 2d Bn, 3d Marines	(1-3May)
Company C, 1st Bn, 26th Marines	(5-13May)
Company A, 1st Bn, 26th Marines	(12-13May)

2d Bn, 3d Marines

LtCol E.R. DELONG (26Apr-12May)

Company E, 2d Bn, 3d Marines	(26Apr-12May)
Company F, 2d Bn, 3d Marines	(3-12May)
Company G, 2d Bn, 3d Marines	(26Apr-12May)

RETURN TO CLASSIFIED CONTROL CENTER

MCS LOG # 68292
MCS CPY # 1 OF 1

6 of 13

Company H, 2d Bn, 3d Marines

(26Apr-12May)

1st Bn, 26th Marines

LtCol D.E. NEWTON (11-13May)

Company A, 1st Bn, 26th Marines

(11-12May)(13May)

Company B, 1st Bn, 26th Marines

(11-13May)

Company C, 1st Bn, 26th Marines

(13May)

Company D, 1st Bn, 26th Marines

(11-13May)

Company E, 2d Bn, 9th Marines

(12-13May)

5. Supporting Arms

a. Artillery Forces

(1) Opcon

Battery F (Reinf), 2d Bn, 12th Marines
KHE SANH Artillery Group

Capt G. GOLDEN (24-27Apr)

Capt G. GOLDEN (27-29Apr)

Maj R. WHEELLOCK (29Apr-11May)

Capt G. GOLDEN (12-13May)

Battery F (Reinf), 2d Bn, 12th Marines

(27Apr-13May)

Battery B, 2d Bn, 12th Marines

(27Apr-11May)

Battery A, 1st Bn, 12th Marines

(13May)

(2) General Support

Battery B, 2d Bn, 94th Artillery (USA)

(24Apr-13May)

b. Employment

Battery F supported the operation from its beginning to end with six 105mm howitzers, two 155mm howitzers, and three 4.2" mortars. The battery generally provided fire support for one battalion (3/3) during the operation; however, on one occasion it was required to support two battalions (26-27Apr), until Battery B was laid and ready to fire. Battery B supported 2/3 during most of its participation in the operation. Both batteries were required to provide fire support for the CAC unit in the KHE SANH area and the LANG VEI Special Forces Camp.

Initially F/2/12 (Reinf) was the control agency for artillery in the KHE SANH area; however, with the arrival of B/1/12, a provisional artillery group was formed to accommodate the control of the increased fire support forces. The artillery group remained as the control agency for the duration of the operation.

Battery F displaced to a forward support position with its two 155mm howitzers on 5 May. The detachment of 4.2" mortars was helilifted to Hill 881S on the same day. F/2/12 returned to the base on 11 May; the 4.2" mortars remained at their forward position for the duration of the operation.

Artillery during the operation was called upon to provide fire support in coordination with air strikes. Although artillery was unable in all cases to destroy the heavier constructed enemy fortifications on the three objectives, it was used extensively for prep fires, to suppress enemy mortar fire, to attack enemy troops in the open, and to provide nighttime fire support and H&I's. While air support assumed the predominant offensive fire support role, artillery provided the bulk of the defensive fire support. However, this does not preclude the massive volume of fires delivered by artillery to neutralize and destroy point targets in the battle area. By final count the two batteries and the two 155mm howitzers delivered over 24,000 rounds in support of the operation.

c. Ammunition Expenditures

105MM EXPENDITURES

DATE	FIRE MISSIONS			H&I	TOTAL
	HE	WP	TOTAL		
24APR	559	101	660	0	660
25	146	123	269	76	345
26	890	186	1076	280	1356
27	521(10)*	111	632	163	795
28	957	11	968	107	1075
29	1830(277)	52	1882	265	2147
30	1177(12)	508	1685	240	1925
01MAY	1191(24)	56	1247	72	1319
2	2567	72	2639	274	2913
3	810(247)	43(23)	853	163	1016
4	1602(40)	179(28)	1781	321	2102
5	89(27)	44	133	354	487
6	389	68	457	516	973
7	401(30)	46(1)	447	619	1066
8	250(48)	48	298	834	1132
9	656(100)	38	694	357	1051
10	1020(5)	54	1074	400	1474
11	142	32	174	480	654
12	108	37	145	361	506
13	137	34	171	305	476
TOTAL	15442	1843	17285	6187	23472

* Unobserved Fire Missions

Total 155mm expenditure was 1365 rounds of which 992 rounds were expended in fire missions and 373 rounds were expended as H&I's.

Total missions for the operation were 1688 of which 460 were observed, 87 were unobserved, and 1141 were H&I's.

6. Air Support

a. First Marine Aircraft Wing (24Apr-13May)

Marine Aircraft Group 16
Marine Aircraft Group 11
Marine Aircraft Transport Squad VMGR-252

7th Air Force (24Apr-13May)
Det, 20th Tactical Air Support System (Project Tigerhound)

b. KHE SANH possesses a runway capable of supporting helicopters and fixed wing aircraft up to C-130 in size. This facility in proximity to the battle area greatly aided the engaged forces by allowing aircraft for resupply, med evac, observation, or gunship support to be readily available. Rotary wing and AO aircraft were never more than twenty minutes away from request time to on station. The minimum amount of aircraft available on a twenty-four hour basis was two O1D aircraft, two gunships, two H-34's, and two CH-46's supplemented as the situation required by the Wing and CTG 79.5. In addition, the ability of the airstrip to receive C-130 aircraft allowed large numbers of troops and large amounts of supplies to be transported to and staged at KHE SANH thus increasing the reinforcing and support capability of the controlling headquarters.

c. Although the KHE SANH area is generally frequented by early morning ground fog and afternoon thundershowers, weather did not become a highly critical factor. It was estimated that satisfactory flying conditions prevailed during eighty percent of the operational time frame. When adverse weather conditions did occur, emergency missions were generally flown despite the weather.

d. A total of nine tactical troop lifts of platoon size or larger and the displacement of three 4.2" mortars were undertaken by helicopter during the course of the operation. In addition two companies and a battalion command group were moved administratively by rotary wing from the Camp CARROLL/THON SON IAM area to KHE SANH on 25 April. Two full battalions, three additional companies, and one battery were moved to KHE SANH by fixed wing, and one full battalion and four additional companies were transported from KHE SANH by fixed wing. Furthermore, tactical insertions and extractions of recon units were also made by KHE SANH based rotary wing aircraft.

e. Resupply was flown into the KHE SANH ISA by fixed wing. Resupply of units in the field was accomplished by helicopter as the only means of transportation. Resupply was normally accomplished on a twice-a-day basis, all the requested supplies being staged prior to the commencement of resupply. Priority or emergency requests were fulfilled as they occurred.

f. Casualty evacuation from the field was accomplished by CH-46 and H-34 aircraft. Casualty evacuation from KHE SANH to permanent

medical facilities such as DONG HA, PHU RAI, DA NANG, or the USS Princeton was accomplished principally by C-130 aircraft with emergencies by CH-46.

g. Qualified aerial observers provided aerial reconnaissance, direct-ed tactical airstrikes, and called in artillery fires. In addition to the two AO's permanently based at KHE SANH, further support was provided by detachments from DONG HA and PHU RAI and by available gunships. AO's were on station over the battle area and to the west from sunrise to sunset and at night when the situation required.

h. Gunship support was provided by two gunships provided to KHE SANH on a rotating basis. These two gunships were augmented by as many as four additional gunships when the situation required. Gunships were employed as escorts, AO's, and to a limited degree as close support.

i. Flareships and "Spooky" aircraft were provided to KHE SANH on a nightly basis to provide illumination and fire support for night defense.

j. Maximum use was made of fixed wing aircraft to strike targets inaccessible to artillery fire or targets for which artillery was not adequate. Such strikes were employed to neutralize and destroy enemy positions in preparation for infantry assaults. These strikes were controlled by TAC(A)'s, FAC's, AO's and at times, by gunships. The maximum number of sorties in one day was 166 during the period of intense supporting arms preparation of Objectives 2 and 3. Total ordnance dropped in direct support of the operation totaled over 3,000,000 lbs of explosives, not to include TPQ-10's or Arclights. Total casualties inflicted on the enemy by air support were 252 KIA (C), 185 KIA (P), and 1 Returnee who was sighted and picked up solely by air. Two aircraft were downed in support of the operation - a CH-46 by ground fire and a H-34 due to mechanical failure; the former was unrecoverable, the latter was extracted by a CH-53, all passengers were safely extracted in both instances. In addition, two other C-46 sustained major damage during an attempted recon extraction but were able to return to KHE SANH; the pilot of one was gravely wounded during the flight and died shortly thereafter. Several other rotary wing and AO aircraft received minor to moderate damage from ground fire, but all were able to return to permanent repair facilities under their own power.

k. The following statistics relevant to close air support were compiled for the period 24 April to 12 May. These totals do not reflect TPQ-10 or Arclight tonnage.

DATE	MAPAM(lbs)	EXPLOSIVES(lbs)	250	500	750	1000	2000	TOTAL ORDN(lbs)	SORTIE
24 Apr	5,250	1,250	5	"	"	"	"	6,500	8
25	18,000	15,000	60	"	"	"	"	33,000	12
26	21,000	37,000	148	"	"	"	"	58,000	20
27	18,000	118,000	40	216	"	"	"	136,000	40
28	74,250	209,500	"	371	"	"	12	283,750	88

29	40,000	155,000	66	229	-	8	8	195,000	77
30	56,000	267,750	95	304	-	-	26	323,750	118
1 May	68,000	582,000	-	402	48	85	130	650,000	166
2	25,500	389,500	-	285	52	72	68	415,000	106
3	41,500	334,000	78	250	42	48	55	375,500	100
4	31,000	201,500	128	272	18	12	4	232,500	76
5	41,500	255,000	122	195	84	4	30	296,500	80
6	21,000	156,500	74	44	64	8	30	177,500	42
7	10,000	119,000	92	148	-	10	6	129,000	40
8	8,500	38,000	16	68	-	-	-	46,500	12
9	55,000	156,500	190	178	-	-	10	212,500	71
10	40,500	92,000	104	132	-	-	-	132,500	60
11	20,500	42,000	12	78	-	-	-	62,500	26
12	16,000	49,000	-	66	-	-	8	65,000	28
TOTAL	611,500	3,218,500	1230	3528	308	247	387	3,830,000	1170

1. There were a total of 23 Arcflight strikes dropped in support of the operation during the period 24 April - 13 May. Others were requested as the operation officially terminated. The first Arcflight strikes by the GUM based B-52's began on 28 April approximately two days after the heavy engagement of 25-26 April. Thereafter, the strikes followed in rapid succession with sometimes as many as four strikes on one day.

DTG

Area of the Strikes

(1)	280730H April	XD 740460, 770460, 770450, 740450
(2)	281330H April	XD 750636, 774548, 783530, 763520
(3)	301600H April	XD 674479, 683486, 697471, 688463
(4)	020500H April	XD 722462, 729481, 749476, 749459
(5)	021600H May	XD 734448, 746442, 739440, 731422
(6)	021800H May	XD 700540, 730540, 730530, 700530
(7)	030500H May	XD 721451, 725451, 745458, 747446
(8)	030600H May	XD 775525, 798516, 796504, 773511
(9)	032000H May	XD 673447, 700445, 700460, 671460
(10)	032100H May	XD 730520, 728510, 735520, 750513
(11)	041900H May	XD 677517, 680530, 708530, 702514
(12)	050400H May	XD 734448, 746442, 739440, 731422
(13)	052000H May	XD 722462, 729481, 749476, 749459 (2)
(14)	060400H May	XD 673447, 700445, 700427, 678423
(15)	060500H May	XD 964461, 697471, 725461, 721452
(16)	070330H May	XD 750559, 761566, 775550, 760543
(17)	072015H May	XD 680530, 681541, 701588, 699526
(18)	072030H May	XD 748518, 770508, 769496, 745502
(19)	072130H May	XD 708528, 730520, 728510, 701513
(20)	080530H May	XD 756531, 780525, 774509, 753519
(21)	082045H May	XD 755529, 753519, 755529, 730520
(22)	100500H May	XD 687508, 696513, 710487, 701483
(23)	110510H May	XD 658512, 669518, 682489, 670484

Note: (1) and (2) Arcflights numbers 12 and 13 were second runs for Arcflights number 5 and 4 respectively.

Plotted on the map these 23 Arcflights represent almost complete coverage of

an area from the northwestern and western edge of the battle area to the Laotian border.

6. Intelligence

a. The KHE SANH area of operations consists of piedmont type hills covered with elephant grass up to fifteen feet high, secondary brush type vegetation, and jungle growth. A majority of the trails located in the area were concealed by canopies up to sixty feet high in the more mountainous areas. In the hill areas, elephant grass and dense undergrowth were major obstacles. Foot troops could not penetrate the majority of these areas except by following the existing trails or by the extremely slow process of hacking out a trail. In the objective area Hill 861 and 881N were covered with tree and bamboo growth; Hill 881S was covered with heavy tree growth on the north side and by elephant grass on the south side. All three of these hill masses were almost entirely denuded of foliage as a result of supporting arms coverage during the operation.

The sixty foot canopy, jungle undergrowth, and elephant grass offered excellent concealment from ground observation which was limited to five meters in most areas. Concealment from aerial observation was good to fair depending upon the continuity of the canopy or the height and density of the elephant grass and undergrowth. Observation and fields of fire prior to supporting arms coverage were limited to about five meters in the areas of densest foliage extending out to greater ranges depending upon the height and consistency of the undergrowth.

DONG TRI Mountain (XD 8545) is the highest peak in the KHE SANH Valley and dominates the area. Hill 861 (XD 8044) controls the northern and northwestern avenues of approach to the KHE SANH Base. Hill 881S (XD 7743) dominates the approaches from the west and northwest. Hill 881N (XD 7745) affords good observation of most of the approach routes from the northwest, but does not permit observation of the KHE SANH Base itself.

The weather during the Battle of KHE SANH was clear with excellent visibility during eighty percent of the operation. However, short periods of heavy rain and cloudiness did hamper aerial observation and close air support missions and on at least one occasion was a determining factor in the type of ordnance which had to be employed.

b. During the Battle of KHE SANH, intelligence reports revealed that elements of the 325th NVA Division were located to the northwest of the KHE SANH Base. Reports also revealed that the mission of the enemy units was to attack Allied Forces and fixed installations, e.g. KHE SANH Base and LANG VEI Special Forces Camp, in the KHE SANH area. Agent reports, friendly reconnaissance efforts, visual sightings, and enemy activity in the KHE SANH area indicated some increase in the tempo of enemy activity prior to the initial contact on 24 April; however, the full extent was undetermined at the time.

c. At 241200H April B/1/9 made contact with what was later estimated to be an enemy battalion in the vicinity of Hill 861. One squad to the south of Hill 861 met stiff resistance from a firmly entrenched enemy. Two platoons to the northwest and west of the hill were under light but continuous small arms, automatic weapons and mortar fire throughout the day. This was in the form of harassing fire as opposed to an attack or counterattack type fire.

On 25 April light contact continued for the B/1/9 elements to the northwest of Hill 861. K/3/3 moved up from the south on the afternoon of 25 April and met heavy contact near the crest of Hill 861 receiving mortar, small arms and automatic weapons fire. This contact continued until 1900H.

At 260050H the 3/3 CP and K/3/3 received approximately 200 rounds of 82mm mortar fire; at the same time the KHE SANH Base received 100 rounds of 82mm and 75mm RR fire. Fire on the 3/3 CP area was dispersed, causing no casualties; the rounds fired at the Base impacted outside the perimeter, also causing no casualties. Elements of B/1/9 and K/3/3 were sporadically mortared throughout the day of 26 April; varying amounts of small arms fire were also received during the same period. Crater analysis and visual sightings confirmed that most of the enemy activity was being directed from Hills 861 and 881S.

On 27 April there was no significant enemy contact with Marine infantry units as enemy positions of Hill 861 were subjected to intense bombing by Marine Air throughout the day. However, two attempts to insert recon teams to screen the northwest avenues of approach to KHE SANH were unsuccessful. At 271345H one CH-46 was shot down attempting to insert recon team 1A2 (XD 714452). The helicopter was approximately 20 feet off the ground when the enemy opened fire with automatic weapons, shooting down the aircraft. Both the recon team and the helicopter crew were successfully extracted. Recon team 2A2, after insertion at (XD 743541), received fire from several directions commencing at 1345H. The team was extracted shortly thereafter.

Hill 861 was taken on 28 April with no enemy resistance, though sporadic mortar fire was received from the north and west on three occasions. The enemy had withdrawn sometime between the last contact on 26 April and the assault on the afternoon of 28 April.

Hill 861 was found to be well fortified with bunkers constructed from bamboo, dirt and grass. Some of the bunkers were as much as six feet thick and were capable of receiving direct artillery hits without suffering internal damage. Approximately 25 bunkers and 62 fighting holes were found on top of Hill 861, all mutually supporting and very well camouflaged. A total of 400 fighting holes were counted on Hill 861 and the ridges to the north and west. Defenses were primarily oriented toward the finger running up the hill from the south. Mortar positions were found on the reverse slope (northwest), laid in the

direction of KHE SANH Base. If all the positions had been occupied at one time, Hill 861 could have held two NVA companies plus supporting arms. The battle area was extremely well policed by the enemy; virtually no equipment or information of intelligence value remained. Due to the large amount of ordnance expended on Hill 861 many of the positions were destroyed or buried. The odor of dead and decaying bodies was strong throughout the area.

On 29 April the enemy offered resistance to 3/3 moving toward Hill 881S. This resistance took the form of heavy small arms fire from fortified, camouflaged positions. Several rounds of mortar fire were also received late in the day. Between 1900 and 2000H enemy forces appeared to be moving to attack 3/3's night position; however, artillery with VT fuze was brought to bear effectively curtailing any enemy plans to attack the position.

On 30 April 3/3 assaulted Hill 881S against what was later estimated to be two reinforced companies, in well fortified and camouflaged positions. As the lead elements of 3/3 moved toward the top of the hill, the enemy offered only light resistance. However, once the two leading platoons had reached the top of the hill they were subjected to a withering volume of small arms and automatic weapons fire. As the Marines advanced to seize the first line of enemy positions, they were hit by enemy mortar fire from multiple locations called in on the enemy's own positions. This fire fight continued until darkness on 30 April as the Marine forces withdrew to evacuate casualties and call in supporting arms coverage. Results of the engagement were 125 KIA (C) and 85 KIA (P).

From interviews with Marines that made the assault on Hill 881S on 30 April it was revealed that the enemy force consisted of two companies reinforced, positioned in well camouflaged fortifications. These NVA were excellent troops whose marksmanship, fire and camouflage discipline, and aggressiveness was classic. Again the enemy used well camouflaged and well constructed bunkers to protect himself from supporting arms fire and awaited the Marines to move up within close range before engaging with full fire power. When the Marines commenced their final assault, the enemy fought from spider holes, trenches, and trees and his protective bunkers. The employment of sniper rifles was prevalent. Many Marines KIA's were the result of one well placed shot in the chest or head. Several enemy snipers were tied in the trees in addition to maximum dispersion throughout the battlefield, making it difficult for the assaulting enemy troops to locate the direction from which enemy fire was originating. In several instances, one enemy would attack small groups of Marines with complete disregard for his own life. Generally the NVA were selective in their targets concentrating first upon machine gunners and radio operators. Communications wire was later discovered running over the entire position. Most of the well fortified positions were on the southwest, west, and northwest slopes of the hill in a modified reverse slope defense with mutually supporting positions.

During the two days following the initial assault, Hill 881S was subjected to heavy supporting arms coverage as was the remainder of the battle area. Intelligence revealed that sometime around 1 May the 95th Regiment, 325th NVA Division moved up to relieve the 18th Regiment, 325th NVA Division in the battle area. Interrogation reports stated that the 18th Regiment had been badly mauled by Marine ground and air forces during the period 24-30 April.

On 2 May Hill 881S was again assaulted and seized by 3/3 units with no enemy resistance. Approximately 200-250 protective bunkers positions were located on the objective. After four days of heavy air strikes and artillery preparation in addition to the two assaults on 30 April and 2 May, 50 of these bunkers were still effective.

As 3/3 was attacking Hill 881S, 2/3 was attacking in a northwesterly direction toward Hill 881N. During the period 30 April - 2 May 2/3 daily came in contact with the enemy while moving toward the objective. Consistent with previous actions, the enemy allowed lead elements of the advancing units to move within several meters of his positions before commencing fire with a heavy volley of small arms and automatic weapons fire. Marine units were then required to put out a massive volume of fire to gain fire superiority, then disengage to evacuate casualties and call in supporting arms. When Marine units returned to an area of previous contact, the enemy was gone and the battlefield generally well policed. The only evidence of previous action were craters from Marine artillery and air.

During early morning darkness on 3 May E/2/3 in position on a southern finger of Hill 881N was attacked by two NVA reinforced companies. The attack was preceded by intense mortar preparation followed by a night assault which succeeded in penetrating a portion of the company perimeter. Once the penetration was contained by Marine forces, the enemy reoccupied some of his old positions within the penetration and was expelled only after several hours of vicious fighting. Even then he was eliminated only by being killed. Results of the engagement were 137 KIA (C) and 124 KIA (P).

During 4 and 5 May Hill 881N was again subjected to intense supporting arms coverage and was seized on the afternoon of 5 May with moderate resistance. Positions found on this hill closely resembled those found on the other two objectives. With the seizure of Hill 881N, the enemy offensive capability had been effectively destroyed by Marine ground and air attack. Both the 18th and 95th Regiments had suffered severe losses. During the action Marine forces had captured 5 POW's and several documents which lead to the identification of the enemy forces engaged.

On 4 May the LANG TRI Special Forces Camp was attacked during early morning darkness by an estimated two enemy companies. Identity of the attacking force was undetermined. The enemy, dressed in shirts and short trousers entered the camp through the wire on the west end of the camp. Using RPG's, satchel charges, homemade hand grenades, and small arms,

they systematically destroyed most of the principle bunkers in the camp (the ammo bunker, a recruit quarters, the communications bunker, the CP bunker, and the supply bunker). The enemy continued to ravage the camp until 0430H when they withdrew through openings in the wire which they had entered. Damage to the camp was extensive; friendly casualties were high.

During the period 5-8 May there was little or no enemy contact. Marine air continued to strike enemy position to the north, west, and northwest of Hills 8818 and 881N.

On 9 May F/2/3 made contact with an enemy company in the vicinity of (XD 747473). The contact was unusual in that the enemy did not fight from prepared positions; however, tactics remained the same. Deploying sporadic sniper fire to draw Marine units forward, the enemy opened up with small arms and automatic weapons fire and grenades at close range. Differing again from previous actions, the enemy withdrew after delivering 20 minutes of heavy fire, probably because he was not fighting from fortified positions which could withstand supporting arms coverage. Results of the engagement were 25 KIA (C) and 45 KIA (P).

The last noteworthy contact occurred on 10 May shortly after midnight when a recon team (1A2) located to the north of Hill 881N, became heavily engaged with an estimated enemy company. The team called in artillery and air support; however, the enemy force was in such close contact that adequate supporting arms coverage was difficult. The enemy however, was content not to overrun the position; rather he appeared to be awaiting helicopter extraction attempts with the intent of shooting down incoming helicopters. Four helicopters were hit by enemy fire, one severely, as a result of extraction attempts. The team was extracted at midday; thereafter the area was thoroughly covered with air strikes.

During the Battle of KHE SANH approximately 1000 rounds of 82mm mortar, 60mm mortar, and 75mm ER fire were directed at friendly troops or installations. Mines and booby traps incidents were negligible. Crude attempts to booby trap fighting holes, bunkers, and bodies were discovered before any of the devices were activated. Cumulative casualties for the period 24 April - 10 May 1967: 824 KIA (C), 545 KIA (P), 5 PW (NVA), 1 Bailier, 1 unclassified detainee; captured equipment: 83 individual weapons, 13 crew served weapons.

7. Mission. 34 Marines and SOP KHE SANH conduct operations in the KHE SANH area to attack and destroy enemy forces located therein, making maximum use of supporting arms.

8. Concept of Operations. Initial plans called for the injection of the 3/3 command group and two companies into the battle area to link up with the two heavily engaged platoons of B/1/9 in the vicinity of Hill 861. Following link up the battalion was to conduct search and destroy operations to attack and destroy enemy forces in the area.

After a determination was made that Marine forces were in contact with a major enemy force, the concept called for the engaged units to disengage in order to evacuate casualties and to call in heavy supporting arms to soften up the objective area. Following the neutralization and destruction of enemy fortified positions in the objective area, two battalions (2/3 and 3/3) were to move out in the attack on the three hill masses dominating the western and northwestern approaches to the KHE SANH Base - Hill 861 (XD 803443), Hill 881S (XD 778438), and Hill 881N (XD 775458).

2/3 was to attack and seize Hill 861 with 3/3 in trace and echeloned to the west. Following the seizure of Hill 861, 3/3 was to attack to the west enveloping Hill 881S while 2/3 was to screen this maneuver to the north. Following the seizure of Hill 881S, 2/3 was to attack Hill 881N enveloping from the north and south. Upon seizure of the three objectives, the two battalions were to conduct thorough searches of the respective areas and be prepared to continue the attack as required.

9. Execution

On 20 April 1967, SOP KHE SANH passed to the operational control of the 3d Marines with the commencement of Operation PRAIRIE IV. The KHE SANH AO, however, was not included as a part of PRAIRIE IV; rather it was a territorial appendage attached for operational control purposes to the 3d Marines which, occupying the adjacent area of operations, was in the best position to oversee activities there and to reinforce if the need arose. Prior to the beginning of Operation PRAIRIE IV, KHE SANH had reported directly to the 3d Marine Division; with the commencement of the operation, reports were submitted to the 3d Marine Division via the 3d Marines.

In early October 1966, KHE SANH, then a CIDG Camp, had been reinforced by the 1st Battalion, 3d Marines to prevent any possible takeover by infiltrating North Vietnamese forces. The battalion remained in residence until February when it displaced for rotation to Okinawa. During the battalion's occupancy of the KHE SANH area of operations, there were no significant contacts.

The battalion was replaced in residency by a single company from the 2d Battalion, 9th Marines. In mid March B/2/9 encountered a heavy contact in the vicinity of Hill 861 (XD 803443) and was reinforced by B/1/9. B/1/9 remained at KHE SANH after the contact, while B/2/9 returned to RVN BnL. Recon sightings and patrol contacts at KHE SANH remained relatively quiet until 24 April.

KHE SANH Base itself was an amorphous aggregation of separate support detachments joined together for the purposes of servicing the needs of a military installation and an area of operations separated from the rest of the I Corps area by all but air transportation and an occasional ROUGH RIDER convoy down Route 9 from DONG HA. Combat forces within the area of

operations on 24 April consisted of the resident defense company at KHE SAIH Base - B/1/9, a CAC Company in KHE SAIH village, and a CIDG force at LANG VAI, all astride the northeast-southwest axis of Route 9. Fire support was provided by F/2/12 reinforced by 2 155mm howitzers and 2 4.2" mortars. The mission of the units was to deny the enemy infiltration into QUANG TRI Province from the west.

On 23 April, B/1/9 had two platoon-sized patrol bases operating to the west of the base - one to the south and one to the northeast of Hill 861. On this date B/1/9 was given the mission of conducting a two platoon sweep of a cave area in the vicinity of (XD 790463). Moving his southern platoon around to the north along the low ground skirting Hill 861 to the east, the Company Commander maneuvered his two units into position for the sweep on 24 April. The two platoons, the 1st and 3d, passed the night in the vicinity of (XD 810460).

On the morning of 24 April a 81mm mortar section with a rifle squad for security from the 2d platoon displaced to the southern slope of Hill 861 (vicinity XD 805435) to provide additional fire support for the sweep then commencing. After the mortars were emplaced and ready to fire, a five man FO team proceeded up the trail to the top of Hill 861 in order to gain a favorable position for observation. At 241100H the FO team within 200 meters of the summit was ambushed by an enemy force of unknown size. All but one member of the team was killed. Having lost radio contact with the FO team and being aware of a fire fight to the front, the squad security for the 81mm moved forward to investigate the situation and came upon the lone survivor of the ambushed FO team. Moving back into the area of initial contact the squad sighted but was unable to recover the bodies of the other four members of the FO team. Receiving a heavy volume of fire the squad withdrew to the friendly mortar positions and proceeded to fire the mortar and call in artillery on the area of contact.

At the commencement of contact the two sweeping platoons which were then in the vicinity of (XD 799462) were ordered to sweep back to the southeast across Hill 861 in an attempt to strike the enemy from the rear. As they turned to commence their new direction of advance they received approximately 5 rounds of 82mm mortar fire, suffering one KIA. The contact continued in sporadic fashion for the rest of the afternoon as the two platoons moved up to the trail in the vicinity of (XD 793455). Artillery fire was brought to bear, and fixed wing and gunships were called on station to neutralize the contact area. At 1640H 1 and 3/B/1/9 called for a medevac of their casualties from their location on the trail at (XD 793455); however, the first B-34 in the zone received fire while picking up two WIA's and was forced to pull out before picking up the remainder of the casualties. The two platoons passed the night without contact in the vicinity of their perspective LZ with their remaining casualties, separated by approximately 400 meters.

In the morning the 3d of B/1/9 had proceeded to the forward mortar position from KHE SAIH in an attempt to ascertain whether the four bodies of the men killed in the initial contact could be recovered. By 1710H

two of the four bodies had been recovered; however, the other two were not recovered due to intense rifle fire. Having exhausted the 81mm ammunition at the forward position the company commander pulled back to KHE SANH with the mortar team and squad security just prior to darkness. Casualties from the first day were 12 USMC KIA, 17 USMC WIA, 2 USMC MIA; 5 enemy KIA (C), 100 enemy KIA (P).

Total artillery support for 24 April consisted of 660 rounds of 105mm fired in support of B/1/9. Air support totaled 8 sorties and consisted of 6500 lbs of ordnance delivered.

Intentions for 25 April were to move K/3/3 and the 3/3 command group to KHE SANH to conduct a battalion (a) operation with B/1/9. Originally K/3/3 had been scheduled to relieve B/1/9 of duties at KHE SANH on or about 29 April, and, as a result, liaison personnel from K/3/3 were present at KHE SANH during the outbreak of action on 24 April. Thus, the transition for 3/3 units to operations in the KHE SANH area was not to represent too abrupt a change. Intentions for B/1/9 to medevac casualties during the morning of 25 April and be prepared to continue the sweep toward Hill 861 from the northwest formed the basis for plans for the following day.

On the morning of 25 April B/1/9 captured 1 PW (NVA) who appeared to be lost and wandering in search of his unit. The detainee was held for evacuation to KHE SANH. Shortly thereafter the medevac of casualties was attempted. As the first chopper landed in the zone, it was met with a hail of small arms fire. The chopper lifted off immediately, but not before the Company Commander had debarked and several evacuees embarked. This was the only helicopter able to get in to B/1/9 on 25 April. Thereafter, B/1/9 commenced movement along the trail south and east to Hill 861 (XD 803443).

At 251200H the 3/3 command group and K/3/3 arrived at KHE SANH by helicopter from THON SON LAM and were met by the CO of the 3d Marines, Colonel J.P. LAMIGAN, who had preceded them that morning. The CO of the Third Battalion, Third Marines was Major J. WILSON. Shortly after arriving, B/1/9 commenced movement toward Hill 861, approaching from the southeast. B/1/9, which had been encountering sporadic contact, was told to continue its southeastern approach to Hill 861. Because of a late start as a result of having awaited medevac during the morning and because of the necessity of slow and careful movement due to terrain, the carrying of casualties, and sporadic enemy contact which required the seizure of each succeeding ridgeline, B/1/9 succeeded in moving approximately 800 meters during the day and passed the night with the lead elements of the company located at (XD 795445). The remainder of the company was strung out behind along the trail and the 1st and 3d platoons still remained physically separated.

At 251645H, K/3/3 received approximately 30 rounds of 82mm mortar fire while moving toward Hill 861 800 meters to the south. Countermortar fire was returned and the enemy fire ceased. At 251715H the lead elements of K/3/3 made contact with what at first appeared to be an estimated enemy platoon in well dug-in positions 300 meters south of the top of Hill 861.

The enemy was firing small arms and automatic weapons from prepared positions and 82mm mortars from the reverse slope of the hill. Countermortar and neutralization fire was undertaken, and the enemy mortar fire ceased. The enemy however, held his ground and continued to fire on K/3/3, bringing movement to a halt. The engagement continued until dusk approximately 1930H with K/3/3 receiving 4 additional 82mm rounds at 1907H. A revised estimate placed the size of the enemy force in contact at one company.

3/3 set in for the night with the enemy in close proximity. The 3d platoon of K/3/3 was located within 100 meters of the top of Hill 861; the remainder of the company was 200 meters to the south of the 3d platoon. The command group was located at approximately (XD 805435).

During the afternoon as a result of the heavy contact experienced by B/1/9 and 3/3, it was decided to move another company to KHE SANH. K/3/9 was designated as the company, and, departing CAMP CARROLL by helicopter, the company arrived at KHE SANH at 1800H. Because of the hour the company passed the night at KHE SANH.

Artillery fired 276 rounds in support of the operation on 25 April. Air flew a total of 12 sorties, dropping 33,000 lbs of ordnance.

Intentions for 26 April called for 3/3 including B/1/9, to medevac casualties and to seize Hill 861. K/3/9 was to join 3/3 as soon as possible after first light.

At 260500H the 3/3 CP received approximately 200 rounds of 82mm mortar fire. At the same time KHE SANH Base received approximately 100 rounds of 82mm mortars and 75mm RR fire, most of which landed outside the perimeter. Countermortar fire was delivered on suspected enemy mortar positions, suppressing the incoming fire. A flareship with miniguns was called on station, delivering a massive volume of fire on suspected enemy positions and movement. There were no friendly casualties as a result of this action.

At 0700H the respective units commenced movement to evacuate casualties. B/1/9 moving east along the trail leading to Hill 861 encountered enemy resistance immediately. Enemy small arms fire coupled with sporadic mortar fire succeeded in limiting B/1/9's advance to a bitterly contested struggle for each foot of terrain. At the same time 3/K/3/3 near the top of Hill 861 and K/3/3(-) just to the south also began receiving small arms fire and incoming 82mm rounds as the company attempted to move its casualties to the rear for evacuation. Each time the movement of casualties was attempted enemy fire was brought to bear; whereupon movement stopped and artillery fire was called in suppressing the enemy fire. However, as soon as the evacuation of casualties was recommenced, the enemy fire began again.

At 0800H, K/3/9 moved out from KHE SANH, linking up with the 3/3 CP group at 1230H. Upon arrival two platoons were dispatched to assist 3/K/3/3 and K/3/3(-) in their separate evacuations of dead and wounded. K/3/3(-)

was linked up with at 1315H and immediately withdrawn to the 3/3 CP. The platoon of K/3/9 ordered to link up with 3/K/3/3 experienced a great deal of difficulty in moving to its assistance; time, 3/K/3/3 was not drawn back to the 3/3 CP until 1900H. B/1/9, which had linked up all elements during movement early on the morning of 26 April, experienced a lull in the fighting at approximately 1200H. Medevac was then attempted; but, as the first helicopter entered the LZ at 1315H, enemy small arms and mortar fire commenced, causing the helicopter to abort its mission. At 1445H, B/1/9 reported that it had too many casualties to continue movement. K/3/9(-) was dispatched to assist the company which was located in the vicinity of (XD 798442). At 1800H K/3/9(-) reached B/1/9 and proceeded to march out with them, skirting to the southwest of Hill 861 and arriving in the vicinity of the 3/3 CP at 270500H. 3/3 passed the night at (XD 805428).

As a result of the contact on 25 April, followed by a continuation of the heavy fighting on the morning of 26 April, it was deemed advisable to hold forces in position on 26 April, rather than attempt to seize Hill 861 after casualty evacuation. This was accomplished for the purpose of neutralization of Hill 861 by supporting arms. Moreover, it was seen that 3/3, as a result of losses during the battle thus far, did not have the strength to carry Hill 861. Division chopped 2/3, LtCol E. R. DELONG, Commanding, then conducting Operation BRACON STAB as part of the SLF, to the 3d Marines. Picked up in the middle of operations on the morning of 26 April 2/3 was transported by helicopter and fixed wing to KHE SANH. The lead elements (E/2/3) arrived at 1200H. G/2/3 and the CP group arrived at 1320H. The command group and two companies commenced movement to the objective area at 1445H. H/2/3, the third and last company to be moved to KHE SANH on 26 April, arrived at 1600H and commenced movement in trace of 2/3 at 1620H. All 2/3 units arrived in the objective area and set in for the night at 2120H to the east of 3/3 (vicinity (XD 812431)). F/2/3 was scheduled to arrive at KHE SANH on 27 April.

Artillery support for 26 April consisted of 1076 rounds fired in support of the engaged units. Air with a total of 20 sorties dropped 58,000 lbs of ordnance, resulting in 10 KIA (P). Friendly casualties to date were 37 KIA, 90 WIA, 6 MIA. Casualties inflicted upon the enemy were 23 KIA (C), 175 KIA (P).

Intentions for 27 April were predicated on the linkup of all 3/3 units and the accomplishment of casualty evacuation. After the completion of this evolution, 3/3 was to move back to KHE SANH Base for the replacement of its battle depleted companies. 2/3 was to remain to the south of Hill 861 (XD 803443) to assist in the supporting arms neutralization of the objective area. Air and artillery were given the primary mission of neutralizing Hill 861.

All units of 3/3 moved into close proximity shortly after first light; medevac of casualties was completed by 270727H. Thereafter 3/3 commenced overland movement to the KHE SANH perimeter, arriving at 1130H. At 1400H 3d Marines chopped M/3/3 and M/3/9 to SOP KHE SANH to replace K/3/3 and B/1/9. M/3/3 arrived at 1610H, and M/3/9 arrived at 1730H. Operational

control of both units was assumed by 3/3. K/3/3 departed at 1500H and B/1/9 departed at 1630H for DOUG HA by fixed wing. In addition F/2/3, the remaining company of the SLF, arrived at KEN SAKH and assumed the mission of reserve. B/1/12, the SLF battery, arrived at 1900H and was laid and ready to fire by 2150H.

2/3 realigned itself during 27 April while assisting in the neutralization of Hill 861 by supporting arms. 2/3 remained to the south of the hill (XD 812432) with the companies oriented to the west of the command group.

Two reconnaissance inserts were attempted on 28 April to provide surveillance to the west and north of the battle area. The first (XD 714452) was shot out while attempting to insert at 1345H. The enemy opened fire with automatic weapons in the area and succeeding in shooting down 1 OH-36 resulting in 7 KIA. All personnel in the area were safely evacuated. The second team (XD 743541) was successfully inserted at 1420H, but extracted two hours later due to contact and numerous sighting in the area. 40's during the day received automatic weapons and .50 caliber fire to the north and west of Hill 861. These actions, at minimum, indicated enemy presence and movement to the north and west of the objective area.

Artillery fired 632 rounds in observed neutralization and preparation fires on Hill 861 on 27 April. By the end of the day artillery support was reorganized into an artillery group with two batteries, one in support of each battalion, and a detachment of 155 howitzers (2) and 4.2" mortars (3) in general support. Air support for 27 April consisted of 136,000 lbs of ordnance delivered primarily on Hill 861. The bombs consisted of 250 and 500 lbs mixtures along with 18,000 lbs of napalm. Air accounted for 10 KIA (C) during the day's air strikes.

Plans for 28 April were centered upon a two battalion attack concentrated in an area commanded by three terrain features, Hill 861 (XD 803443), Hill 881S (XD 778438), and Hill 881W (XD 775456). The three hill masses were designated Objective 1-3 respectively. 2/3 from its position to the south of Hill 861, was to seize Objective 1 after thorough preparation on 28 April. Thereafter 3/3, which was to follow in trace of 2/3 during the attack on Objective 1 providing blocking and reinforcing capability, was to wheel to the west in an arcing movement so as to secure the key terrain between Objective 1 and 2 and attack and seize Objective 2 from a northeastern direction. 2/3 after the seizure of Objective 1 was to thoroughly search out the area for enemy documents, weapons, and equipment to aid in identification of the enemy units within the battle area. During 3/3's movement toward Objective 2, 2/3 was to screen to the north, providing reinforcement if necessary. Upon the seizure of Objective 2 by 3/3, 2/3 was to attack and seize Objective 3 from the east from an assault position which was to have been occupied during the screening effort in support of 3/3's seizure of Objective 2. 3/3, after its seizure of Objective 2, was to screen 2/3's assault on Objective 3 from the south and southwest and to provide fire support and observation of the objective area and the

avenues of access and egress to the west, with a reinforcing mission if necessary. Duration of this phase of the operation would be dependent upon the enemy resistance encountered in these areas. Air and artillery support on 28 April were to provide adequate preparation of Objective 1 prior to its seizure by 2/3. Longer range planning called for equivalent preparation of Objectives 2 and 3 in addition to interdiction of a reinforcing or withdrawing enemy to the west and north of the battle area. TPC-10 strikes and Arclights were requested in conjunction with the interdiction efforts. Reconnaissance patrol insertions to the north and west of the battle area were planned to provide surveillance and fire control in these areas.

On 28 April after thorough preparation 2/3 assaulted Objective 1 (XD 803443) with two companies abreast (E and G/2/3) and secured it at 281630H, with no enemy contact. Between 1710H and 1840H E/2/3 received sporadic mortar fire on three occasions, for a total of 19 incoming 60mm and 82mm rounds, suffering no casualties. Countermortar fire suppressed the enemy fire on each occasion. 2/3 set in for the night with the two assaulting companies remaining in the vicinity of the objective and the command group and the remaining company to the south. 3/3, composed of a command group and three companies (M/3/3, K/3/9, M/3/9), moved overland from the KHE SANH perimeter to occupy nighttime positions on the southwestern flank of 2/3, with the command group and a company at (XD 803427) and the remaining two companies deployed to the west.

Recon teams had two sightings during the day both to the west of Objective 1. The targets were engaged with artillery, however, the enemy moved into the foliage prior to the completion of the mission so that results were unknown. Air strikes, in addition to the preparation and neutralization of Objective 1 in conjunction with artillery, resulted in the killing of 40 KIA (C) and 75 KIA (P) during interdiction missions to the north and west of Objective 1. Air expended 382,700 lbs of ordnance on 28 April, including 74,250 lbs of napalm and 12 2000 lbs bombs. Artillery fired 968 rounds in observed missions and 107 rounds as H&I's. In addition two arclight strikes were conducted in support of the operation, centered at (XD 955455) and (XD 789530) to the west and north of the operating area.

Intentions for 29 April called for 2/3 to search out the area of Objective 1 destroying enemy positions and to be prepared to support 3/3. 2/3 also planned to push out patrols to the northwest to reconnoiter portions of the area between Objectives 1 and 3. Plans for 3/3 were centered around a continuation of the attack toward Objective 2. Air and artillery were to continue with their neutralization and interdiction missions.

At 290800H 3/3 commenced the attack toward Battalion Intermediate Objective A located at (XD 782445), a hill mass 750 meters to the northwest of Objective 2. M/3/9 was the leading element, and at 1120H the right flank became engaged in a draw (XD 792440) with an estimated enemy platoon.

Initially receiving small arms fire from the north and west, the company returned fire with small arms and 60mm mortars, then disengaged to call in supporting arms coverage and to evacuate casualties. Enemy fire continued sporadically during disengagement. Results of the fire fight which lasted until 1300H were: 2 USMC KIA, 10 USMC WIA, 2 enemy KIA (C), and 19 enemy KIA (P).

During M/3/9's contact, M/3/3 the second element in the battalion column passed to the south of the fire fight continuing the attack on toward the battalion objective. This movement allowed M/3/9 to prosecute its action to the fullest while the attack was continued. Battalion Intermediate Objective A was secured by M/3/3 at 1915H. At 1930H M/3/3 sighted 20 NVA on Objective 2 moving in a western direction across the top of the hill. In addition, two enemy mortar teams were sighted setting up on Objective 2 and just to the west of M/3/3's position at (XD 780444). Countermortar fire was brought to bear immediately allowing the enemy to fire only 4 rounds (82mm) before being dispersed. At 2015H M/3/3 sighted additional NVA, an estimated company, moving toward its position. Artillery fire with VT fuses was called in on noise and lights resulting in screams of pain among the enemy, 25 KIA (P). M/3/3 remained on the intermediate objective during the night with no further contact. The remainder of 3/3 was to the east (vicinity XD 792442) within support and reinforcement range of the lead company.

2/3 encountered no contact and only one sighting during the day. The search of Objective 1 yielded 2 enemy bodies with ID cards, numerous items of enemy equipment, and 2 AK-47's along with the bodies of 4 previously unrecovered Marine KIA's. 2/3's nighttime positions ranged from the top of Objective 1 to the west.

Air support for 29 April accounted for 9 KIA (C) and 2 KIA (P) while delivering 195,000 lbs of ordnance including 40,000 lbs of napalm and a mixture of 250-2000 lbs bombs. Artillery fired 2040 rounds during the day primarily in support of M/3/9's morning contact and M/3/3's evening contact. Recon had one sighting during the day to the northeast of Objective 1; the target was engaged by artillery fire with unknown results. Air reconnaissance of the area west of Objective 2 and 3 revealed a large number of previously undiscovered enemy positions including 12 .50 caliber positions, unoccupied at the time.

Intentions for 30 April were predicated on the seizure of Objective 2 by 3/3 from its position on the intermediate objective. After securing the objective, 3/3 was to be prepared to continue the attack in a northwest direction along the ridgeline leading from Objective 2 (XD 778438) to Hill 821 (XD 763443) on order. 2/3 was to move a company into the area of M/3/9's contact on 29 April, to clear the area and screen the right flank of a second company moving toward Objective 3. With these elements advancing, 2/3 was to attack and seize Objective 3 and be prepared to continue the attack in a northwest direction on order. Air and artillery were to provide neutralization and interdiction support. Recon was to be inserted to the northwest of the battle area to provide surveillance of possible enemy reinforcing or withdrawing movements.

On the morning of 30 April, shortly after first light, H/2/3 moved into the area of M/3/9's contact on 29 April. At 300800H the company encountered an enemy force estimated at two platoons in the vicinity (XD 793446) of the preceding day's fire fight. The enemy engaged H/2/3 with small arms and automatic weapons, the company returned fire with small arms and 81mm's, calling in artillery as well. The enemy was positioned in bunkers; thus it became advisable to disengage to call in air support. Holding fire superiority the company pulled back with its casualties, clearing the area for close air support. Results of the fire fight were: 9 USMC KIA, 43 USMC WIA (of whom 29 were medevaced), 14 enemy KIA (C), 25 enemy KIA (P).

H/2/3 moving on the left flank of H/2/3 received several rounds of sniper fire during the latter's contact; however, the company continued its advance unhindered to the southern approaches of Objective 3. The company spotted enemy troop movement at 1140H and 1610H and took the enemy under fire while calling in gunships and air. In conjunction with the second sighting (XD 784450), air strikes resulted in 11 KIA (C), 35 KIA (P). At 1700H H/2/3 (XD 778452) received small arms fire from (XD 782449) resulting in 5 USMC WIA, gunships were called in to neutralize the enemy and the casualties were successfully extracted. Again at 1927H H/2/3 reported receiving sporadic small arms fire from (XD 774453) to the northwest. Artillery was called in but with unknown results due to darkness. As a result of H/2/3's contacts, MIA's were planned in the area as the H/2/3 perimeter (XD 778452) drew in tight for the night.

At midafternoon G/2/3 moved back into the area of H/2/3's morning contact after thorough artillery and air preparation and proceeded to flush out the enemy. Fighting through prepared positions the company succeeded in dislodging the enemy killing eight in the process. Results of the skirmish were 2 USMC KIA, 9 USMC WIA, 8 enemy KIA (C). G/2/3 set in for the night at (XD 789449). H/2/3, which had spent much of the day reorganizing after its heavy morning contact, passed the night with the battalion CP group at (XD 792443).

On the morning of 30 April M/3/3, prior to commencing its assault on Objective 2, commenced a search of the adjacent draw in which the enemy troops had been massing on the preceding night prior to the artillery saturation with VE fuze. While in the area, elements of the company located 5 NVA bodies and two NVA wounded. One of the enemy wounded attempted to escape and was killed; the second was captured but died later from his previously inflicted wound.

Prior to M/3/3's search of the draw K/3/9 at 0615H had commenced movement from its nighttime position to link up with M/3/3. The company linked up with the rear elements of M/3/3 at 0815H, while the lead elements of M/3/3 had commenced the attack on Objective 2 at 0800H.

At 0830H M/3/3 sighted 4 NVA on Objective 2 and called in artillery with unknown results. By 1025H the leading platoon of M/3/3 had reached the top

of Objective 2 (XD 778438) on the western end, receiving sporadic small arms fire. Bringing up a second platoon the company closed on the enemy and was hit by heavy fire from a well dug in enemy in heavily camouflaged positions and by sniper fire from individual riflemen located in the trees. The two platoons also received 30 rounds of 82mm mortar fire from the southern side of the objective. Countermortar fire was brought to bear on suspected mortar positions and gunships were requested to aid the engaged units in the immediate area of the contact. In the meantime the remaining platoon of M/3/3 and K/3/9 moved up to reinforce the unit in contact. As the two engaged platoons attempted to methodically reduce the enemy bunkers, the resistance stiffened to a nearly overwhelming volume of fire. At this point it became advisable to disengage to allow supporting arms, particularly air, to reduce the objective. Although the objective had been heavily hit by supporting arms, many of the bunkers remained intact or only lightly damaged, thus additional heavy bombardment was considered essential prior to continuation of the attack.

After the initial engagement M/3/9 had moved forward to the intermediate objective. When the decision to disengage had been made, one platoon of M/3/9 was ordered to assist the casualty evacuation in addition to M/3/3 and K/3/9 which had already been committed. Employing the M-16 aided by the large amounts of ammo the individual Marine was thus able to carry, 3/3 put out a large enough volume of fire to gain fire superiority to allow the evacuation of all the wounded from the battlefield under the cover of artillery and 81mm delivered smoke. Disengagement was not completed until nightfall, and all the wounded were evacuated. The battalion, less the command group and one platoon which remained to the east (XD 792442), set up nighttime positions on the intermediate objective (XD 782445) from which the attack had been launched that morning, and medevac was completed. Final casualty figures were 43 USMC KIA, 109 USMC WIA (of whom 90 were medevaced), 125 enemy KIA (C), 85 enemy KIA (P). Most of the friendly casualties were suffered by M/3/3 the initially engaged unit. Immediately after the action 4 MIA were reported; however, these bodies were recovered at a later date along with the bodies of the known dead which 3/3 had been unable to remove from Hill 8818 the previous night.

During the day artillery delivered 1686 rounds in support of the engaged units. Air, flying a total of 118 sorties, delivered a total of 323,750 lbs of ordnance in support of the Marines in contact. Close air support accounted for 38 KIA (C) and 47 KIA (P) during the day's operations. An A-1H was also dropped in support of the operation approximately 10 kilometers west of Objective 4. One rescue insert to the northwest of Objective 3 was attempted during the day; however, heavy automatic weapons fire on the aircraft in the vicinity of the proposed LZ prevented its completion.

Plans for 1 May envisioned 2/3 continuing northwest toward Objective 3 completing the clearance of the area of M/2/3's heavy contact on 30 April after thorough artillery and air neutralization. In addition, M/2/3 was

to continue its advance on Objective 3 from its forward position on the southeastern slope. 3/3 was to remain on the intermediate objective and conduct a very detailed air and artillery destruction of Objective 2 after which the attack was to be continued on order. After the seizure of Objectives 2 and 3, a careful search of each was to be conducted while reconnoitering by fire to the west to attack targets of opportunity. In addition to air and artillery preparation and neutralization of the two remaining objectives, 20 additional Arclights and 40 TPO-10 targets were requested to be hit as soon as possible in areas where intelligence reports indicated possible buildup and staging areas and bunker complexes.

At 010630H M/3/3 commenced movement to the 3/3 CP in order to be relieved by F/2/3 which was to be helilifted in. At 0645H 3/3 units on the intermediate objective received 10 rounds of 60mm incoming mortar fire and the command group received 20 rounds of the same. Countermortar fire by artillery and organic support weapons was brought to bear immediately, suppressing the enemy fire. There were no casualties. By 1035H M/3/3 had arrived at the 3/3 CP and the relief by F/2/3 commenced. In addition, the platoon of M/3/9 providing CP security was moved forward to link up with the remainder of the company on the intermediate objective. At 1150H M/3/3 completed its movement by helicopter to the WHE SAM perimeter. At 1200H F/2/3 had been lifted into the 3/3 CP landing zone completing the relief.

As the reserve had to be committed to replace the casualty depleted M/3/3, the CG 3dMarDiv chopped E/2/9 to the 3d Marines and the leading elements began to arrive at 011400H. The entire company had completed its movement by 1910H. In the meantime one platoon had been taken from the company and helilifted to Hill 861 (XD 803443) to prevent enemy reoccupation of or infiltration through that objective. 2/3 assumed operational control of the platoon. At 1715H M/3/3 departed for DONG HA by fixed wing. During this time 3/3 conducted a heavy air and artillery neutralization and destruction of Objective 2. Supporting arms were called in on enemy troop sightings and other targets of opportunity as well. 3/3 units, less the command group and F/2/3 which remained at the CP location (XD 792442), remained in place for the night at (XD 782445).

At 010745H E/2/3 (XD 782452) on the southern slope of Objective 3 received 18-20 incoming mortar rounds from (XD 799453) and (XD 767454) along with small arms fire. Countermortar fire was delivered causing the enemy fire to cease. Air strikes were called on the possible mortar positions. Results of the action were 3 USMC KIA, 16 USMC WIA. Plans to move E/2/3 on to Objective 3 on 1 May were postponed as a result of this action and further neutralization of the objective was planned.

On 1 May G/2/3 pulled back from its night position to allow supporting arms coverage of two previously designated battalion intermediate objectives (Objective 1 XD 789449 and Objective 2 XD 787452), between Regimental Objective 1 and 3. At 1100H G/2/3 moved back into the area commencing the attack. By 1200H G/2/3 had secured Battalion Intermediate Objective 2, moving on to the second objective which was secured at 1300H, both with no

contact. In the second intermediate objective the company located an extensive bunker complex which it searched, locating several items of enemy equipment and assorted ammunition. G/2/3 consolidated for the night in the vicinity of Battalion Intermediate Objective 2, while the other units of the battalion remained in positions occupied on the preceding night.

During the day both battalions requested and received their "Mule" mounted 106mm recoilless rifles to be used in the reduction of enemy bunkers and fortifications by direct fire. On 1 May 1445 rounds of 105mm and 155mm ammunition were expended in support of the two battalions for the neutralization and destruction of the separate objectives. During the same day 166 sorties were flown in support of the operation delivering 650,000 lbs of ordnance, including 130 2000 lbs bombs to insure the destruction of enemy protective bunkers. During the morning of 1 May 2/3 received the predominance of air delivered ordnance on Objective 3. In the afternoon close air support was shifted to Objective 2 where the enemy had withstood preceding supporting arms destruction with classic tenacity. Three heavy air attacks uncovered additional bunkers and forced approximately a platoon to leave their prepared positions in flight. These troops in the open were engaged by air and by small arms and mortar fire from 3/3's positions on its intermediate objective. Additional air strikes also interdicted the escape routes. Close air support strikes resulted in 1/4 enemy KIA (C), including one strike to the west of the battle area which produced 81 KIA (C). All scheduled recon inserts were cancelled due to priority helicopter employment in support of the operating battalions.

Intentions for the following day called for both battalions, after extensive air and artillery preparation - with the preponderance of air support to 3/3 - to seize their respective objectives. Thereafter, routes of escape were to be denied by fire while both objectives were thoroughly searched. In addition, the importance of the previously requested Arclight strikes were reaffirmed; while 5 CHU strikes on suspected enemy troop concentrations to the northwest of the battle area were requested.

On the morning of 2 May F/2/3 moved up to 3/3's intermediate objective (XD 782445) to support the attack on Objective 2. At 021120H, after a final heavy preparation, M and K/3/9 launched the assault on Objective 2 (XD 778438) from the intermediate objective. At 1250H the leading elements reached the objective, securing it at 1420H with no contact. After the seizure of the objective, the area was thoroughly searched resulting in the discovery of the Marine bodies left on the hill as a result of the battle on 30 April. Only one enemy was discovered that day. At 1800H the CP group was lifted from its previous location to the top of Objective 2 - Hill 8818 - to link up with K and M/3/9. At 1815H a K/3/9 platoon in the process of clearing one of the east running fingers on the objective encountered sniper fire and small arms fire. Artillery and 106 RR's were brought to bear suppressing the enemy fire. As darkness was approaching, the unit pulled back to the night defensive position with the intention of clearing the area on the following day. All 3/3 units, except F/2/3 which remained on the intermediate objective, consolidated nighttime positions on Objective 2.

At 021015H G/2/3 and H/2/3, from separate positions, commenced their movement toward Objective 3 after heavy preparation (over 1400 rounds of artillery prep for G/2/3 alone). At 1455H G/2/3, having advanced up the narrow ridgeline which approached Objective 3 from the northeast, received small arms and automatic weapons fire at (XD 778560). As the action continued enemy fire increased and the company pulled back to call in artillery. Under the cover of the adjusted artillery fire, the company moved back into the scene of action to recover its casualties. While moving forward the company received additional automatic weapons and sporadic 82mm mortar fire. Countermortar fire was called in suppressing the enemy fire. Results of the fire fight were 6 USMC KIA, 7 USMC WIA, 2 enemy KIA (C); 5 enemy KIA (P); however, initially four individuals were reported MIA, their bodies being recovered at a later date.

During the duration of G/2/3's engagement, H/2/3, which had moved forward during the morning into a position from which to support G/2/3 during the afternoon, received sporadic 82mm mortar fire at the same time as G/2/3. The incoming was suppressed in conjunction with the countermortar fire delivered in support of G/2/3. During the same period H/2/3 which had advanced almost to the top of Objective 3 - Hill 880M - received heavy sniper fire from the northwest. The company returned fire with small arms and organic support weapons. While the contact was taking place in three separate locations, a heavy rain squall took place from 1600H to 1645H with winds gusting up to 40 mph and rain so heavy as to obscure vision completely. Taking all these factors into consideration, it was deemed advisable to pull the 2/3 forward units back to more defensive terrain for the night.

Artillery support for 2 May reached its peak for the operation as 2193 rounds were fired in support of the two battalions either in preparation or as a result of contact with the enemy. Air support was again heavy with 106 sorties delivering 415,000 lbs of ordnance. In addition, 3 Arclights strikes were dropped to the west of the battle area in support of the operation.

Intentions for 3 May called for 2/3, after detailed preparation of the objective, to assault and seize it. 3/3 was to support 2/3 during its assault. Both battalions were to thoroughly search their objective areas, destroying all enemy positions. In addition, after the seizure of Objective 3, both battalions were to conduct patrols from their positions to determine in which direction the enemy was moving. Aerial Observer surveillance was planned as well, to engage targets to the west and to assist in the determination of enemy movement and plans.

At 030415H H/2/3 (XD 778451) began receiving small arms fire from three sides and 60mm mortar fire, followed by a well planned, well led ground attack by an estimated company size unit. The ground attack succeeded in penetrating the company perimeter from the north. As a result of the initial contact, countermortar fire was undertaken and succeeded in silencing the enemy mortars. Artillery continued to fire in support of the engaged unit.

while a flareship, gunships, an AC, and fixed wing were called on station to conduct air strikes. 3/3 also provided fire support with 106 ER's. After a period of bitter fighting the penetration was contained and means were sought to eliminate it. At 030700H F/2/3, under the control of 3/3, was chopped back to 2/3, having been in the best position to support the engaged company. Lifting in one platoon of F/2/3, 2/3 sought to counter-attack the penetration. The platoon from F/2/3 counterattacked the penetration at the point where it had cut through the perimeter to restore the lines. E/2/3 moved northwest to cut off the penetration from the rear between the position held and Hill 881N. As a result of the F/2/3 counter-attack the enemy penetration was sealed. The enemy, however, had reoccupied some old bunkers in the area which had not yet been destroyed and fought tenaciously to the end, employing automatic weapons and hand grenades with deadly effect. So well emplaced was the enemy that initial attempts to destroy his positions were unsuccessful, though heavy supporting arms fire had been brought to bear. During a gunship strike in the area, the CO of E/2/3, who had moved forward to personally direct the strikes, was wounded as a result of his close proximity to the air strikes. He was evacuated and his Executive Officer took command. The last resistance points were reduced by the systematic seizure of each separate bunker by E/2/3 assaulting the north and rear of the penetration. The action finally terminated at 031500H. Results were 27 USMC KIA, 84 USMC WIA, 137 enemy KIA (C), 124 enemy KIA (P). In addition, 3 PW (NVA) were captured along with various weapons, assorted ammunition, and miscellaneous items of equipment. 2/3 passed the night with three companies in tight perimeter defense (E/2/3, G/2/3, H/2/3) on the southern side of Objective 3 and F/2/3 (-) at 3/3's intermediate objective. The CP group remained in its previous location, although the CO and S-3 passed the night in the forward position. During the night E/2/3 received 2 grenade probes resulting in no friendly casualties; the following morning 5 enemy bodies were found as a result of the small arms fire and grenades returned by the company.

In addition to supporting 2/3 with 106mm ER fire which resulted in 5 KIA (P) and dispersed enemy troops moving into the area from the southwest, 3/3 also thoroughly searched out its objective, securing the eastern finger from which sniper fire had been received on the preceding day. All 3/3 units (K and M/3/9) passed the night on Objective 2. During the night K/3/9 received 5 rounds of 82mm mortar fire at 040455H. Countermortar fire was returned immediately; however, the enemy fire had already ceased.

Artillery fired 969 rounds in support of the operation during the day and 352 rounds that night as H&I's as the forward elements of 2/3 drew up into tight company perimeters surrounded by barbed wire, trip flares, and Slaymore mines. Air support delivered 374,500 lbs of ordnance resulting in 3 enemy KIA. In addition, four Arelights were dropped in support of the operation to the north and west of the battle area.

Plans for 4 May were centered on 2/3's continued preparation of Objective 3, employing "snake eyes" and again for close in support and heavier air delivered ordnance farther out on top of the objective and its routes of access and egress to the north and west. After a heavy preparation

the battalion was to attack and seize Objective 3, then conduct a careful search of the area with particular emphasis on the routes of enemy withdrawal to the north and west. 3/3 was to continue to support 2/3 by fire and observation and on order be prepared to continue the attack to secure the western portion of Objective 3. In addition, 3/3 was to conduct local patrols to the west, continuing with the search of Objective 2. Air and artillery in addition to preparation of 2/3's objective, were to engage targets to the west and north under the control of 3/3 and AO aircraft to interdict the enemy escape routes.

At 040435H LANG VBI Special Forces Camp (XD 795360) came under ground attack by an estimated enemy company reinforced. Initially it was thought to have been preceded by a mortar attack of some 200 rounds, however, investigation of the area on the following day revealed that the explosions were the result of enemy sapper units clearing lanes through the barbed wire and mine fields on the west end of the perimeter. Once the ground attack had entered the perimeter through the penetration at the west end, the raiding unit proceeded to systematically destroy the vital installations within the compound, i.e. the communications center, the command bunker, the ammunition bunker, and to eliminate the key personnel, including the USST CO and XO. The enemy, wearing camouflaged shirts and rolled up trousers (for identification purposes), employed demolition and satchel charges, RPG's, and small TNT charges employed as hand grenades, as well as small arms. The efficiency and thoroughness of the raid was evidence of a well planned, well led, well executed attack, the organization of which must have been based upon extensive knowledge of the interior of the compound.

Initial requests for fire support by KHE SANH were made about 0330H; however, the requesting individual was the Communications Chief, as the CO and XO had already been killed, and he asked for countermortar fire to the south and west of LANG VBI. Difficulty was encountered in attempting to get even a general fix on a target from the Sergeant who had no map available to him or no knowledge of pre-planned concentrations. In addition, he had the only radio that was operational and frequently changed channels to talk to two patrols in the field. Artillery was fired initially on one grid square to the south and one to the west; when it became evident that the Sergeant was unable to shift fires, preplanned close in defensive concentrations were fired. Initial firing commenced at 0350H and the shift to pre-planned concentrations were made about 0400H and continued until 0430H when a cease fire was requested.

At the time of the initial request for countermortar fire, it was known that a patrol from LANG VBI was about 2000 meters west of the camp. This knowledge plus the fact the LANG VBI was attempting to contact and move its patrols, dictated extreme caution in any unobserved mission to the west.

During the period after the initial request prior to the first fire mission, attempts were made to communicate with LANG VBI in order to determine which of the preplanned concentrations would best help the camp;

however, the concentration list had been destroyed along with the command bunker and the Communications Chief was not in a position to observe any of the fires. When it became apparent that this was the case, preplanned concentrations were fired in the areas requested without observation or adjustment. As a result of the communications difficulty, which finally had to be resolved by employing a nearby SOG unit to relay, there was never a really clear picture of what was happening, nor were the locations or status of friendly troops in the area ever known.

At the time of the initial report of contact, a flareship was diverted and was on station at approximately 0340H. KHE SANH Base was put on alert and a relief unit placed on standby alert to move via truck to LANG VEI. Two gunships were launched and were over the area at 0425H. Fixed wing and a minigun aircraft were requested and were overhead by 0525H. All aircraft delivered support to the beleaguered camp. Results of the attack were 2 USA KIA, 2 USA WIA; 20 CIDG KIA, 34 CIDG WIA, 39 CIDG MIA; 7 enemy KIA (C), 5 enemy KIA (P). All the wounded and killed were evacuated by Marine helicopter to KHE SANH shortly after first light.

3/3 passed the day searching out Objective 2 and discovering numerous enemy positions in the process. Patrols sighted enemy troops on two occasions, taking them under fire with artillery and 106 RR's and killing 4 (P) in the process. 2/3 oriented its companies for the final assault on Objective 3. One wounded NVA, located in one of the bunkers in the area, was found by E/2/3 during the morning's activities. The day passed in final preparation of the objective area. At 1530H E/2/3 and H/2/3 commenced a final assault on Objective 3; however, movement was slow and methodical and only the southern edge of the objective was secured by nightfall. E/2/3 and H/2/3 moved into final attack positions for the following day. G/2/3 and H/2/3 remained to the east of the objective.

In addition to the day's tactical movements, C/1/26 was moved by fixed wing from PHU BAI in response to a request for additional troops to strengthen the reserve and to provide security for an artillery displacement. The company completed its movement by 1610H.

Artillery support for 4 May delivered 1781 rounds in support of LANG VEI and as preparation fires on Objective 3. In addition one A-1H was dropped in support of the operation, covering an area to the northwest of the battle area. A recon team was inserted to the southeast of KHE SANH to provide surveillance in that area with emphasis on determining if the enemy was massing troops in the area for an attack somewhere along the eastern side of the LANG VEI-KHE SANH axis.

Intentions for the following day were predicated upon the complete seizure of Objective 3 by 2/3. After its seizure a thorough search of the hill complex was to be conducted. 3/3 was to continue supporting 2/3 by fire and observation, while patrolling to the east and southwest of its objective. On 5 May a detachment of three 4.2" mortars was to be helilifted to objective 2 to provide direct fire support to the east and north.

F/2/12 and the detachment of two 155mm howitzers were to be moved to a forward artillery position to extend the range of artillery support further west in aid of planned patrols and future operations. C/1/26 was designated to provide security for the artillery. In addition ground mounted 106 HR's from A company 3d AF Battalion were to be helilifted to Hill 861 (XD 803443) to provide direct fire support for the platoon of B/2/9 located in a defensive position there.

At 050850H F/2/3 commenced the final attack on objective 3 encountering sporadic resistance from enemy located in bunker positions. The contact increased in volume as the enemy brought more fire to bear. The company then disengaged to call in close air support which eliminated the enemy resistance. Results of the contact were 5 USMC KIA, 3 enemy KIA (P).

Again at 1310H F/2/3 commenced the attack on Objective 3 with B/2/3 supporting by fire. C/2/3 also commenced an assault from the east along the northwest running ridgeline to envelope Objective 3 from the north. At 1400H F/2/3 received light automatic weapons and sniper fire from the northwest side of the objective. Fire was returned with small arms and organic support weapons. Results of the brief encounter were 2 USMC KIA, 3 enemy KIA (C). At 1445H objective 3 was secured. All four companies then moved up to the objective and set in for the night in separate company perimeters covering the various approaches to the objective.

3/3, in addition to supporting 2/3 by fire and observation, conducted patrols from its primary position on Objective 2. The patrols located several enemy positions in the area, which they searched - capturing assorted enemy ammunition and destroying bunkers. 2/3 also found numerous items of enemy equipment, assorted ammunition, and several weapons during its final assault and initial search of Objective 3.

At 1200H C/1/26 chopped to 3/3 for control purposes in conjunction with the F/2/12 displacement forward. F/2/12 and the two 155's were laid and ready to fire in their forward fire support position at 1620H. In addition, the three 4.2" mortars were transported by helicopter to Hill 881S and were laid within the 3/3 perimeter and ready to fire by 1330H. These two displacements offered increased fire power and support range to the forward infantry battalions.

At 2050H (XD 777456) and F/2/3 (XD 777439) received a total of 92 incoming 82mm mortar rounds about equally divided between the two companies. Lights were sighted to the northwest in conjunction with the attack, and artillery and 4.2" countermortar fire was brought to bear on the suspected enemy positions, causing the incoming to cease. A later search of the area from which the fire originated revealed 3 enemy KIA (C) and 60 enemy KIA (P) as a result of direct hits on the enemy mortar positions. Marine casualties from the attack were 1 KIA and 6 WIA.

Air support achieved a unique first on the morning of 5 May when G3 AO sighted a lone NVA waving a flag and indicating a desire to surrender.

A helicopter was dispatched immediately and picked up the rallier approximately 750 meters east of Objective 3. Upon initial interrogation the rallier indicated that there were several other individuals from his unit in the area who desired to rally. AU-10 PayWar aircraft was dispatched to the area to broadcast the standard assortment of CHIEU HOI tapes plus one special appeal made by the rallier to his comrades. Patrols were dispatched to the area but no contact was made with the other NVA.

A total of 133 rounds of artillery in observed and unobserved missions were fired on 5 May, and 360 rounds were fired as H&I's. In addition to bringing in one rallier, air support delivered a total of 296,500 lbs of ordnance in neutralization and interdiction strikes, resulting in 3 enemy KIA (P). Two Arclight strikes were dropped to the west of the battle area in support of the operation on 5 May.

Intentions for 6 May called for 2/3 to complete a detailed search of its objective; while both battalions were to conduct platoon size combat patrols to a minimum range of 1000 meters with particular emphasis on covering the area to the west of the two objectives. Patrols were to employ recon by fire with air and artillery during their movement. AO's were to conduct a similar type recon by fire further to the west of the objectives.

Attempts were also to be made to insert reconnaissance patrols to the west to provide added surveillance of the area.

Both battalions passed the day of 6 May without incident. Numerous positions were located and searched. Large quantities of captured equipment, ammunition, and several weapons were the result. The only contact of the day was a recon sighting northeast of Objective 3. Nine NVA were spotted moving south and an artillery mission was called in, resulting in 5 KIA (C), and 4 KIA (P). Artillery fired 463 rounds in recon by fire missions during the day and 532 rounds were fired as H&I's that night. Air support was limited to 42 sorties for the day with 127,500 lbs of ordnance delivered in the operating area, and two Arclights were dropped in support of the operations. In addition, a recon team was inserted 5000 meters west of Objective 2 to provide surveillance of possible enemy movement or buildup to the west of the battle area.

Planning for 7 May emphasized the same activities as for the preceding day. The two battalions passed the day without incident uncovering and destroying enemy positions and capturing a sizable amount of equipment, ammunition, documents, and several weapons. Early in the morning an AO received automatic weapons fire from a ridgeline to the west of Objective 3. Air strikes called in on the area accounted for 9 enemy KIA (P). Air support accounted for another 4 KIA (P) as a result of gunship and fixed wing strikes in support of a recon extraction. Artillery fired 467 rounds during the day and 642 rounds as H&I's. A total of 40 sorties delivered 129,000 lbs of ordnance for the day's air support. A total of four Arclights to the northeast of Objective 3 were dropped in support of the operation.

The only change in intentions for 8 May was the extension of patrol limits to the west and an additional patrol from KHE SANH Base to the southeast with helicopter extraction planned at the end of the patrol route. Activities on 8 May were without incident, as the number of enemy positions located diminished - a result of thorough coverage of the patrolling areas. Only 12 series for a total of 46,000 lbs of ordnance were conducted. Two Arclights were dropped to the northwest. A total of 340 artillery rounds were fired during the day and 870 were fired as H&I's during the night.

Intentions for 9 May saw the battalions' planned patrol activities extended further west. Also, plans were made to insert two recon patrols to the west and north of the battle area to determine the extent, if any, of enemy activity, buildup, and movement in the area. A joint engineer/artillery reconnaissance was planned for 9 May to determine the feasibility of displacing artillery to the west either overland or by helicopter in the event additional range was required.

Patrol activities continued without incident during the morning of 9 May. At 091307H E/2/3 while patrolling to the west of Objective 3 (vicinity XD 747473) received light sniper fire from the west. Pursuing the contact the lead elements pushed forward only to be met point blank by a heavy fusillade of automatic weapons fire and mortar fire accompanied by grenades from an estimated enemy company. The heavy volume of fire continued for approximately 20 minutes whereupon the enemy began to withdraw when artillery fire was brought to bear on the enemy and gunships and fixed wing were called on station to conduct air strikes. In addition E/2/3's company sized patrol was diverted to render support. Setting up its 60mm mortars on the high ground at (XD 750463) with one squad as security, the company moved to flank the enemy position. To provide additional fire support, 2 81mm mortars and 2 106 RR's were lifted by helicopter to the 60mm position with a platoon of E/2/3 to provide security. The Battalion Commander and 3-3 of the battalion were also helilifted forward to effect better direction and coordination of the engaged units. By the timely massing of infantry and supporting arms the enemy's organized withdrawal was turned into flight. Results of the engagement were 24 USMC KIA, 19 USMC KIA, 25 enemy KIA (C), 45 enemy KIA (P). The majority of the Marine casualties, including the wounding of E/2/3's C.O., occurred during the heavy volume of point blank fire delivered during the first few moments of the encounter.

In a related encounter the fire support position (XD 750463) received small arms fire from an adjacent hill (Hill 803 XD 746464). The squad from E/2/3 which had remained with the company's mortars was dispatched to eliminate the source of fire. Supported by 81mm and 106mm direct fire, the squad succeeded in killing 6 NVA (C) and driving off the remainder.

This day's contact differed from the past in that the enemy did not fight from prepared positions nor did he remain in flight after the initial exchange of fire. The area in which E/2/3's heavy contact occurred

contained large amounts of new 782 gear and rice. In addition, 203 fresh graves were found in the area. Opening of eight graves revealed NVA's who had been buried at this site within the past 72 hours.

At the termination of the day's action, it was intended to helilift the involved units back to their respective GP locations; however, bad weather swept over the area as the initial phase of the troop lift commenced. Consequently, E and F/2/3 drew up into a night defensive position in the vicinity of the fire support position (XD 750463), and the remaining two companies on Objective 3 redistributed their assets to better cover the objective with their reduced forces.

Artillery support for the day increased to 740 rounds as a result of the contact and air support also increased to 71 sorties delivering a total of 212,000 lbs of ordnance. Two recon patrols were inserted during the morning to the west and north of the battle area, and one recon patrol was extracted.

Findings of the engineer/artillery reconnaissance patrol indicated that it would require a minimum of five days to pioneer a road capable of supporting the displacement of a battery further west. The requirement to displace a battery by helicopter would necessitate an additional 75-1000 helilifts a day to maintain an adequate supply of ammunition on position.

Intentions for 10 May centered around a detailed search of the preceding day's area of contact by 2/3. Otherwise, patrol activities would remain the same. In anticipation of a possible continuation of the operation, plans were made to replace 3/3's companies (K and M/3/9) with fresh units (I and L/3/3). A ROUGH RIDER from DONG HA was scheduled for 11 May to accomplish part of this shift. A platoon sweep of Route 9 east to the bridge located at (XD 913403) was planned by E/2/9 for 10 May in conjunction with a platoon sweep from CA LU to the same position. The two units would remain at the bridge overnight under the opcon of the CA LU units and return to their respective GP's on 11 May clearing the road for the ROUGH RIDER.

At 100007H the recon team "BENEFIT" (1A2), inserted on 9 May, made contact with an estimated company of enemy. This contact continued until almost noon when the team was finally extracted, while KHE SANH provided artillery and air support. The only artillery capable of providing support were the 155mm howitzers which fired during the periods when air was not on station. Gunships, a flare ship, "Spooky", and fixed wing were scrambled to render support. The enemy could easily have overrun the seven man team, however, they chose not to do so, probably in hopes of shooting down any helicopter attempting extraction. Two attempts were made to extract the team during the night and one attempt in the early morning; all three attempts were unsuccessful due to heavy ground fire. At 1145H a fourth extraction attempt was made. After boxing in the area with fixed wing and gunship coverage, the western side of the box was opened at the point of maximum intensity of the air support. Two gunships providing covering fire then led in one "click" through the opening in the fire. The "click" team set down, quickly picked up the three survivors, or the original team of

seven and returned to KHE SANH. Air strikes were then called in to saturate the entire area in which the team had made contact. Results of the action: 4 USMC KIA, 3 USMC WIA, of the Recon Team, 7 enemy KIA (G), 24 KIA (P), one pilot killed, one pilot seriously wounded, 5 crew members light wounds. Four helicopters were hit - all able to return to KHE SANH.

At 100920H the other recon team inserted on 9 May reported sighting 35440 NVA approaching its position. This team was extracted without complication and air and artillery was called on the NVA with unknown results. Other than the recon contacts, the day passed without incident. The only significant event was that 2/3 captured a lone NVA who wandered into the G/2/3 perimeter.

Intentions for 11 May centered around the decision to replace the two battalions of the 3d Marines with one battalion of the 26th Marines and to turn over the area of operations to the 26th Marines. 2/3 was to chop the platoon of E/2/9 on Hill 861 to 3/3 at 0700H and move back to KHE SANH by helicopter and overland march. F/2/12 was also to displace back to KHE SANH, and C/1/26 was to occupy one of the company positions vacated by 2/3 on Objective 3. Two companies and a command group of 1/26 were to arrive by plane, and two companies (*) of 2/3 were to depart by the same transportation to reembark as the SLW. The ROUGH RIDER originally scheduled to bring up a replacement company for 3/3 was now detailed to move B/1/12 back to DONG HA instead.

The platoon of E/2/9 on Hill 861 was chopped to 3/3 at 110700H. F/2/12 completed its displacement by 111100H. E and F/2/3 were moved by helicopter to KHE SANH at 1135H; the last elements of the battalion arrived by fixed wing at 1613H. The first elements of 1/26 began arriving at 1140H and the remainder of the two companies and the CP group arrived at 1325H. The ROUGH RIDER from DONG HA arrived at 1250H and departed with B/1/12 at 1420H. At 1410H E and F/2/3 departed for DONG HA by fixed wing. C/1/26 was in position of Hill 881N by 1400H. All units arriving chopped to CO, 3d Marines; all units departing chopped to the 3d Marine Division. At 1650H an E-34 helicopter crashed in the vicinity of Hill 881N as a result of a down wind take off. None of the crew or passengers were injured, and all were safely extracted; however, the downed aircraft necessitated C/1/26 having to provide security until it could be extracted on the following day.

Intentions for 12 May involved the movement of the remainder of 2/3 to DONG HA by fixed wing and the arrival of the remainder of 1/26, and the lead elements of the 26th Marines. Plans also called for 3/3 to assume control of A/1/26 and to reorient its posture in preparation for a move back to KHE SANH on 13 May. 1/26 was to assume control of E/2/9(-) and responsibility for base defense. The downed E-34 was to be extracted on 12 May.

At 121004H A/1/26 completed helilift to Hill 881N and chopped to 3/3. During the same time K/3/9 moved from Hill 861 to a position 600 meters north (XD 777444). At 1200H 1/26 assumed control of E/2/9(-) and responsibility for base defense. At 1430H B/1/26 and the lead elements of the 26th Marines arrived at KHE SANH. At 1445H the remaining elements of 2/3 departed

for DONG HA by fixed wing, chopping to the 3d Marine Division. During the afternoon C/1/26(-) moved from Hill 881W to Hill 861 linking up with the platoon of E/2/9 which had occupied the hill since 1 May. At 1815H the downed H-34 was extracted by a CH-53, and the remaining platoon of C/1/26 moved to the K/3/9 position for the night.

At 1730H KHE SANH received notification that all Marine CH-46's were grounded because of a suspected structural deficiency. As a result, intentions for 13 May which had been predicated upon the use of 46's had to be altered. 3/3 was to move overland from Hill 881S with K/3/9, M/3/9 and the platoon of C/1/26 to Hill 861, leaving A/1/26 on the objective. Upon arrival at Hill 861 3/3 was to detach the C/1/26 platoon and attach the E/2/9 platoon. The battalion was then to move on to KHE SANH, leaving C/1/26 on Hill 861. Both 1/26 companies were to chop back to 1/26 upon the departure of 3/3 from their respective positions. Upon arrival at KHE SANH, the E/2/9 platoon was to return to its parent organization; the company then was to be transported to DONG HA by fixed wing. 3/3 was to move back to its THON SON IAM position by a ROUGH RIDER to be run out from DONG HA in the morning. A/1/13 was to arrive by fixed wing. In addition, the final elements of the HQ 26th Marines were to arrive and relieve the 3d Marines of responsibility for the KHE SANH area of operations.

At 130700H 3/3 departed Hill 881S, chopping A/1/26 to 1/26. At 0930H 3/3 had chopped the platoon of C/1/26 back to its parent organization and moved on toward KHE SANH with the platoon of E/2/9 from Hill 861, chopping C/1/26 to 1/26 in the process. 3/3 arrived at KHE SANH at 1130H and chopped the platoon of E/2/9 back to its parent organization. At 1146H the ROUGH RIDER arrived from DONG HA; 1315H 3/3 departed KHE SANH for THON SON IAM with K and M/3/9 moving on to CAMP CARROLL. At 1420H the lead elements of A/1/13 arrived at KHE SANH by fixed wing and at 1440H the lead elements of E/2/9 departed for DONG HA by the same aircraft.

At 131500H Colonel J. J. PADLEY, Commanding Officer, 26th Marines relieved Colonel J. P. IANIGAN, Commanding Officer, 3d Marines as SOP Third MarDiv/III MAF Rep/KHE SANH, thus terminating the Third Marines "Battle of KHE SANH".

Civil Affairs. Due to the fact that the "Battle for KHE SANH" concerned a direct confrontation between US Forces and the North Vietnamese Army, Civil Affairs activities were not conducted as a part of the actual operation and are therefore not mentioned.

Psychological Operations. Psychological Operations were directed predominantly toward one target audience, the enemy. During the course of the operation C-47 aircraft dropped propaganda leaflets with the themes of CHIEU HOI, NVA Hardship, Free World armed supremacy, and the inevitability of NVA defeat. Special drops were made following sunset. After the surrender of the rallier on 5 May, special efforts were made to induce additional ralliers within the battle area. UH-10 aircraft with speaker broadcast capability were dispatched to the battle area to broadcast assorted taped messages to the enemy emphasizing the inevitability of defeat and the

opportunities offered by the CHIEU HOI program. Included among these tapes was a special message recorded by the rallier to members of his own unit. These tapes were played for a period of two hours on two separate days. In addition to the aircraft broadcasts portable speaker teams were provided by the SLF and employed to make broadcasts for 2/3 in the vicinity of Hill 881N. The two teams were employed from 6-11 May and broadcast daily for a period of 1-2 hours.

Near the conclusion of the battle an effort was also made to inform the civilian population in the area of the victory over the North Vietnamese forces. Posters were printed and were distributed to the people through District Headquarters in KHE SANH and the Special Forces Camp at LANG VBI proclaiming the defeat of the North Vietnamese Army by the Free World forces as another example of the inevitable defeat of the National Liberation Front.

Enemy attitudes as displayed by the fierceness of the battle indicated a well-trained, well-led enemy capable of fighting a pitched battle on almost any terms. Discipline appeared to be excellent particularly when under the close supervision of small unit leaders. Prisoner and rallier interrogation, however, determined a small flaw in morale among the lower ranks as a result of the separation from home and family and the hardships involved in combat. This may have been no more than the emotion felt of all soldiers fighting away from home and suffering the normal hardships by war, but was more likely a weakness which can be exploited if followed up by a concerted psychological warfare program continually harping upon such themes as hardship, family separation, and the inevitability of defeat.

The attitude of the civilian population remained passive throughout the operation. The decisiveness of the victory should act as visible proof to them of the Free World promise to protect them from Communist attempts at aggression and subversion.

10. Results

a. U. S. Losses

(1) Total casualties; 168 KIA, 443 MIA, 2 MIA

(2) The breakdown of friendly casualties is shown in the columns below. The left hand column indicates those casualties suffered by 2d Bn, 3d Marines/3d Bn, 3d Marines units; Less B/9. The right hand column indicates those casualties suffered by Co B, 1st Bn, 0th Marines/Other units involved in the operation.

DATE	KIA	MIA	KIA	MIA
24 Apr	0/0	0/0	0/0	17/0
25	0/11	0/8	0/0	1/0
26	0/7	0/37	0/0	28/0
27	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0
28	0/0	2/0	0/0	0/7 (Recon)

DATE	KIA	WIA	KIA	WIA
29	0/2	0/10	0/0	0/0
30	12/43	56/109	0/0	0/0
1	3/0	13/1	0/0	0/0
2	6/0	7/2	0/0	0/0
3	27/0	34/0	0/0	0/0
4	1/0	12/0	0/2(USSF)	0/2(USSF)
5	1/0	14/0	0/0	0/0
6	0/0	2/1	0/0	0/0
7	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0
8	0/0	3/0	0/0	0/0
9	24/0	19/0	0/1(CAC)	0/0
10	0/0	0/0	0/4(Recon)	0/3(Recon)
11	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0
12	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0
13	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0
TOTAL	74/63	217/168	24/7	46/12

2 KIA suffered by 3/3 on 25 April

(2) Combat equipment losses sustained during the Battle of KHE SANH.

- (a) Two helicopters were downed - one extracted, one destroyed.
- (b) B/1/9 lost 1 AN/PRC-25 radio, 4 M-16 rifles, and assorted 782 gear.
- (c) 3/3 units lost or had destroyed 1 AN/PRC-25 radio, 40 M-16 rifles, and assorted 782 gear.

b. Enemy losses inflicted during the Battle of KHE SANH.

(1) Total casualties inflicted: 824 KIA (C), 551 KIA (P), 6 PW (NVA), 1 Returnee

(2) The breakdown of enemy casualties inflicted is shown in the columns below. The left hand column indicates those casualties inflicted by 2d Bn, 3d Marines/3d Bn, 3d Marines units, less B/1/9. The right hand column indicates those casualties inflicted by AIC/Co P, 1st Bn, 9th Marines and other units involved in the operation.

DATE	KIA (C)	KIA (P)	KIA (C)	KIA (P)
24	0/0	0/0	0/0 (B/1/9)	0/100 (B/1/9)
25	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0
26	0/4	0/0	0/0 (B/1/9)	10/62 (B/1/9)
27	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0
28	2/0	0/0	0/0	75/0
29	0/2	0/0	0/0	2/0
30	23/125	25/85	0/0	47/0

<u>DATE</u>	<u>KIA (C)</u>	<u>KIA (P)</u>	<u>KIA (C)</u>	<u>KIA (P)</u>
1 May	0/1	0/4	140/0	0/0
2	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0
3	2/0	5/5	3/0	0/0
4	137/0	124/4	0/0 (GIDG)	0/5 (GIDG)
5	5/0	0/0	0/0	3/0
6	6/1	60/0	5/0	4/0
7	1/0	0/0	0/0	13/0
8	1/0	0/0	0/0	0/0
9	31/0	45/0	0/0	5/0
10	0/0	0/0	7/0	24/0
11	0/0	0/0	0/0	2/0
12	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0
13	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0
TOTAL	208/143	250/143	252/27	185/167

In addition, 2/3 discovered 203 enemy graves on 9 May adding 203 KIA (C) and subtracting 203 KIA (P).

2/3 captured five prisoners during the operation: 3 on 3 May, 1 on 4 May, and 1 on 10 May. B/1/9 captured 1 prisoner on 25 April. Air support sighted and picked up 1 Returnee on 5 May.

c. Captured Enemy Equipment/Material during Battle for KHE SANH

(1) Weapons

AK-47 - 42
Machineguns - 10
Sniper Rifles - 10
Carbines - 21
60mm Mortar - 6
82mm Mortar - 7

(2) Weapons Accessories

RR Casings (Chinese Markings) - 11
Firing Table - 1
Rocket Launcher carrying case - 1
Fuses for 82mm - 3
Canisters for 82mm rds - 8
75mm RR canisters - 86
Barrel for Machinegun - 5
Rocket launcher's RPG's - 3
Anti-aircraft sights - 8
60mm mortar tube - 1
Drum magazine - 23
Magazine - 23
Magazine - 39
AK-47 Magazine - 7
LMC Barrel - 1
Mortar charges - 3 cans

82mm Mortar tube - 1
Base plates - 3
BIPOLS (82mm) - 2
Aiming Circle - 1

(3) Demolitions

Booby traps - 2
TNT - 5 lbs
Land mines - 4
Chicom blasting caps - 45
C-4 - 46 lbs
Claymore mines - 3
Chicom fuses - 12
Electric detonator device - 1
Powder - 1 keg
DH-10 frag mine - 1
82mm fuses - 4

(4) Ammunition

Chicom grenades - 205
Unknown type assorted ammo - 4350 rds
7.62 Chicom ammo - 2730 rds
Mortar rds 82mm - 118 rds
Rocket with propellant charge - 1
Sniper rifle rds - 937 rds
61mm mortar rds - 13 rds
Homemade grenades - 1
AT rds - 2 rds
AT-47 rds - 103 rds
50 caliber ammo - 7 boxes
7.62 chicom ammo - 4500 rds
Rockets - 10
75mm Rds - 5 rds
60mm rds - 2 rds
Gas grenade - 1

(5) Documents. Assorted documents were discovered throughout the Battle for KHE SANH. These documents included; newspapers/newsletters, propaganda leaflets, notebooks, diaries, NVA ID cards, money, mpas, and personal letters.

(6) Food

Rice - 800 lbs
Salt - 2 bags
Peanuts - 1 bag

- (7) Clothing. Assorted articles of clothing were discovered throughout the Rattle for KHE SANH. This clothing included: green utilities, khaki uniforms, jungle hats, brush hats, tennis shoes, civilian clothing, and black pajamas.

(8) Medical Supplies

Water purification tablets (French) - unknown number
Medical pills - unknown number
Salve - unknown
Bandages - unknown number
Syringes - 25
Stretchers - 1
Battle Dressings - unknown
Med pack - 1

(9) Communication Equipment

Electrical wire - 150 feet
Radio antennas - 1
Communications Wire - 1 roll
Telephones - 1

(10) Web Gear

Gas masks - 22
Canteens - 64
E Tools - 49
Shelter halves - 17
Ponchos - 49
Cartridge belts - 5
Picks - 24
Blankets - 33
Helmets - 9
Packs - 30
Plastic covers - 22
Hammocks - 7
Poncho liners - 5
Sewing kits - 1
Ammo pouches - 6
Canteen covers - 34
Benara type magazines - 6
Ammo belts - 21
Grenade pouches - 8
Haversacks - 20
Rucksacks - 3
Bamboo canteens - 2
Mosquito nets - 2
Knives - 1

(11) Miscellaneous

Bolt cutters - 1

Knife with sheath - 1
 Rice carrying bags - 1
 Cooking pots - 2
 Baskets - 3
 Large spoons - 2
 Large cooking containers - 1
 Drinking cups - 2
 Saws - 4
 Flashlights - 4
 Whistles - 4
 Rice bowls - 20
 Mirrors - 1
 Machettes - 2
 Shovels - 17
 Hammocks - 19
 Plastic Bags - 10
 Burlap Bags - 2
 Handbag - 1
 Binocular case - 1
 Grappling hooks - 1
 Silk parachute (small) - 5

d. Areas were generally searched or AO's provided surveillance after artillery and close air support missions. The searches were not always conducted immediately after the air strikes or artillery missions due to darkness or continuing preparation fires. AO surveillance was not able to provide a complete assessment of target damage in every case due to impending darkness, poor visibility, or heavy foliage.

11. Administrative Matters

a. Administrative plans issued by the separate battalions along with guidance from Regiment proved adequate in handling administrative matters on an occurring basis. Administrative traffic for the units was handled by the rear echelons of the involved units.

b. Casualties were treated in the field when appropriate; otherwise, they were evacuated to KHE SANH for triage and on to permanent facilities to the rear. The expeditious treatment and evacuation of wounded casualties during the operation was a determining factor in the recovery and return to duty of many individuals and a definite asset to the fighting spirit and morale of the troops. Many of the WIA were light and while initially evacuated were returned to duty within 72 hours.

(1) All 2/3 WIA's were evacuated to the USMC PRINCETON for treatment. All other WIA's were evacuated either to KHE BA, PHU BAI, or DA NANG.

(2) All KIA's were initially processed at a grave's registration detachment at KHE SANH and were then transported to KHE BA for further

processing, in some cases for identification, and for further evacuation, except that those bodies definitely identified as 2/3 KIA's were evacuated from KHE SANH to the USS PRINCETON.

c. Logistics. Logistic planning at KHE SANH was originally predicated upon maintaining dump levels for the support of one infantry battalion and one artillery battery in addition to various base personnel. Along with the rapid troop buildup an attendant increase in the on-hand dump level status was necessary. This was accomplished by additional cargo lifts from DA NANG to the KHE SANH LSA which was responsible for the logistic support of operations in the KHE SANH area.

d. Supply

The supply system utilized during this operation was one in common practice throughout South Vietnam. That of the units in the field submitting directly to the supporting L.S.U. During the initial phases of the operation L.S.U. personnel handled the resupply. Shore Party Platoon attached to BLT 2/3 arrived on 2 May 1967 and at once took over the Landing Zone and L.S.U. personnel returned to their primary mission.

During the operation the only shortages which existed were initially in the areas of individual clothing such as medium utilities, skivies, and weapons cleaning gear. This shortage was eliminated within 48 hours. No other shortages existed and all requests were met by the L.S.U.

Units in the field had MCI rations supplemented daily with fresh fruits, canned juices, and sundry packs.

Combat loads, ammunition and weapons consisted of standard T/E Marine Corps equipment. Replacement items were not immediately available and shortages did exist in areas such as communications, primarily radios and hand sets. This was overcome by local adjustments pending arrival of replacement items.

e. Maintenance

Ordnance and electronic maintenance was a minor problem. L.S.U. had repair personnel, however, did not maintain sufficient spare parts to support such a large and prolonged operation.

Some weapons and radios were repaired and returned to the units in the field.

f. Transportation

All resupply was moved by helicopter and the results were outstanding. The only problems encountered were the heat and altitude of the area of operation. This limited the amount of gear that could be moved and thereby increased the number of helicopter loads required for resupply.

g. Medical Evacuation, Treatment, and Evaluation

During the course of the operation an intermediate treatment station was set up on the air strip at KHE SANH by a detachment from A Med at PHU Bai. This aid station provided intermediate level treatment between the corpsmen in the field and the permanent medical facilities to the rear. Casualties were evacuated to this facility from the field by helicopter. Evacuation was as expeditious as possible, limited only by insecure landing zones on occasion.

In addition to hostile action casualties, the predominant number of non-hostile casualties which was small in number occurred from heat exhaustion caused by the heat and extreme exertion in situations where resupply of water was not always immediately forthcoming because of the tactical situation. In most cases these men were evacuated from the field at first opportunity, treated in the aid station at KHE SANH, and returned to duty.

Any medical treatment required beyond the capabilities of the aid station at KHE SANH was furnished by the permanent medical facilities to the rear. Transportation was accomplished either by helicopter or fixed wing and was furnished in most cases within $\frac{1}{2}$ hour after receipt of the casualty from the field.

h. Communications

(1) Radio

(a) Normal radio circuits were established.

(b) Retransmission and manual radio relay sites were established for using units atop Hill 950 just to the north of KHE SANH and maintained during the entire operation.

(c) The radio set AN/PRC-25 continued to be the backbone of the communication system, providing high quality modulation with good range capability.

(2) Radio - Relay/Wire

(a) Wire lines were laid within the KHE SANH Base and provided rapid and efficient service with a minimum of difficulty.

(b) Radio-Relay provided a problem during operation due to the limited amount of equipment to support an operation of such size. KHE SANH possessed three MRC-62's for communication with CAMP CARROLL, DONG HA, and PHU Bai. This required a realignment to increase telephone traffic required with the Division Command Post when control of the operation was shifted directly to Division vice through 3d Marines at CAMP CARROLL. While the communications was crowded it did not materially affect the operation

and at no time was communications with higher or lower units out.

(3) In general, all communications facilities were initially limited by the rapid troop buildup, but rapid supplementation by Division augmented by the SLF alleviated most of the problems within a minimum amount of time.

12. Special Equipment and Techniques Employed. There were really no special equipment and/or techniques used. Due to the volume of air used and the predominant use of Airborne Controllers it was essential that front lines be vividly marked at all times. Additional air panels were provided so that on the order of one out of four men had an air panel. While moving these were affixed to the pack of one man in each fire team. They were displayed on the ground when the unit went into a fixed position for the night or marked their lines for the conduct of heavy air strikes of any duration.

13. Commander's Analysis

a. Once the enemy was fixed this was a conventional infantry attack against a well trained, highly disciplined, well dug-in enemy force. The protective bunkers, of which there were many, were covered by layers of logs alternated with layers of dirt averaging 4 foot in thickness. These bunkers would withstand artillery and up to 500 lbs bombs. For the most part the bunkers were located 20 to 50 feet into very dense jungle. This meant that first it was necessary to employ air to strip away the foliage and trees in order even to locate the bunkers and then to attack the bunkers. The stripping was best accomplished by the use of bombs and by using multiple attacks salvaging the loads and methodically moving across a hill or ridge covering it in as much detail as possible. Napalm used initially against the dense foliage was of little value since it burned on top of the foliage. The cover must be cleared away before supporting arms are effective against the positions encountered.

b. Air Liaison and Forward Air Controllers while infrequently able to personally control air strikes were in continuous radio contact with the Airborne Controllers and directed and controlled to a great extent the coverage of an objective. The airborne controllers were invaluable in the strikes, assessing damage and providing intelligence to the Regiment and Battalion. The debrief of these personnel after their flights and the briefing prior to their flights on the area to be attacked was of the utmost importance. Having the same personnel day after day greatly enhanced this phase of the operation.

c. Even though the terrain is highly restrictive, it is absolutely essential that squads, platoons and companies alike deploy on the widest possible front that the terrain permits. You must have the maximum fire power up forward when the enemy is met. A single column will be at an immediate disadvantage when it meets the enemy and subsequent deployment will meet with very little success until fire superiority is gained. The terrain must always be very carefully read in order to advance across it with the widest formation possible.

d. It is essential that when combat patrols or reconnaissance in force elements are sent out on the ground that more than one be employed and that parallel routes be selected preferably within 200 meters but not more than 400 meters separating them. This gives the capability of providing mutual support from a flank as opposed to reinforcing from behind or by means of helicopter.

e. The M16 proved its great value in weight of the weapon and the weight of the ammunition. The amount of ammunition that can be carried is nearly double that of the M14. This proved to be a very important factor on the initial attack on Objective 2 (Hill 8818). The Company Commander of M/3/3 stated he would have been out of ammunition at the most critical time of the attack if his company had been armed with the M14.

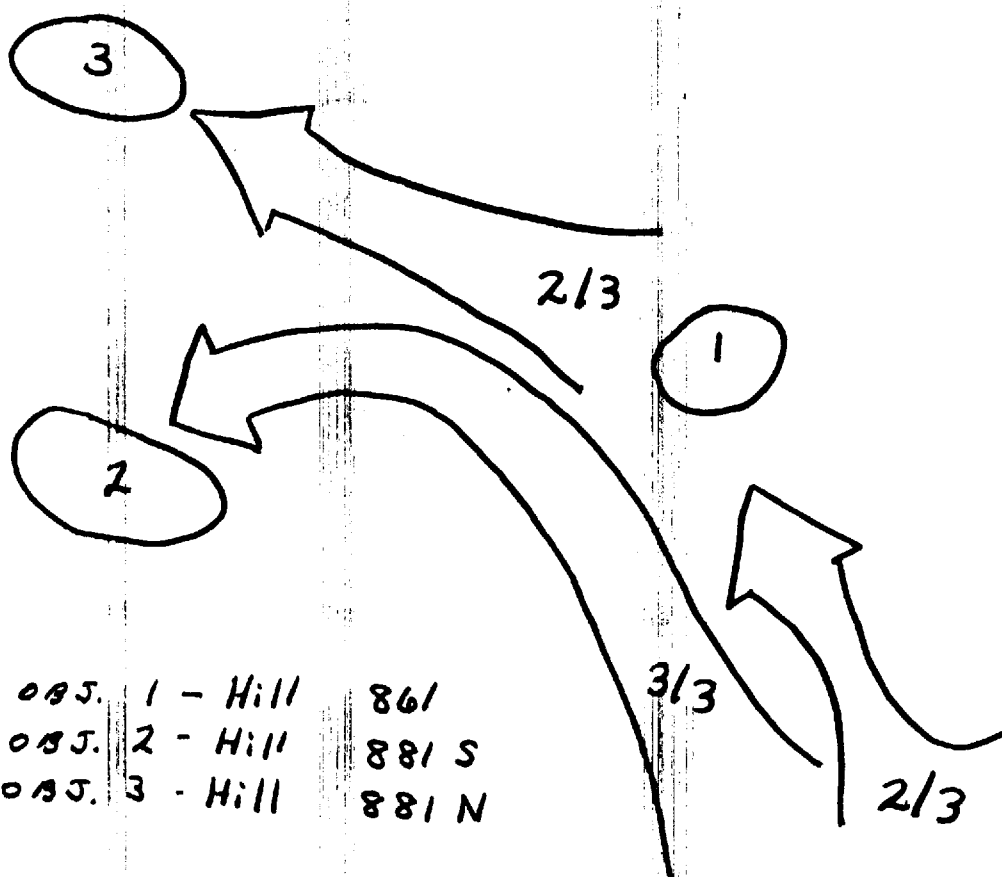
f. The 196mm HR rifle was introduced into the operation shortly after the seizure of Objective 1 and proved to be an excellent support weapon. It could be used while air strikes and helicopter lifts were in progress. The two battalions on numerous occasions were in a position to mutually support one another with the 196 HR. These weapons were displaced from ridgeline to ridgeline by helicopter and were used extensively with outstanding results. During the night attack on E/2/3, 3/3 delivered close-in protective fires from Hill 8818 throughout the attack and was able to bring the fire to within a hundred yards or less of the perimeter. Over a hundred rounds were fired during this attack and was one of the deciding factors in winning this fight.

g. While not a lesson learned, but an old one brought to mind, is Close Air Support. The Close Air Support was the most accurate and devastating that I have observed in three wars. This is concurred in by the Battalion Commanders of 2/3 and 3/3. At times it was called in less than 500 meters from the front lines with excellent target coverage and destruction. Weather proved to be a problem about 25 percent of the time. Visibility at times was too low for any support but more often was 1900 feet or less clearance above the objective. Air support during this period could not attack targets with heavy ordnance such as 750 lbs bombs and above. Aircraft carrying snakeeyes and napalm, however, could be used. The weather had to be watched closely and the Wing advised as to the ordnance to carry. On infrequent occasions aircraft would arrive in the area and have to be diverted or returned due to ordnance load and weather conditions.

J. P. Langan
J. P. LANGAN

SCHEME OF MANUEVER

83
46



OBJ. 1 - Hill 861
OBJ. 2 - Hill 881 S
OBJ. 3 - Hill 881 N

78
41

SERIES L 8020
SHEET 6342 III N
SCALE 1:50,000