OPERATION MONTEREY

2ND BATTALION, 5TH MARINES

1st Marine Division | Republic of Vietnam | 29–30 September 1966

FIELD	DETAIL
Operation Name	Operation Monterey
Dates of Operation	290630H – 301150H September 1966 (1/5 after action report); the 5th Marines chronology records termination at 300600H. It was ended by 1st Marine Division message 291514Z September.
Mission Purpose / Objective	5th Marines search and destroy operation (5th Marines Frag Order 15-66, 272355Z Sep 66; 1/5 Operation Order 1-66) in the Suoi Cau Chau and Suoi Giang / Song Ba Ky valleys along the Tam Ky – Tien Phuoc road, against suspected battalions of the North Vietnamese 21st Regiment (620th Division) and local VC companies. It was cut short when 1st Marine Division Frag Order 25-66 sent 2/5 north to reinforce northern I Corps, and 5th Marines battalions were needed to cover 2/5's area.
Locations / Cities	Tam Ky – Tien Phuoc road; Suoi Cau Chau and Suoi Giang / Song Ba Ky valleys; Hill 94; Quang Tin Province. Staged from Hill 54. Map sheets 6757 IV Phu Nam, 6739 IV Tra Bong, 6639 I Tien Phuoc, 6640 II Tam Ky.
TAOR	5th Marines area west of Tam Ky; Quang Tin Province
UTM Coordinates	Truck dismount and start of the sweep: BT 291201. Company L 3/5 and artillery position: BT 301189. Leading elements, 29 Sep: BT 261188 and BT 258188. Company C sniper contact: BT 237168. Objective limit: BT 235175. Key terrain, Hill 94: BT 246167. Reported enemy: battalion of the 21st NVA Regiment at BT 3014 and BT 3005, 75th Sapper Company at BT 2812, K-53 Company at BT 3407.
USMC Units Involved	5th Marines (Col C.F. Widdecke). 1st Battalion, 5th Marines (LtCol E.R. Watson): Company C (Capt H.B. Darling), Company D, 81mm platoon, attached engineers, scout dogs and ARVN interpreters. Attached from 3/5: Company K (Capt R.E. Maresco) in the sweep and Company L as security for Battery E, 2/11 (direct support); Company M covered the 1/5 TAOR. Battery L, 4/11 in general support; four H-34s at Hill 54; A-4s and UH-1Es on call.
2/5 Companies Participated	None – no 2/5 company took part in this operation.
Mission Results	29 Sep: at 0630 Company L 3/5 and Battery E 2/11 moved by truck convoy to BT 301189. At 0810 Companies C, D and K moved by truck to BT 291201 and at 0900 began searching along the Tam Ky – Tien Phuoc road. Company D destroyed a tunnel at 1045, and the lead elements reached BT 261188 and BT 258188 with no contact. At 1445 Company C took sniper fire from a hut near BT 237168; it returned fire with 81mm mortars and small arms and found a blood trail. Night defensive positions were set at 1630. 30 Sep: at 0810 all units moved back to the pickup point, then trucked back to Hill 54, securing from the operation at 1150. The battalion commander believed contact with local and main force units would have come if the operation had continued, and recommended an "Operation Monterey II" in the near future.
USMC KIA	Not reported.

USMC Wounded	Not reported.
Enemy KIA	1 VC WIA (probable)
Enemy Wounded	1 VC WIA probable; 1 VC suspect detained and sent to the 12th Division Tactical Area at Quang Ngai

NOTES & SOURCE REFERENCES

UPDATED 16 SEPTEMBER 2026 FROM PRIMARY SOURCES. CORRECTION: H COMPANY AND 2/5 DID NOT PARTICIPATE. An earlier version of this file said 2/5 was part of the plan. The 1st Battalion, 5th Marines Combat Operation After Action Report for Monterey (2 October 1966) and the 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines chronology for September 1966 show otherwise. Monterey was carried out by 1/5 with Companies K and L of 3/5 attached; no 2/5 unit took part. The 5th Marines chronology connects the operation to 2/5 only because it was cut short: "The short time involved resulted from the requirement to chop the 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines to 3rd Marine Division." On 29 September, while Monterey was under way, 2/5 was alerted for Dong Ha. At 0530 on 30 September Company H led the battalion off Hill 69 to Operation Prairie. 2/5 COMPANIES THAT DID NOT TAKE PART: Company E, Company F, Company G, Company H, H&S Company. Company H, 2/5 did NOT take part. Neither did 2/5.

RELATED. The 3/5 chronology lists 5th Marines Frag Order 12-66 as Operation El Paso and Frag Order 13-66 as Operation Napa. The 5th Marines chronology says the Napa plans were written into Frag Order 12-66, so El Paso and Napa appear to be two names or phases of the same Tam Ky operation in early September 1966. See Operation_Monterey_II.docx for the follow-on operation the 1/5 commander recommended.

Primary sources: 1st Battalion, 5th Marines Command Chronology, September 1966, including the Combat Operation After Action Report for Monterey dated 2 October 1966 (Texas Tech University Vietnam Archive item 1201048007); 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines Command Chronology, September 1966 (item 1201049013); 5th Marines Command Chronology, September 1966 (item 1201046139); 2/5 Command Chronology, October 1966 (item 1201048074). Originals: National Archives, RG 127 (National Archives II, College Park MD 20740; Marine Corps History Division, Quantico VA 22134).