H COMPANY, 2ND BATTALION, 5TH MARINES

DECEMBER 1966 — REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

Compiled from the 2/5 Command Chronology for December 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 December 1966
Commander	Captain J. J. Doherty, commanding Company H for the whole period 1–31 December 1966
Higher HQ	2nd Battalion, 5th Marines (LtCol W. C. Airheart) / 5th Marine Regiment / 1st Marine Division. 2/5 was OPCON to the 9th Marines until 071730H December, then OPCON 1st Marine Division.
Area of Operations	Que Son and Duc Duc Districts, Quang Nam Province (Operation Mississippi, to 7 December); thereafter the 2/5 An Hoa TAOR
Combat Posture	Offensive — Operation Mississippi to 7 December; daily patrol, ambush and search-and-destroy operations in the new An Hoa TAOR for the rest of the month
Base of Operations	An Hoa Combat Base; battalion CP at AT 874474
Corps Area	I Corps Tactical Zone, Republic of Vietnam

2. Commander's Summary

December 1966 was Hotel Company's first full month at An Hoa. Section I of the battalion's command chronology gives the location for the reporting period as “An Hoa, Vietnam, 2nd Bn, 5th Mar, 1-31 December 1966,” and lists Captain J. J. Doherty as commanding officer of Company H for all thirty-one days. The battalion had flown down from the DMZ on 23 November after Operation Prairie, and it took formal responsibility for the An Hoa TAOR at 271200H November. The S-4 section recorded that the move from Chu Lai was completed during December: about 400,000 pounds of palletised material, handled by hand and forklift seven times before it reached An Hoa.

The month fell into two parts. Until 7 December the company was in the field on Operation Mississippi, the battalion's reconnaissance-in-force into the Que Son and Duc Duc districts and the eastern end of Antenna Valley under the 9th Marines. Company H (Rein) under Captain Doherty was one of three rifle companies committed; it returned to An Hoa Combat Base at 071700H and the battalion passed to 1st Marine Division control at 071730H. The S-3 described the rest of the month as “mainly a period of

adjustment to a new TAOR. Aggressive patroling and S&D operations were conducted daily in all areas of the TAOR. Contact was almost a daily occurance with constant pressure being brought against the VC."

Rain governed everything. "Roads became impassable, even the smallest stream swollen," the S-3 wrote; on several occasions units could not link up or close with the enemy because of flooded rivers. The heaviest fighting came between 19 and 24 December, when two or three companies were almost constantly engaged with an estimated two companies to a battalion of VC in the northeast of the TAOR. A two-day Christmas Truce took effect at 240700H and was broken at 240815H when the enemy fired on a resupply helicopter. Hotel Company was ordered across to relieve Company G that day and was stopped by a stream in flood, supporting instead by fire from AT 964537. The company's own contacts — sniper fire on security patrols, boat and river-crossing engagements, booby traps and night ambushes — ran to the last days of the year, with all positions reporting secure at 312400H.

3. Operations Overview

Operation / Activity	Dates	Description
Operation Mississippi	291000H November – 071730H December 1966	Reconnaissance in force and search and destroy under the 9th Marines in the Que Son and Duc Duc districts and the eastern end of Antenna Valley. Company H (Rein), Capt J. J. Doherty, was one of three rifle companies; Company E held the An Hoa TAOR. Battalion results: 50.6 tons of VC rice recovered and about 2,000 civilians evacuated. See the 2/5 Combat Operation After Action Report for Mississippi, 14 December 1966.
An Hoa TAOR operations	8–31 December 1966	Daily patrols, ambushes, security details and search-and-destroy sweeps from An Hoa Combat Base. Not a named operation. Hotel Company worked the ground north and east of the base, along the river line and on the supply road in from the ferry.
Northeast TAOR engagements	19–24 December 1966	The battalion's heaviest fighting of the month, mainly Companies E, F and G against an estimated two companies to a battalion of VC. Hotel Company joined on 23–24 December: the search for a downed helicopter, the attempted relief of Company G, and supporting fire at AT 964537.
County Fair, Duc Duc District	22–23 December 1966	Cordon-and-search run by H&S Company with 3/51 RF ARVN and a Popular Forces company near AT 907502 and AT 893512; terminated at 230830H. Hotel Company was drawn in on 23 December for the downed-helicopter search and the relief of Company E.
Christmas Truce	240700H – 26 December 1966	A two-day truce took effect at 240700H. It was broken at 240815H when the enemy fired on a resupply helicopter, leading to the day's fighting.

4. Chronology of Company H Activities

Compiled from the chronological sequence of events and the Mississippi after action report in the 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines Command Chronology for 1–31 December 1966. Times are given as recorded (ddhhmmH). Only entries naming Company H, or bearing directly on it, are listed.

Date	Activity / Events
1–7 Dec	Operation Mississippi. Company H (Rein) in the objective area west of the landing zone with the command group and Companies F and G, pushing through the mountain pass toward Antenna Valley in continuous rain.
7 Dec	At 071700H the battalion (-) (Rein) returned to An Hoa Combat Base and Operation Mississippi terminated. At 071730H 2/5 chopped from OPCON 9th Marines to OPCON 1st Marine Division.
8–14 Dec	Patrolling, ambushes and search-and-destroy operations from An Hoa Combat Base as the battalion settled into the new TAOR.
15 Dec	A bulldozer was disabled on the road; it was believed to be part of a convoy attempting to move supplies from the ferry to An Hoa. A platoon from Company H was sent to provide security until the vehicle could be retrieved.
18 Dec	At 181135H a Company H squad security element received about 6 rounds of small-arms fire and swept the perimeter around the bulldozer for 30 minutes; negative results.
19 Dec	At 191745H Company H squad security at AT 903493 received approximately 80 rounds of small-arms and automatic weapons fire from an estimated 10 VC; returned 100 rounds; the VC broke contact and fled west. 1 USMC WIA (non-evac). Major General Nickerson visited the An Hoa complex that afternoon.
20–22 Dec **23 Dec**	Heavy fighting northeast of the TAOR involving Companies E, F and G. H&S Company and ARVN Regional and Popular Forces conducted a County Fair operation on 22 December. Company H searched about 1,000 metres downstream with Company E for a downed helicopter. At 230830H the County Fair operation terminated and Company H moved to relieve Company E; it was unable to link up with Company G because of the swollen river. At 231330H Company H (-) at AT 950540 engaged 2 VC across the river at AT 955545 — 1 VC KIA. At 231715H, on a sweep, its flank guard took a VC suspect hiding in the weeds along the river bank.
24 Dec	The Christmas Truce took effect at 240700H and was broken at 240815H. Company G, unresupplied for days, ran out of rations; Company H was ordered to relieve it at AT 976533 but “reported it impossible to get across a stream because of depth and volumn of water.” At 241400H the Company H relief element on helicopter security at AT 958524 took 2 rounds while trying to cross, answered with a LAW and crossed. When Company E's relief column was ambushed at AT 955545 (1 KIA, 9 WIA), Company H at AT 964537 fired 300 rounds of small-arms and automatic weapons fire to keep the VC left flank pinned down. Company H moved back to its defensive position at 241830H.
26 Dec	At 260945H a Company H squad security patrol set off a booby-trapped M-26 fragmentation grenade at AT 911515: 3 USMC WIA, medevaced. At 261120H a Company H squad patrol found an olive-drab foot mine rigged with a pressure device in the LZ just used for that medevac; it was blown in place.

Date	Activity / Events
28 Dec	At 280920H Company H (-) on search and destroy received 40 rounds of automatic weapons fire from VC at AT 964525 — 1 USMC WIA; returned 60mm and 106mm recoilless fire. At 281150H it took 20 rounds from an estimated 2 VC across the river, which could not be searched. At 281510H it received 150 rounds from an estimated VC squad in a hamlet at AT 975518, answered with small arms, automatic weapons and 60mm and called artillery; the search found signs of 2 VC WIA, fighting holes, trench works and a pack of documents.
30 Dec	At 300215H a Company H platoon in perimeter defence at AT 910515 saw 3 armed VC moving north near the tree line at AT 910514 and took them under fire with small arms and 106mm; the VC fled northwest. At 301930H a Company H platoon ambush at AT 922518 received 10 rounds of small-arms fire and two 60mm or 40mm rounds from an estimated 4 or 5 VC at AT 915523 and returned 150 rounds.
31 Dec	At 310415H a Company H platoon ambush heard rifle fire at AT 942517 and found a villager wounded twice — “evidence of VC terrors.” A corpsman gave first aid; the man refused evacuation and was left in the village, with Civil Affairs notified. At 312400H all positions reported all secure, no enemy contact.

5. Notes and Caveats

This file was rewritten on 19 September 2026 directly from the battalion's own December 1966 command chronology. The notes below record what changed and where the record is thin.

1. SOURCE. The whole of this file comes from the 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines Command Chronology for 1–31 December 1966 (Texas Tech University Vietnam Archive item 1201048075), including its Section I organisation data, the S-3 and S-4 narratives, the chronological sequence of events and the Combat Operation After Action Report for Operation Mississippi dated 14 December 1966. It replaces an earlier AI-compiled version.

2. OPERATION SIERRA REMOVED. The earlier version of this file stated that Hotel Company took part in “Operation Sierra, 12 December 1966 – 21 January 1967.” No operation of that name appears anywhere in the December 1966 chronology — not in the S-3 narrative, the daily sequence of events or the list of enclosures. The battalion's only named operation in the period was Mississippi, and 8–31 December was TAOR work. The Sierra claim should be treated as unverified unless a primary document is produced.

3. OPERATION MISSISSIPPI ADDED. The earlier version omitted Mississippi altogether, although it was Hotel Company's principal operation of the month and the reason the battalion came to An Hoa. See Operation_Mississippi.docx in the Operations folder.

4. CASUALTIES. The Hotel Company losses recorded in this chronology for December 1966 are wounded only: 1 WIA (19 December, non-evac), 3 WIA (26 December, booby trap) and 1 WIA (28 December). No Company H killed in action is recorded during the month. The battalion casualty table in Section II is partly illegible in the scan.

5. SCAN QUALITY. The 1966 chronology survives as a poor carbon-copy scan and some figures and grid references are hard to read. Where a reading is doubtful it has been left out rather than guessed; the 18 December grid, which reads “AT909407,” is probably AT 909507. Consult the original for anything to be published as fact.

6. ORIGINALS. National Archives, RG 127. 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, 1–31 December 1966, with the Combat Operation After Action Report for Operation Mississippi dated 14 December 1966. Texas Tech University Vietnam Archive item 1201048075. Local copy: Command Chronologies\2nd Battalion - Command Chronology\2nd Battalion CC for December 1966 -1201048075.pdf

— 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines Command Chronology, October 1966 (Texas Tech item 1201048074), for Operation Prairie and the move south.

— Originals: National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 127, Records of the United States Marine Corps.

SECONDARY SOURCES

— Shulimson, Jack and Charles M. Johnson. U.S. Marines in Vietnam: An Expanding War, 1966. History and Museums Division, HQMC, 1982. (Operation Mississippi is not covered in the official history; the chronology is the primary record.)

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

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