OPERATION SUSSEX BAY

2ND BATTALION, 5TH MARINES

1st Marine Division | Republic of Vietnam | 29 August – 9 September 1968

FIELD	DETAIL
Operation Name	Operation Sussex Bay
Dates of Operation	29 August – 9 September 1968 (H-hour 0900, 29 August)
Mission Purpose / Objective	1st Marine Division operation to block the withdrawal of North Vietnamese and VC forces from the Da Nang area after their failed August 1968 offensive, and destroy them in detail as they tried to reach Go Noi Island.
Locations / Cities	Go Noi Island; Song Ky Lam; Dodge City; National Railroad; Liberty Bridge; Quang Nam Province
TAOR	Go Noi Island and Song Ky Lam; Quang Nam Province
UTM Coordinates	Not recorded.
USMC Units Involved	5th and 7th Marines with ARVN 21st and 37th Ranger Battalions and Korean Marines. 3/5 blocked the western half of Go Noi Island along the Song Ky Lam; 2/5 (LtCol James W. Stemple) swept the eastern half. 3/7 held a line west of the railroad; Korean Marines blocked along the Co Ca stream.
2/5 Companies Participated	Company H. 2/5 (LtCol James W. Stemple) swept the eastern half of Go Noi Island; Company H is the company named.
Mission Results	30 Aug, just after midnight: Company H ambushed about 30 North Vietnamese fording the Song Ky Lam toward Go Noi Island; 29 enemy dead were found at first light, with no Marine casualties. 31 Aug, 2000: Company H ambushed a second group of about 30 NVA crossing the river in boats; under 81mm illumination it sank both boats with small-arms fire. 5–6 Sep: Typhoon Bess struck while 2/5 was at the far east end of the island. The battalion was lifted out by helicopter on 6 September except Company H, which was to stay under 5th Marines control and sweep back to Liberty Bridge. LtCol Stemple had Company H lifted out after one of its Marines drowned. Both 2/5 and 3/5 had to leave tanks and LVTs on the island for later recovery.
USMC KIA	Whole operation: not available. Company H: 1 Marine drowned during Typhoon Bess (6 Sep); no casualties in the 30 August ambush.
USMC Wounded	Not recorded.
Enemy KIA	Company H, 30 Aug: 29 NVA dead; 31 Aug: two boatloads sunk. Whole operation: not available (ARVN Rangers reported more than 80 NVA dead on 31 Aug).
Enemy Wounded	Unknown

NOTES & SOURCE REFERENCES

UPDATED 16 SEPTEMBER 2026 FROM PRIMARY SOURCES. CONFIRMED H COMPANY ENGAGEMENT. CORRECTION: this file previously described Sussex Bay as a vehicle recovery operation. Shulimson's official history shows it was a blocking operation against enemy forces withdrawing after the August 1968 attacks on Da Nang. Company H's two night ambushes on the Song Ky Lam (29 NVA dead on 30 August, and two boats sunk

on 31 August) are among its best-documented actions. The recovery of the tanks and amtracs left on Go Noi during Typhoon Bess came afterward. The 1st Marine Division ended the operation on 9 September because of the typhoon. The record does not say whether Company E, Company F, Company G, H&S Company took part.

Primary sources: Jack Shulimson et al., U.S. Marines in Vietnam: The Defining Year, 1968 (HQMC, 1997), pp. 381–384 (citing 1st MarDiv and 5th Marines records); 2/5 Command Chronology, September 1968 (Texas Tech University Vietnam Archive item 1201048107). Originals: National Archives, RG 127 (National Archives II, College Park MD 20740; Marine Corps History Division, Quantico VA 22134).