OPERATION CATAWBA FALLS

2ND BATTALION, 5TH MARINES

1st Marine Division | Republic of Vietnam | 18–21 September 1970

FIELD	DETAIL
Operation Name	Operation Catawba Falls
Dates of Operation	18 September – noon 21 September 1970 (Fire Support Base Dagger occupied from 26 August; guns lifted in 17 September)
Mission Purpose / Objective	A large artillery diversion into Base Area 112 to keep the enemy off balance while the 5th Marines moved out of An Hoa and the Vu Gia valley and the 7th Marines redeployed. It began as a 5th Marines plan (Col Clark V. Judge) for a two-battalion infantry operation against the 38th NVA Regiment headquarters; the infantry sweep was kept only as a ruse.
Locations / Cities	Fire Support Base Dagger, on Ban Co (1,031 m), about 10 miles west of An Hoa; Base Area 112; Hill 65; An Hoa; Quang Nam Province
TAOR	Base Area 112, west of An Hoa; Quang Nam Province
UTM Coordinates	Not recorded.
USMC Units Involved	Phase I was run by the 11th Marines under direct control of MajGen Charles F. Widdecke, commanding the 1st Marine Division; 2d Battalion, 11th Marines (Maj George W. Ryhanych) with a composite battery of 105mm and 155mm howitzers and 4.2-inch mortars on FSB Dagger; 1st 175mm Gun Battery at An Hoa and an Army 175mm platoon (2/92d Artillery) on Hill 65; 3d Platoon, Company I, 3/5 as firebase security; 1st Marine Aircraft Wing.
2/5 Companies Participated	None – no 2/5 company took part in this operation.
Mission Results	76 helicopter lifts moved guns, crews and ammunition to Dagger on 17 September. From dawn on 18 September to noon on 21 September the batteries fired more than 11,500 rounds at 160 intelligence targets, pausing for 1st MAW jets, which dropped 141 tons of bombs. Intelligence later estimated casualties to several enemy units.
USMC KIA	Not recorded.
USMC Wounded	Not recorded.
Enemy KIA	Not Available (intelligence estimates only)
Enemy Wounded	Unknown

NOTES & SOURCE REFERENCES

UPDATED 16 SEPTEMBER 2026 FROM PRIMARY SOURCES. CORRECTION: H COMPANY AND 2/5 WERE NOT PARTICIPANTS. This file previously listed 2/5 among the units. Cosmas and Murray's official history shows Catawba Falls as an artillery attack run by the 11th Marines. Marine rifle companies made no real heliborne assaults; the infantry phase existed only to deceive the enemy, and the only infantry present was a 3/5 security platoon on FSB Dagger. At the time 2/5 was moving from An Hoa to LZ Baldy. Its elements displaced to Baldy on 20 September 1970, according to the September 1970 chronology. 2/5 COMPANIES THAT DID NOT TAKE PART: Company E, Company F, Company G, Company H, H&S Company.

Primary sources: 2/5 Command Chronology, September 1970 (TTU Vietnam Archive item 1201049001); Cosmas and Murray, Vietnamization and Redeployment, 1970-1971 (HQMC, 1986), pp. 97–100. Originals: NARA RG 127 (College Park MD 20740) and Marine Corps History Division (Quantico VA 22134).