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khe sanh 1 (normass/deepe)

SAIGON, APRIL 12--An escalation towards heavier fighting is expected soon in the battle around Khe Sanh.

But, the form of the fighting by both sides has changed tactically, reliable sources report.

The spectre of a massive Communist ground assault in the setpiece fashion of Dien Bien Phu has vanished at this point, these sources said. First, because of the immensity of American military power and mobility there, second, because the American command is reportedly ~~turning the base~~ shifting the holding power of the base from American Marine to Vietnamese regulars--and even these regulars Vietnamese forces could be withdrawn. Third, the significance of Khe Sanh for the Communists has consistently been measured by official sources as a ~~hinge~~ dramatic hinge to swing the American political party conventions, if not the election, which meant their grand assault should have come in July, when the monsoon rains also began to shift in their favor. But, President Johnson's April 1 eliminated the American conventions and election as the ~~pivot~~ decisive point in the Communist timetable--and hence the political ~~sign~~ significance of the ~~base~~ Khe Sanh also vanished ~~from the Communist viewpoint,~~ these sources report.

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khe sanh 2 (normass/deepe)

In the wake of the 30,000-man Allied operation around the combat base, the Communists have reportedly shifted from positional warfare, once used to besiege the former Marine base, to mobile warfare of harrassing and briefly contesting the Allied forces. In short, they have shifted to a mobile, momentary frontline, rather than a rigid one encircling the base camp.

American ~~the~~ tactics have also shifted from the Marine concept of holding a static, fixed position—a concept ordered by their ~~superior~~ superior headquarters—to the Army concept of highly mobile, heliborne operations covering wide ~~expanses~~ expanses quickly and with more flexibility. The Army ~~concept~~ concept is essentially the classical search-and-destroy operation General William C. Westmoreland has espou<sup>ed</sup> ~~implemented~~ consistently attempt to employ here. <sup>throughout VIETNAM.</sup>

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khe sanh 43 (normass/deepe)

*military*

The relative mildness of the ~~contacts~~ <sup>military</sup> thus far--relative compared to the spectre of Dien Bien Phu--has lead to the conclusion among many leading ~~Vietnae~~ <sup>SAIGON</sup> Vietnamese ~~salon~~ <sup>SAIGON</sup> salon ~~politician~~ politicians here that ~~diplomatic~~ a ~~tacit~~ <sup>initiated</sup> tacit diplomatic deal had been made between Washington and Hanoi to militarily disengage in the Khe Sanh area. This view--while widespread in sophisticated circles here--however appears to be ~~perpetrated~~ <sup>initiated</sup> by pro-French, if not pro-Communist, elements striving to widen the ~~misunderstanding and suspecit~~ suspicion and cleavage between the American ~~official~~ officialdom here and the Vietnamese government. The gist of this line is that Washington and the Communists have already made a deal for a pre-cooked peace, in which South Vietnamese would be sold out by the Americans. This line of reasoning appears to be an extension of the ~~fiction~~ <sup>lethal, fallacious</sup> ~~absurd~~ propaganda circulating in Saigon, Hue and other cities during the Tet offensive, ~~from~~ intimating that the American command had deliberately let the Communist troops into the cities as a means to force the government of President Nguyen Van Thieu to negotiate. The result of this whirlwind of ~~in~~ propaganda ~~has~~ has been a net lack of confidence on the part of Vietnamese leaders in the Americans, <sup>FWD</sup> a great deal of confusion in the ~~ma~~ minds of pro-American, anti-Communists. Significantly, neither the American command nor mission spokesmen are countering this ~~prop~~ propaganda, saying they are not <sup>authorized to discuss diplomatic developments.</sup>

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khe sanh 4 (normass/deepe)

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However, more studious and informed sources here believe that no tacit Hanoi-Washington understanding had been reached about Khe Sanh for these <sup>four</sup> ~~three~~ reasons:

1. The Communist strategy is not to de-escalate the military war while negotiating--but to escalate it. This position, ~~was~~ clearly expressed in a mammoth ~~of~~ captured Communist document, states that "Fighting continues until the emergence of a situation where both sides are fighting indecisively. Then, a situation where fighting and negotiations are conducted simultaneously ~~may~~ may emerge. In fighting while negotiating, the side which fights more strongly will ~~compel~~ compel the ~~ad~~ adversary to accept his conditions."

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khe sanh 5 (normass/áeepe)

2. Both Radio Hanoi and the Liberation Radio ~~in the southern~~ Viet Cong have commented at length about Operation Pegasus/Lam Son 207 which they call the "Flying Horse" operation. They have claimed victories there, which seem exaggerated in Western eyes, and to such an extent that it appears the lifting of the siege around Khe Sanh has put them on the propaganda defensive. Their broadcasts forecast more fighting and are especially vitriolic about General Westmoreland.

The Liberation Front Press, similar to radio broadcasts from Hanoi, said, "The fighting and victories at Khe Sanh are a big slap in the mouth of defeated General Westmoreland when he left Vietnam for Washington and boasted the military situation of the Americans in the South has improved. With our trend of one victory after another victory (around Khe Sanh), the people and the military forces in Quang Tri province (along the demilitarized zone) will move forward to gain bigger victories, push the Americans and their puppets down into an abyss of complete defeat."

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khe sanh 7 (normass/deepe)

3. The classical Communist military tactics that they have used for years has been to withdraw in the face of superior superior forces or when the military disadvantages prevailed against their staying in some victorious manner. Hence, the <sup>at this time</sup> ~~withdrawal~~ <sup>partial</sup> Communist withdrawal <sup>we have</sup> if in fact they have withdrawn—would suit them better <sup>to justify withdrawal</sup> ~~than~~ political arrangement with Washington to militarily disengage.

Just how many Communist troops were ever around the Khe Sanh base was <sup>2</sup> ~~an~~ matter of conjecture ~~we~~ even a month ago—when and if they have withdrawn and why is still a source of <sup>Special interest</sup> ~~questioning~~ here. The Marines at Khe Sanh consistently maintained that two divisions were near the base, including some in Laos, and that they had captured prisoners and defectors who verified this. Others, however, believed that only "elements" of two divisions were in the area.

The Washington statement by Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford <sup>A month ago</sup> ~~before President Johnson's April~~ that the Communist divisions withdrew ~~because of overwhelming American firepower is also~~ <sup>questioned</sup> ~~addressed~~ <sup>contradicted</sup> here.

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khe sanh (normass/deepe)

"We know there were two full (Communist) divisions around Khe Sanh by March 30, with enough people to mount an ~~off~~ offensive, whether they chose to assault or not," one high-ranking American officer explained. "We don't know where ~~the~~ they've gone now--or even if they've gone ~~any~~ anywhere. But, if ~~they~~ anyone made them leave, it had to be airpower and artillery. There was certainly no one on the ground to make them leave before that the ~~FI ground~~ First Air Cavalry and Vietnamese moved in."

Special news  
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17 months ago

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khe sanh 8 (normass/deepe)

4. For the Communists, Khe Sanh lost its political significance with President Johnson's April 1 speech. The prevailing view of officials in Saigon was that Khe Sanh was important to the Communists only as a hinge to swing the American political nominations or the elections. Hence, their attack grand ground assault--if actually planned--would have been launched in July or August, for maximum impact within America.

But, on April 1, President Johnson in effect assumed the Kennedy position by undertaking negotiations and proposing a political settlement. And by refusing to accept a renomination for the Presidency, Mr. Johnson increased the likelihood for Hanoi it would be faced with a hard-line Richard Nixon as the next president, rather than a soft-line Robert Kennedy. Kennedy.

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