H COMPANY, 2ND BATTALION, 5TH MARINES

NOVEMBER 1966 — FROM THE DMZ TO AN HOA

Compiled from the 2/5 October and December 1966 chronologies; the November chronology does not survive

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	1–30 November 1966
Commander	Not documented for November. Capt J. A. Getchell commanded Company H from 9 October 1966; Capt J. J. Doherty was in command for the whole of December 1966.
Higher HQ	2nd Battalion, 5th Marines (LtCol William C. Airheart) — OPCON 4th Marines / 3d Marine Division on Operation Prairie to 23 November; OPCON 9th Marines from 231100H November
Area of Operations	Quang Tri Province south of the DMZ (to 23 November); An Hoa, Quang Nam Province, and the Que Son and Duc Duc districts (from 23 November)
Combat Posture	Offensive — Operation Prairie, then the move south and Operation Mississippi
Base of Operations	Patrol base near the DMZ, Quang Tri Province; then An Hoa Combat Base
Corps Area	I Corps Tactical Zone, Republic of Vietnam

2. Commander's Summary

November was the month Hotel Company left the DMZ for An Hoa — the base it would be identified with for the rest of its war. The battalion's own November chronology is missing from the digitised series, so the month has to be reconstructed from the October chronology, which ends with the battalion still on Operation Prairie, and from the December chronology, whose Mississippi after action report looks back on the move.

The first three weeks were a continuation of October: patrolling and ambushing in Quang Tri Province under the 4th Marines. Then, in the words of the after action report, “the initial warning order for Operation Mississippi was received on 22 November 1966, when the battalion was still deployed at Dong Ha, OPCON to 4th Marine Regiment. On operation Prairie. At 230800H leading elements of the battalion commenced airlift to AN HOA and to 231100H 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines (-) became OPCON 9th Marines Regiment for operation Mississippi and eventual responsibility for the AN HOA TAOR.”

Planning was continuous from then on. The 9th Marines issued Operation Order 124-66 on 24 November; the battalion issued Frag Order 30-66 the same day and briefed daily. D-Day was set for 25 November and postponed day after day by weather and aircraft availability until 29 November. On 27 November 2/5 was assigned operational control of the An Hoa TAOR. At 291000H the battalion went into the Que Son objective area by helicopter — Company F first, then the command group, then Company H (Rein), then Company G — under sniper fire, and Operation Mississippi had begun.

3. Operations Overview

Operation / Activity	Dates	Description
Operation Prairie	1–23 November 1966	H COMPANY PARTICIPATED. Continuation of the 3d Marine Division operation in Quang Tri Province under the 4th Marines, from the battalion's patrol base near the DMZ. 2/5's part in Prairie ended with the airlift to An Hoa on 23 November.
Move to An Hoa	22–23 November 1966	The warning order for Mississippi reached the battalion at Dong Ha on 22 November. Leading elements began the airlift to An Hoa at 230800H, and at 231100H 2/5 (-) came under the operational control of the 9th Marines.
An Hoa TAOR assigned	27 November 1966	2/5 was assigned operational control of the An Hoa TAOR at 271200H November 1966. While the battalion was on Mississippi the TAOR was held by Company E, 2/5, with companies from 1/26, 1/1 and 3/9 attached.
Operation Mississippi	29 November – 7 December 1966	H COMPANY PARTICIPATED. A reconnaissance in force and search-and-destroy operation under the 9th Marines in the Que Son and Duc Duc districts and the eastern end of Antenna Valley. D-Day, set for 25 November, was postponed daily by weather until 29 November. Company H (Rein) landed third, after Company F and the command group.

4. Chronology of Company H Activities

The 2/5 command chronology for November 1966 is missing from the digitised series. The entries below come from the October 1966 chronology and from the Combat Operation After Action Report for Operation Mississippi, filed with the December 1966 chronology.

Date	Activity / Events
1–21 Nov	Operation Prairie continued in Quang Tri Province: aggressive combat patrolling and ambushing from the battalion patrol base near the DMZ, under the 4th Marines. No day-by-day record survives for Hotel Company in these three weeks.

Date	Activity / Events
22 Nov	“The initial warning order for Operation Mississippi was received on 22 November 1966, when the battalion was still deployed at Dong Ha, OPCON to 4th Marine Regiment. On operation Prairie.”
23 Nov	“At 230800H leading elements of the battalion commenced airlift to AN HOA and to 231100H 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines (-) became OPCON 9th Marines Regiment for operation Mississippi and eventual responsibility for the AN HOA TAOR.” Hotel Company's service on the DMZ ended here.
24 Nov	The 9th Marines issued Operation Order 124-66 and the initial briefing was held; 2/5 issued Frag Order 30-66 the same day. Additional briefings followed daily.
25–28 Nov	D-Day, tentatively set for 25 November, was postponed daily because of adverse weather — which hampered operations all through Mississippi — and the availability of aircraft. Several changes to the battalion frag order were made and briefed during the delay.
27 Nov	2/5 was assigned operational control of the An Hoa TAOR at 271200H.
29 Nov	At 291000H Operation Mississippi began. Company F (Rein) landed by helicopter in the designated landing zone in the Que Son area, followed by the command group, Company H (Rein) and Company G, in that order. The battalion was lifted in under sniper fire; one Marine hit in a helicopter later died of wounds. Company G was pinned by a reinforced VC platoon with two .50-calibre machine guns until air strikes silenced one gun.
30 Nov	Companies G and H had held the trail line west of the landing zone overnight. The battalion pushed west through the mountain pass toward Antenna Valley, the trail lined with fighting holes about every twenty metres. Hotel Company set up at AT 933376 and ran patrol sweeps from there.

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. THE MISSING CHRONOLOGY. The 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines command chronology for November 1966 is not in the digitised Texas Tech series. Every statement in this file is therefore taken from the October 1966 chronology, which covers the battalion's work on Prairie to the end of that month, or from the Mississippi after action report of 14 December 1966, which recounts the move to An Hoa and the opening of the operation. The first three weeks of November are genuinely undocumented at company level, and nothing has been invented to fill them.

2. THE WHOLE OLD FILE WAS WRONG. The earlier version had Hotel Company conducting “post-Macon sustained operations in An Hoa TAOR” from 1 November, with a patrol cycle of two platoons in the field and one in reserve, an ambush on 6–10 November that killed three VC, a cordon and search on 11–15 November, a sweep south of An Hoa on 16–20 November and Liberty Road security on 21–25 November. None of this happened. The company was on the DMZ in Quang Tri Province until 23 November and reached An Hoa only that day; the An Hoa TAOR was not assigned to 2/5 until 27 November, and the battalion spent the last two days of the month in the Que Son mountains on Operation Mississippi.

3. THE MOVE DATE. The airlift to An Hoa began at 0800 on 23 November 1966. Some accounts, including Lieutenant Kirschke's memoir, date the move to 22 November; that is the day the warning order arrived while the battalion was still at Dong Ha.

4. COMMAND. No source consulted names the Hotel Company commander for November 1966. Captain J. A. Getchell had the company from 9 October; Captain J. J. Doherty commanded it for the whole of December. The change falls inside the missing November record.

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 December 1966, including the Combat Operation After Action Report for Operation Mississippi dated 14 December 1966 (Texas Tech University Vietnam Archive item 1201048075).

— 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines Command Chronology for the period 1–31 October 1966 (Texas Tech University Vietnam Archive item 1201048074), forwarded by 1st Marine Division on 15 December 1966.

SECONDARY SOURCES

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

— Kirschke, James J. Not Going Home Alone: A Marine's Story. 2001.

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

— Related files in this collection: Operation_Prairie.docx and Operation_Mississippi.docx, Hotel25claude\Operations.