H COMPANY, 2ND BATTALION, 5TH MARINES

AUGUST 1966 — OPERATION COLORADO

Compiled from the 2/5 Command Chronology for 1–31 August 1966

1st Marine Division · III Marine Amphibious Force · I Corps, Republic of Vietnam

1. Unit Overview

Unit Designation	Hotel Company (H Co), 2nd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division
Reporting Period	1–31 August 1966
Commander	Captain R. D. Hughes, commanding Company H
Higher HQ	2nd Battalion, 5th Marines (LtCol Walter Moore) under the 5th Marines for Operation Colorado; 1st Marine Division
Area of Operations	Hiep Duc and the Song Ly Ly valley, Quang Tin and Quang Nam Provinces (Operation Colorado, 6–15 August); Tam Ky; then the Chu Lai TAOR
Combat Posture	Offensive — helicopter-borne search and destroy on Colorado, then company operations and saturation patrolling in the TAOR
Base of Operations	Hill 69 complex (BT 464072); battalion CP at Tam Ky (coord 290232) during Colorado
Corps Area	I Corps Tactical Zone, Republic of Vietnam

2. Commander's Summary

August opened with Operation Colorado, and it was the hardest month Hotel Company had yet had. “The battalion was helilifted repeatedly into indisputable enemy territory to assess ARC-LIGHT strike damage and to effect physical contact with an enemy force that our best intelligence had rated in excess of one division,” the commander wrote. 2/5 (-)(Rein) took part from 6 to 15 August in the Hiep Duc – Song Ly Ly valley, making twelve helicopter insertions and extractions before returning to the Chu Lai TAOR.

Hotel Company (Rein) was lifted from Hill 69 to the first objective on the morning of 6 August, swept north-east under the air strikes, and was extracted the same afternoon with four heat casualties. On 7 August its 1st Platoon took a section of tanks out to hold a bridge until Regional and Popular Forces relieved them. On 9 August the company went into another landing zone and cleared a village ahead of the move to Hill 150.

The cost came at Tam Ky. At 0215 on 12 August the battalion perimeter and the helicopter fuel area took eight to twelve rounds of 81mm mortar, an unknown number of 57mm recoilless rifle rounds and

about 200 rounds of small-arms fire from the north. The initial casualty report was three Marines of Hotel Company killed and twenty-two wounded, with three more wounded in Company G; the consolidated report the next day gives three killed and twenty-eight wounded in the company. A reaction force of two platoons with tanks extended the perimeter and the enemy withdrew; by first light Hotel Company patrols were sweeping north of Tam Ky. The battalion returned to Hill 69 on 14–15 August, and Colorado was terminated on 22 August. The rest of the month went to two- and three-day company operations on the edges of the TAOR, to the County Fair operation “Key Chain” on 28 August, and to base development before the monsoon.

3. Operations Overview

Operation / Activity	Dates	Description
Operation Colorado (Lien Ket 52)	6–15 August 1966 (terminated 22 August)	H COMPANY PARTICIPATED. A coordinated ground reconnaissance and search-and-destroy operation in the Hiep Duc – Song Ly Ly valley, Quang Tin and Quang Nam Provinces, with ARVN forces, under 5th Marines Operation Order 322-66. 2/5 (-)(Rein) made twelve helicopter insertions and extractions and returned to its Chu Lai TAOR on 15 August, standing by until Colorado ended on 22 August.
Tam Ky perimeter attack	12 August 1966	At 120215H the battalion perimeter and helicopter fuel area at coord 288232 received 8 to 12 rounds of 81mm mortar, an unknown number of 57mm recoilless rifle rounds and about 200 rounds of small-arms fire from the north. Initial casualties: 3 USMC KIA and 22 USMC WIA in Company H, 3 USMC WIA in Company G; the consolidated casualty report the following day gives 3 killed and 28 wounded in Company H.
Company operations on the TAOR extremities	16–27 August 1966	Far-reaching company operations of two and three days to secure ground on the edges of the TAOR left untended during the battalion's absence on Colorado, followed by renewed saturation patrolling and ambushing.
County Fair operation “Key Chain”	28 August 1966	The battalion provided two companies (-) as blocking forces for a company-size sweep of the hamlets of Ky Sanh (1) and Ky Long.

4. Chronology of Company H Activities

Compiled from the commander's narrative summary, the Operation Colorado after action report and the chronological sequence of events in the 2/5 command chronology for 1–31 August 1966. Coordinates during Colorado are given as recorded in the operation's message traffic.

Date	Activity / Events
1–5 Aug	Planning and preparation for Operation Colorado; patrolling and ambushing continued in the TAOR. A Hotel Company squad helped an engineer party salvage a mined vehicle.
6 Aug	At 060915H Company H (Rein) was helilifted from Hill 69 to the first objective under 5th Marines Operation Order 322-66, going into the landing zone at 061015H and sweeping north-east. Air strikes were put in ahead of the company with good coverage. Four VC suspects were picked up for screening; four Marines were evacuated as heat casualties; the company was extracted at 061430H. At 061800H it captured three more suspects, two of them identified as VC by villagers.
7–8 Aug	At 071920H the 1st Platoon with a section of tanks left Tam Ky for bridge security. At 081020H it was relieved by Regional and Popular Forces personnel and returned to the battalion command post at Tam Ky (coord 290232).
9–10 Aug	At 090840H the first elements of Company H went into the landing zone, all units in by 090850H with no enemy contact. At 091140H the company moved to clear a village in preparation for the move of Company H and the command group to Hill 150. On 10 August a Hotel Company platoon patrol engaged VC with M-60 fire; the enemy returned fire and fled.
11 Aug	At 111700H the 3rd Platoon provided convoy security for Company E's move to the 2/11 artillery position at coord 226320, returning to Tam Ky at 111830H.
12 Aug	At 120215H the battalion perimeter and helicopter fuel area at coord 288232 received 8 to 12 rounds of 81mm mortar, an unknown number of 57mm recoilless rifle rounds and about 200 rounds of small-arms fire from the north. Initial estimated casualties: 3 USMC KIA Company H, 22 USMC WIA Company H, 3 USMC WIA Company G — the consolidated report the next day gives 3 killed and 28 wounded in Company H. At 120220H a battalion reaction force of two platoons with tanks extended the perimeter and returned fire; the enemy withdrew with no further contact. At 120600H patrols from Companies G and H with tanks swept north of Tam Ky. At 120910H a Hotel Company patrol at coord 280241 picked up three suspects, and at 120930H it checked a large group of Vietnamese at coord 275231 and brought in three more.
14–15 Aug	At 141400H the battalion returned to the Hill 69 command post complex from Operation Colorado, remaining on standby until the operation was terminated on 22 August.
16–27 Aug	Company operations of two and three days on the extremities of the TAOR, then renewed patrolling and ambushing. On 20 August a Hotel Company squad patrol found a US M-26 grenade booby-trapped with a trip wire to a punji stake and destroyed it in place; the company command post is recorded that day at coord 448028.
28–31 Aug	The battalion conducted the County Fair operation “Key Chain” on 28 August, providing two companies (-) as blocking forces for a sweep of the hamlets of Ky Sanh (1) and Ky Long, and closed the month on base development work and TAOR patrolling.

5. Notes and Caveats

This file was rewritten on 19 September 2026 directly from the 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines command chronologies. The notes below record what changed and where the record is thin.

1. SOURCE. The 2/5 command chronology for 1–31 August 1966 (Texas Tech item 1201048072), including the Combat After Action Report for Operation Colorado and the daily message traffic filed with it.

2. THE 12 AUGUST ATTACK. The mortar and recoilless rifle attack on the Tam Ky perimeter is the heaviest loss Hotel Company suffered in 1966: three Marines killed and twenty-two wounded in the first minutes, rising to three killed and twenty-eight wounded in the consolidated casualty report of the following day, against three wounded in Company G. The battalion's monthly casualty table is partly illegible in the scan, so a small further variation is possible. This action does not appear in the earlier version of this file at all.

3. CHANGE OF COMMAND CORRECTED. The earlier version had 1stLt J. J. Doherty commanding Hotel Company until 16 August 1966, when he was said to have moved to battalion S-4 and an unnamed officer took the company. The records do not support this. The June chronology shows Doherty commanding Company H to 25 June and Capt R. D. Hughes from 26 June; the July and August chronologies both list Captain Hughes as commanding officer of Company H. Doherty appears in the August list as battalion Communications Officer for 1–15 August. This also settles the commander named on the Colorado after action report.

4. OPERATION MACON REMOVED. As in the July file, the claim that Hotel Company was conducting Operation Macon around An Hoa has been removed; Macon was a 1/9 operation and 2/5 was in the Chu Lai TAOR and at Tam Ky. The 24 August “first convoy along Liberty Road” entry belongs to the An Hoa story, not to this company.

5. ORIGINALS. National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 127, Records of the United States Marine Corps. For full records contact National Archives II, 8601 Adelphi Road, College Park MD 20740, or Marine Corps History Division, Quantico VA 22134.

6. Sources

This document was compiled from the following primary and secondary sources:

PRIMARY SOURCES

— 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines Command Chronology for the period 1–31 August 1966 (Texas Tech University Vietnam Archive item 1201048072), including the Combat After Action Report for Operation Colorado and 5th Marines Operation Order 322-66.

— Section I organisational data, 1–31 August 1966, which lists Capt R. D. Hughes as commanding officer of Company H and 1stLt J. J. Doherty as battalion Communications Officer, 1–15 August.

SECONDARY SOURCES

— Shulimson, Jack and Charles M. Johnson. U.S. Marines in Vietnam: An Expanding War, 1966. History and Museums Division, HQMC, 1982.

— “Hotel Company.” Hotel 2/5 Combat Marines. https://hotel25vv.com/hotel-company

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