OPERATION ESSEX

2ND BATTALION, 5TH MARINES

1st Marine Division | Republic of Vietnam | 6–17 November 1967

FIELD	DETAIL
Operation Name	Operation Essex
Dates of Operation	6–17 November 1967
Mission Purpose / Objective	2/5 search and destroy operation (2/5 Operation Order 27-67) in Antenna Valley, six miles south of An Hoa, to drive North Vietnamese forces from the valley toward the Army's Wheeler/Wallowa operation in the Que Son Basin.
Locations / Cities	Antenna Valley; Ap Bon (2) in the northeastern part of the valley; Hill 170 (battalion command group); LZ Raven; Quang Nam Province
TAOR	Antenna Valley, south of An Hoa; Quang Nam Province
UTM Coordinates	Not recorded (sheets 6640 III and IV).
USMC Units Involved	2nd Battalion, 5th Marines (LtCol George C. McNaughton) with four rifle companies, including Company H (Capt Gene W. Bowers) and Company F (Capt Edward J. "Buck" Byer Jr.). Company F had originally been kept back as the rapid reaction force.
2/5 Companies Participated	Company E; Company F; Company G; Company H. 2/5 committed four rifle companies; Company H and Company F are named in the record.
Mission Results	6 November: after landing by helicopter, Company H advanced on Ap Bon (2) and met a large enemy force in the village. Its 2d Platoon (2ndLt Duane V. Sherin) ran into more NVA in the brush to the west and lost two killed. After air and artillery strikes, the 1st and 3d Platoons assaulted but were stopped by eight strands of barbed wire hidden in bamboo, with .50-caliber machine guns firing along the wire from both flanks under mortar fire. 2ndLt Robert W. Miller Jr. was killed and both platoon sergeants badly wounded. Company F arrived about 1600 and assaulted with Company H as its base of fire; it was also repulsed. The two companies pulled back 70 meters under AC-130 cover. The NVA withdrew about 0430, leaving collapsed bunkers and no bodies. 10 November: a captured NVA officer cadet said a division headquarters battalion had held the village.
USMC KIA	16 killed at Ap Bon (2), H and F Companies (Telfer). Breakdown by 2/5 company: not recorded.
USMC Wounded	53 serious casualties including the 16 dead (H and F Companies at Ap Bon (2)). Breakdown by 2/5 company: not recorded.
Enemy KIA	Operation total: 65 NVA KIA confirmed, 125 NVA KIA probable, 7 VC KIA confirmed, 40 VC KIA probable
Enemy Wounded	Unknown; 2 NVA and 1 VC POWs; 15 detainees; 266 refugees

NOTES & SOURCE REFERENCES

UPDATED 16 SEPTEMBER 2026 FROM PRIMARY SOURCES. CONFIRMED H COMPANY ENGAGEMENT. The 2/5 Command Chronology for November 1967 records: "From 6 November to 17 November, the Marines of the 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines engaged NVA forces in hard fought combat, driving them from the security they

had known in the Antenna Valley." Telfer's official history describes Company H's assault on the fortified village of Ap Bon (2) on 6 November 1967 in detail, quoting Capt Bowers. The operation totals are from the chronology's cumulative statistics. The record does not say whether H&S Company took part.

Primary sources: 2/5 Command Chronology, November 1967, including 2/5 Operation Order 27-67 (Texas Tech University Vietnam Archive item 1201048095); Gary L. Telfer, Lane Rogers and V. Keith Fleming Jr., U.S. Marines in Vietnam: Fighting the North Vietnamese, 1967 (HQMC, 1984), pp. 120–122. Originals: National Archives, RG 127 (National Archives II, College Park MD 20740; Marine Corps History Division, Quantico VA 22134).