Battle for Khe Sanh

Collections Index

Archives Branch

Marine Corps History Division

Quantico, VA

2011
Introduction

The Archives Branch supports the professional military education requirements of Marine Corps residential and distance learning programs. They are the chief repository for reporting units as well as for personal papers of current and veteran Marines. The Archives is open without appointment to both military and civilian patrons, and a professional archivist is always available for assistance. Patrons may bring laptops, digital cameras, and personal scanners for use in the reading room.

Contacting the Archives Branch

Physical address: 2044 Broadway Street, Quantico, VA 22134
Phone: (703) 784-4685
Email: mcu_archives@usmcu.edu
Hours: Monday – Friday, 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Administrative Information

Restrictions: Collections are open to all researchers

Preferred citation: Researchers wishing to cite these collections should include the following information:

[Name of Collection], [Folder heading], [Collection Number], Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

Historical Note

In the summer of 1967, American commanders learned of a build-up of People's Army of North Vietnam (PAVN) forces in the area around Khe Sanh in northwest South Vietnam. Responding to this, the Khe Sanh Combat Base was reinforced by elements of the 26th Marine Regiment. Also, outposts on the surrounding hills were occupied by American forces.

That fall, a supply convoy was ambushed by PAVN forces on Route 9. This was the last overland attempt to resupply Khe Sanh until the following April. Through December, PAVN troops were spotted in the area, but there was little fighting. With the increase in enemy activity a decision was needed regarding whether to further reinforce Khe Sanh or abandon the position. Assessing the situation, General William Westmoreland elected to increase the troop levels at KSCB.

This was supported by Lieutenant General Robert Cushman, commander of the III Marine Amphibious Force. In late December and early January, intelligence reported the arrival of the 325th, 324th, and 320th PAVN divisions within striking distance of KSCB.
In response, additional Marines were moved to the base. On January 21 Hill 861 was attacked by about 300 PAVN troops, while KSCB was heavily shelled.

The attack was repulsed and the base was reinforced with more Marines. The defense of the base was named Operation Scotland. Marine patrols engaged the enemy on 30 March and the next day Operation Scotland was ended and the area was turned over to the 1st Air Cavalry Division for the beginning of Operation Pegasus.

Operation Pegasus called for elements of the 1st and 3rd Marine Regiments to attack up Route 9 towards Khe Sanh. Jumping off on 1 April, Pegasus met little resistance as American forces moved west. The first major engagement occurred on 6 April, when a day-long battle was fought with a PAVN blocking force. Fighting largely concluded with a three-day fight near Khe Sanh village.

Scope and Content

The Archives Branch holds approximately 30 collections related to the Marine Corps and Khe Sanh. This finding aid highlights some of those collections, focusing on those that have notably unique content, are large in volume, or are regularly used by Branch patrons. Included in this compilation are collections that contain official Marine Corps reference records; personal papers collections; photograph collections; map collections; and oral histories.

Research Collections

Title Vietnam War Collection
Record COLL/3808
Home A/23/G/5/2

Collection includes an after action report issued by 3d Marine Division for the battle of Khe Sahn, April – May 1967 (located in Box 5, Folder 12)

Personal Papers Collections

Title Anthony C. Borja, Jr. Memoir
Record COLL/4823
Home A/29/C/7/4

Memoir titled Tour of Duty: My Year in Vietnam: 1968 written by Borja. Borja was a member of 1st Battalion, 9th Marines (1/9), 3d Marine Division and participated in fighting at Khe Sanh from 21 January - April 1968.

Title James R. Cannon Memoir
Record COLL/1364
Home A/14/G/6/1
Memoir titled *The Khe Sanh Hill Fights* written by Cannon. The memoir recounts fighting by Echo Company, 2d Battalion, 3d Marines (2/3) from April - May 1967 in the Hill 881N area. Cannon served as the Platoon Commander of 2d Platoon, Echo Company.

Title Carlton Crenshaw Maps
Record COLL/4567
Home A/5/J/5/3

Eleven original maps, circa 1967 - 1968, of various areas in Vietnam. These maps were used by Crenshaw while serving in the Marine Corps during the Vietnam War in 1967 and 1968. Many of them bear notes and/or markings written in pen or grease pencil during operations. Mr. Crenshaw was a lieutenant and an infantry officer, serving at Con Thien and Khe Sanh.

Title Eric Hammel
Record COLL/1985
Home A/5/F/3/3

Collection contains three boxes of Khe Sanh research questionnaires returned to Hammel documenting accounts of experiences at the Khe Sanh Combat Base between January and 15 April 1968. The questionnaires were mailed out by Hammel to Marine Corps veterans to obtain material for his book, *Khe Sanh: Siege in the Clouds*.

Title John M. Kaheny Photographs
Record COLL/99
Home A/10/L/3/3

Nineteen color photographs taken in 1968 at Khe Sanh where Kaheny served with H&S Company, 1st Battalion, 26th Marines. The photographs record daily life in the Khe Sanh area and include photographs of Hill 881 South in 1967. Other subjects documented are Vietnamese civilians, damage to bunkers, and a change of command ceremony.

Title William W. Legal Collection
Record COLL/4755
Home A/5/H/2/2

A collection of material from Legal’s service with the 2d Engineer Battalion in Vietnam. Relevant portions include a journal he wrote in from October 1966-July 1968, and photographs taken at Khe Sanh of the surrounding hills and the Marines in camp.

Title Lawrence J. Seavy-Cioffi Memoir
Record COLL/73
Home A/10/L/3/2
Collection consists of a 68 page memoir recounting the battle for Hill 64 on 8 February 1968 during the fighting for Khe Sanh. The outpost was overrun by North Vietnamese regulars and only by hand to hand combat was the assault repulsed. The memoir is a vivid account of that night's action from the viewpoint of Seavy-Cioffi who was assigned to the 9th Marines as a forward observer from the 12th Marines. Two maps and a supporting statement from another member of the platoon are also included.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Ted Vdorick Photographs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Record</td>
<td>COLL/1237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td>A/28/C/7/2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thirty-eight color photographs taken in the area around Khe Sanh during early 1968. Vdorick served with 1st Battalion, 9th Marines (1/9). The photographs include images from Operations Pegasus and Scotland; and Marines on Hills 689 and 471.