OPERATION MEADE RIVER

2ND BATTALION, 5TH MARINES

1st Marine Division | Republic of Vietnam | 20 November – 9 December 1968

FIELD	DETAIL
Operation Name	Operation Meade River
Dates of Operation	20 November – 9 December 1968 (terminated 1800H, 9 December). 2/5 took part 200800H November – 061700H December. Company H continued under 3/26 control 6–9 December.
Mission Purpose / Objective	1st Marines cordon and search of the "Dodge City" area south of Da Nang. Seven Marine battalions ringed the area and systematically searched and destroyed enemy forces and infrastructure inside.
Locations / Cities	Dodge City; Suoi Co Ca; Song La Tho; the Horseshoe; Northern Bunker Complex; National Railroad berm; Quang Nam Province, south of Da Nang
TAOR	Dodge City cordon, south of Da Nang; Quang Nam Province
UTM Coordinates	Not recorded (sheets 6640 I and IV).
USMC Units Involved	1st Marines (Col Robert G. Lauffer), controlling. 2nd Battalion (Rein), 5th Marines (LtCol James W. Stemple): Company E (Capt J.A. Woggon Jr.), Company F (Capt D.B. Brown), Company G (Capt H.J. Poole), Company H (Capt Ronald J. Drez), Company A 1/7 (Capt James F. Foster, 28 Nov – 6 Dec). BLT 2/26, 3/26 (LtCol J.W.P. Robertson), 3/5, 1/1, BLT 2/7; 51st ARVN Regiment; 2d Troop, 4th ARVN Cavalry.
2/5 Companies Participated	Company E; Company F; Company G; Company H. Companies E, F, G and H are each named with their commanders.
Mission Results	28 Nov (Thanksgiving): BLT 2/26 and 2/5 reached the Suoi Co Ca on the eastern side of the cordon. 6 Dec: as 2/5 waited to be lifted back to An Hoa after 15 quiet days, LtCol Stemple told Capt Drez at 1400 that Company H would instead make a helicopter assault under 3/26 control, with the lift starting in five minutes. Company H was set down less than 1,000 meters away, on the western side of the Suoi Co Ca. 7 Dec: 3/26 swung into the Northern Bunker Complex pivoting on Company H. Company H and A/1/7 attacked frontally; Company H was hit from two pagodas in a flooded cemetery, 10 Marines of the two companies were killed and 23 wounded, and volunteers brought in the dead after dark. 8 Dec: attacking with five companies abreast, Company H was pinned in a paddy by fire from a treeline. A napalm bomb struck the company but bounced away before exploding, and the ARVN armored personnel carriers would not help. Capt Drez and engineer PFC Michael A. Emmons (Silver Star) threw a satchel charge made of C-4, grenades and two 3.5-inch rockets into the main bunker; 39 enemy dead and 1 prisoner were reported around it. 9 Dec: 3/26 made the final assault.
USMC KIA	Whole operation: 108 (Shulimson). 7 Dec, Company H and A/1/7 together: 10 KIA.
USMC Wounded	Whole operation: 510 (Shulimson). 7 Dec, Company H and A/1/7 together: 23 WIA.
Enemy KIA	Whole operation: 1,023 (Shulimson). Company H's bunker assault, 8 Dec: 39 enemy dead reported.

Enemy Wounded	Unknown; whole operation: 123 prisoners, 6 ralliers, 2,663 civilians screened, 71 VC infrastructure members identified

NOTES & SOURCE REFERENCES

UPDATED 16 SEPTEMBER 2026 FROM PRIMARY SOURCES. CONFIRMED MAJOR H COMPANY ENGAGEMENT. Shulimson's official history, drawing on Capt Ronald J. Drez's 29 March 1989 oral history interview (Marine Corps Historical Center Tape 6512), describes Company H's last-minute helicopter assault and its fight at the Northern Bunker Complex on 7–8 December 1968 against the 3d Battalion, 36th NVA Regiment. The 2/5 after action report (December 1968 chronology) confirms Capt Drez commanding Company H from 20 November to 6 December 1968. CORRECTION: the "three-day battle" of 7–9 December belongs to Meade River, not to Operation Taylor Common. The record does not say whether H&S Company took part.

Primary sources: 2/5 Command Chronology, December 1968, including the Combat Operation After Action Report for Meade River (Texas Tech University Vietnam Archive item 1201048110); Jack Shulimson et al., U.S. Marines in Vietnam: The Defining Year, 1968 (HQMC, 1997), pp. 428–437; Ronald J. Drez oral history interview, 29 March 1989, Tape 6512, Marine Corps Historical Center. Originals: National Archives, RG 127 (National Archives II, College Park MD 20740; Marine Corps History Division, Quantico VA 22134).