OPERATION BUTTERFLY

2ND BATTALION, 5TH MARINES

1st Marine Division | Republic of Vietnam | 27 and 31 December 1969 (2/5)

FIELD	DETAIL
Operation Name	Operation Butterfly
Dates of Operation	27 and 31 December 1969 are the dates on which the 2/5 chronology records Company E on Butterfly operations. Butterfly was a rice-denial technique used by the 5th Marines in late 1969, not a single operation.
Mission Purpose / Objective	Deny the enemy his rice: small teams equipped with detonating cord were heli-lifted into enemy-controlled growing areas to destroy rice seedling beds.
Locations / Cities	Rice-growing areas of Quang Nam Province, landing zones east of Liberty Bridge.
TAOR	5th Marines / 2/5 area, An Hoa – Liberty Bridge, Quang Nam Province, I Corps.
UTM Coordinates	27 December: AT 943508, AT 936517, AT 930570 and AT 928500. 31 December: AT 926504, AT 925505 and AT 971503.
USMC Units Involved	2nd Battalion, 5th Marines (LtCol J. T. Bowen) with Company E; Marine helicopters.
2/5 Companies Participated	Company E (1stLt J. H. Stiehl).
Mission Results	27 December: an Echo platoon found and destroyed 40 rice seedling beds; on lift-off at AT 928500 two helicopters at 20 feet took about 20 rounds of AK fire and were both hit; one returned to the landing zone at Liberty Bridge and stayed there, its crew leaving on the other. 31 December: elements of Company E landed at three landing zones and destroyed 5 rice seedling beds with 8 rolls of detonating cord.
USMC KIA	None recorded.
USMC Wounded	None recorded.
Enemy KIA	None recorded.
Enemy Wounded	None recorded.

NOTES & SOURCE REFERENCES

COMPILED 20 NOVEMBER 2026 FROM PRIMARY SOURCES. This file exists because Company E is named in Operation Butterfly and the operations list had no file for it. CAUTION ON SCOPE: these are the only Butterfly entries found in the 2/5 chronologies; the official history describes the technique as used by the 5th Marines in the Arizona and cites Colonel Noble L. Beck, “Rice Krispies Nipped in the Bud,” Marine Corps Gazette, May 1970, p. 50.

Primary sources: 2/5 Command Chronology, December 1969, S-3 journal, 27 and 31 December (Texas Tech University Vietnam Archive item 1201048122, PDF pp. 82, 94); Charles R. Smith, U.S. Marines in Vietnam: High Mobility and Standdown, 1969 (HQMC, 1988), p. 199. Originals: National Archives, RG 127 (National Archives II, College Park MD 20740; Marine Corps History Division, Quantico VA 22134).