OPERATION IMPERIAL LAKE

2ND BATTALION, 5TH MARINES

1st Marine Division | Republic of Vietnam | 1 September 1970 – 12 May 1971

FIELD	DETAIL
Operation Name	Operation Imperial Lake
Dates of Operation	1 September 1970 – 12 May 1971 (whole operation; previously listed as ending 7 May). 2/5 took part from about October 1970 until it pulled out on 1–3 March 1971.
Mission Purpose / Objective	Keep a sustained Marine presence in the Que Son Mountains to deny the enemy a sanctuary there, using small-unit patrols, quick reaction forces and reconnaissance teams, while Marine forces redeployed and the South Vietnamese took over.
Locations / Cities	Que Son Mountains; Fire Support Bases Rainbow, Ross and Ryder; Hill 381; Hill 510; LZ Baldy; Hill 34; Quang Nam Province
TAOR	Que Son Mountains and LZ Baldy area; Quang Nam Province
UTM Coordinates	Not recorded.
USMC Units Involved	7th Marines (September 1970), then 5th Marines (Col Clark V. Judge; regimental HQ at LZ Baldy from 20 September 1970), then 1st Marines from 3 March 1971. 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines, including Company H (Capt John W. Moffett), with 3/5, 1/5 and 1st Reconnaissance Battalion teams.
2/5 Companies Participated	Company H. 2/5 took part; Company H (Capt John W. Moffett) is the company named in the record.
Mission Results	21 Oct 1970: Company H's 3d Platoon was landed four miles southeast of FSB Rainbow and found more than 1,000 lb of rice buried in urns. 22 Oct: two Company H quick reaction platoons killed 4 NVA and found a bunker complex. The same day, 3d Platoon corpsman HM2 Randall L. Hackett found he was sitting on a Composition B booby trap; Capt Moffett held the detonator while Hackett rolled clear, and the device was destroyed. Late October: Tropical Storm Kate cut off resupply, and Companies F and H lived on short rations or none. 26 Oct: Company H's 2d Platoon followed an enemy communication wire into a deserted battalion-size base camp and spent three days recovering arms, ammunition and booby-trap material. February 1971: 2/5 relieved 3/5 on Hill 381 and took over the field operation. 1 Mar 1971: 2/5 pulled its forward CP back to LZ Baldy; Companies F and H patrolled until 3 March, then joined the battalion, which moved to Hill 34 to prepare for embarkation.
USMC KIA	Whole operation: 24 Marines killed (Cosmas and Murray). Breakdown by 2/5 company: not recorded.
USMC Wounded	Not recorded.
Enemy KIA	Whole operation: 305 VC/NVA killed (Cosmas and Murray)
Enemy Wounded	Unknown

NOTES & SOURCE REFERENCES

UPDATED 16 SEPTEMBER 2026 FROM PRIMARY SOURCES. CONFIRMED H COMPANY PARTICIPATION. Cosmas and Murray's official history records Company H's Imperial Lake actions of 21–26 October 1970 by name. Their account of 1 March 1971 states that "Companies F and H of the battalion continued patrolling in the Que Sons until the 3d." CORRECTIONS: (1) An Hoa was turned over to the 51st ARVN Regiment in September–October 1970. 2/5 moved to LZ Baldy (elements 20 September, the battalion (-) 15 October 1970); Company H did not "depart An Hoa in early 1971." (2) 2/5 stood down from Imperial Lake on 1–3 March 1971 and moved to Hill 34 to prepare for embarkation, and the 5th Marines embarked in March 1971. (3) The operation ended on 12 May 1971 with 305 enemy killed and 24 Marines killed. The record does not say whether Company E, Company F, Company G, H&S Company took part.

Primary sources: 2/5 Command Chronologies, September 1970 – February 1971 (Texas Tech University Vietnam Archive items 1201049001–1201049006); Graham A. Cosmas and Terrence P. Murray, U.S. Marines in Vietnam: Vietnamization and Redeployment, 1970-1971 (HQMC, 1986), pp. 91–95, 108–118 and 221–222. Originals: National Archives, RG 127 (National Archives II, College Park MD 20740; Marine Corps History Division, Quantico VA 22134).