OPERATION EL PASO

2ND BATTALION, 5TH MARINES

1st Marine Division | Republic of Vietnam | 4–15 September 1966

FIELD	DETAIL
Operation Name	Operation El Paso (the original name of Operation Napa / Lien Ket 56)
Dates of Operation	D-Day 5 September 1966. Units moved to Tam Ky on 4 September; the operation terminated at 151200H September 1966 (5th Marines after action report).
Mission Purpose / Objective	Coordinated search and destroy operation with elements of the ARVN 2d Division in the Tam Ky area (5th Marines Frag Orders 12-66, 13-66 and 14-66; 1st Marine Division Frag Order 15-66, "Operation El Paso"). Enemy expected: elements of the 21st NVA Regiment, the 70th VC Battalion, the 72nd VC Main Force Battalion and two local companies (C/16 and K-52).
Locations / Cities	Tam Ky District, Quang Tin Province; regimental CP and logistic support area at Tam Ky; areas one to four west of Tam Ky; Thon Bon and Qui Xuan hamlets; Hill 26; Hill 253
TAOR	Tam Ky area, Quang Tin Province
UTM Coordinates	Assembly at Tam Ky: BT 292229. Reconnaissance OP on Hill 253: BT 183205. Critical terrain, Hill 26: BT 209249. Suspected enemy company: Thon Bon hamlet BT 230255, Qui Xuan hamlet BT 213253, Phu Thu hamlet BT 197253. Company G, 2/5: BT 259199 (14 Sep) and BT 258194 (15 Sep). 3/5 CP: BT 247155 (13 Sep). (Sheets 6639 I and 6640 II–III.).
USMC Units Involved	5th Marines (Col C.F. Widdecke), controlling, with ARVN 2d Division elements. Units: 1st Battalion, 5th Marines (area one, north); 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines (LtCol E.J. Bronars; Companies I, K and L; areas two, three and four); Company G (-)(Rein), 2/5 (Capt J.M. Gruner) with one platoon of Company H attached, under 5th Marines control as regimental reserve and security for the regimental CP and the 2/11 artillery at Tam Ky; 2/11 (-) and 4/11 artillery; a platoon of Ontos from Company B, 1st Anti-Tank Battalion; 1st Reconnaissance Battalion platoons; engineers and scout dogs.
2/5 Companies Participated	Company G; Company H (part of the company only). Company G (-)(Rein) with one platoon of Company H attached, as regimental reserve at Tam Ky.
Mission Results	5th Marines received the initiating directive at 1850 on 3 September and issued Frag Order 12-66 (El Paso) the same day; 1st Marine Division ordered "Execute El Paso, D-Day 5 Sept." 4 Sep: all units moved to Tam Ky (BT 292229). The Company G / H platoon reserve left Hill 69 at 1400 and reached Tam Ky at 1520. 5 Sep (D-Day): 1st Battalion moved into area one; its companies were probed that night by two main-force squads. 6 Sep: a reconnaissance platoon was inserted on Hill 253 (BT 183205). 7 Sep: 1st Battalion and the regimental HQ (-) returned to Chu Lai. 8–13 Sep: 3rd Battalion searched areas two, three and four against local-force VC firing from tree lines at long range. 14 Sep: Company G, 2/5 (with the Company H platoon) and a heavy Ontos section were attached to 3/5; Company G swept a hamlet at BT 259199 (2 WIA). 15 Sep: Company G was in contact at BT 258194; the operation ended at 1200 and all units returned to their Chu Lai TAORs. 122 villagers were evacuated voluntarily to Tam Ky, and 7 tons of rice were evacuated.

USMC KIA	7 KIA (5th Marines, whole operation). Company G, 2/5 with the attached Company H platoon: 1 KIA.
USMC Wounded	51 WIA and 52 non-battle casualties (5th Marines, whole operation). Company G, 2/5 with the Company H platoon: 3 WIA.
Enemy KIA	20 VC KIA confirmed, 46 VC KIA probable (5th Marines, whole operation)
Enemy Wounded	8 VC WIA confirmed, 18 probable; 61 VC captured (VCC) and 56 VC suspects detained; 7 weapons captured by 3/5

NOTES & SOURCE REFERENCES

UPDATED 16 SEPTEMBER 2026 FROM PRIMARY SOURCES. H COMPANY TOOK PART WITH ONE PLATOON. EL PASO AND NAPA ARE THE SAME OPERATION. The 5th Marines Combat After Action Report (September 1966 chronology) states: "Operation Napa originally designated El Paso, was conceived approximately one week prior to instigation. At 031850H 5th Marines received the initiating directive and issued Frag Order 12-66 the same day." The 1st Marine Division message ordering it, filed in the same chronology, is headed "Frag O 15-66 – Operation El Paso" and reads "Execute El Paso, D-Day 5 Sept." The 3/5 chronology lists Frag Order 12-66 as "El Paso" and 13-66 as "Napa." Wikipedia lists El Paso (4–15 September) and Napa separately. Company G, 2/5's own after action report gives its mission as "Co G (-)(Rein) w/1 Plt Co H, OPCON 5th Marines, as Regimental Reserve and security for Regimental Command Post and 2nd Battalion, 11th Marines Artillery position." The rest of Hotel Company stayed in the Chu Lai TAOR. The record does not say whether Company E, Company F, H&S Company took part.

SEE ALSO Operation_Napa_Lien_Ket_56.docx, which covers the same operation under its later name. The 2/5 Command Chronology for September 1966 survives only as two unreadable pages, so the 5th Marines and Company G reports are the primary record of Hotel's platoon in this operation. Two weeks later Hotel Company led 2/5 north to the DMZ for Operation Prairie.

Primary sources: 5th Marines Command Chronology, September 1966, including the regimental Combat After Action Report, 1st Marine Division Frag Order 15-66 (Operation El Paso), the Company G, 2/5 Combat Operation After Action Report dated 21 September 1966, and the 3/5 and 1/5 after action reports (Texas Tech University Vietnam Archive item 1201046139); 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines Command Chronology, September 1966 (item 1201049013). Originals: National Archives, RG 127 (National Archives II, College Park MD 20740; Marine Corps History Division, Quantico VA 22134).