Appendix C

Chronology of Significant Events January 1970-June 1971

1970

6 January	An estimated force of 100 VC attacked Fire Support Base Ross, which was then occupied by Companies A and B of the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, the battalion headquarters group, and two artillery batteries. Thirteen Marines were killed and 63 were wounded while the VC left 39 dead behind.
8 January	Building on the combined action platoon concept, III MAF formally established the Combined Unit Pacification Program (CUPP). Under the CUPP, Marine rifle companies deployed their squads in hamlets to work with the RFs and PFs much like the CAPs did. The CUPP differed in that the rifle companies were given no special training, and the Marine units remained under operational control of parent regiments, generally operating within the regiment's AO.
11 January	III MAF formally activated the Combined Action Force, incorporating the four combined action groups (CAGs) under its own headquarters rather than through an assistant chief of staff within III MAF. In January the CAF included 42 Marine officers and 2,050 enlisted men, along with 2 naval officers and 126 hospital corpsmen. The 20 combined action companies and 114 combined action platoons worked with about 3,000 RFs and PFs at the time.
18 January	A North Vietnamese spokesman said that allowing POWs to send a postcard home once a month and to receive packages from home every other month was, in effect, a means of accounting for those captured.
26 January	President Nguyen Van Thieu appealed to friendly nations for continued aid, saying he would go his own way if allied policies were not in accord with the South Vietnamese government's.
28 January	Troop movement for Keystone Bluejay, the first redeployment of 1970, began and continued until 19 March. Among the ground and aviation units redeployed were 26th Marines, VMAs -223 and -211, VMFA-542, HMH-361, and MAG-12.
31 January	Enemy traffic along the Ho Chi Minh Trail in January increased to 10 times what it was in September-October 1969.
31 January	III MAF strength in Vietnam was 55,191.
5 February	At the Paris peace talks, the enemy produced the first letter of a POW held in South Vietnam by the VC. This act took place in response to heavy pressure from the U.S. and South Vietnamese.
17 February	President Nixon said the military aspects of Vietnamization were proceeding on schedule.

19 February	Lieutenant General Nickerson and Lieutenant General Zais briefed General Abrams on the planned Army takeover of ICTZ on 9 March. Abrams sanctioned the arrangement proposed by Nickerson whereby III MAF, while becoming subordinate to XXIV Corps, still remained parent unit of 1st Marine Division and 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, preserving the integrity of the Marine air-ground team concept in Vietnam.
5-9 March	During Operation Cavalier Beach, III MAF relocated to Camp Haskins and XXIV Corps moved from its headquarters in Phu Bai to Camp Horn.
9 March	Lieutenant General Herman Nickerson, Jr., passed operational command of I Corps to Lieutenant General Melvin Zais, USA, and simultaneously passed command of III MAF to Lieutenant General Keith B. McCutcheon.
9 March	III MAF turned command of I Corps over to XXIV Corps. Major elements of III MAF at the time included the 1st Marine Division (Rein), 1st MAW, and FLC.
19 March	The 26th Marines, which had received a Presidential Unit Citation for the defense of Khe Sanh, departed Vietnam. Following the regiment's departure, the 1st Marines was left to control the Rocket Belt, an area of some 534 square kilometers.
19 March	The U.S. said that its recognition of Cambodian sovereignty would continue following the seizure of power from Prince Norodom Sihanouk by General Lon Nol.
26 March	The Combined Action Force was placed under the operational control of XXIV Corps while remaining under the administrative control of III MAF.
April	During April the Marine Corps stopped taking draftees.
14 April	Major General C. F. Widdecke relieved Major General Edwin B. Wheeler as Commanding General, 1st Marine Division, and as Deputy Commander, III MAF.
21 April	President Thieu said that the Vietnamese could gradually assume greater responsibilities as the Americans withdrew from Vietnam but that the South Vietnamese would require more aid from allies.
23 April	The 1st Force Service Support Regiment was closed down and transferred to Camp Pendleton.
27 April	Following a helicopter crash on 18 April Major General Edwin B. Wheeler, who broke a leg on impact, was replaced by Major General Charles F. Widdecke.
30 April	President Nixon announced that several thousand American troops supporting the RVNAF invasion entered Cambodia's Fishook area bordering South Vietnam to attack the supposed location of the headquarters of the Communist military operation in South Vietnam. American advisors, tactical air support, medical evacuation teams, and logistical support were also provided to the RVNAF. On 9 May Brigade B of the VNMC crossed the Cambodian border and at 0930 landed at Neck Luong to begin operations. Allied troops in Cambodia increased to 50,000 by 6 May. Withdrawal of American units from Cambodia was completed when the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) returned to South Vietnam on 29 June.

29 April Beginning this date RVNAF and U.S. Army forces conducted search and destroy operations in a dozen base areas in Cambodia adjoining II, III, and IV Corps in South Vietnam. A U.S.-Vietnamese naval task force also swept up the Mekong River to open a supply line to Phnom Penh, the Cambodian capital.

1-31 May The VC progressively returned to guerrilla warfare and terrorism in 1970. During May the VC in Quang Nam killed 129 civilians, wounded 247, and kidnapped 73. Most of the latter was interpreted as being forcible recruitment of young males.

3 May III MAF approved a 1st Division request to demolish the Da Nang Antiinfiltration System (DAIS), the line of minefields, cleared land, barbed wire fences, and electronic sensors which had been developed to stop enemy infiltration of the Rocket Belt. Never fully constructed or manned, the DAIS was regarded as ineffective by most Marines because farmers and water buffaloes could not be distinguished from rocket-bearing enemy.

4 May Four students at Kent State University in Ohio were killed by soldiers of the U.S. National Guard who had been called to halt riots which were stimulated in part by the Cambodian invasion.

4 May The Senate Foreign Relations Committee accused President Nixon of usurping the war-making powers of Congress by allowing American troops to participate in the RVNAF's invasion of Cambodia. A day later President Nixon responded, saying American troops would penetrate no further than 19 miles and would be withdrawn by 1 July 1970.

6 May Que Son District Headquarters in Quang Nam Province received some 200 rounds of mortar fire followed by a ground attack of an enemy force estimated at greater than battalion strength. Marines of Company H, 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, supported by artillery aided the beseiged RF/PF units. Friendly losses were 11 killed, including one American, and 41 wounded; 27 enemy were killed.

11 June To terrorize the villagers of Phu Thanh—a village near the Ba Ren Bridge where CUPP team Number 9 of 1st Platoon, Company A, 7th Marines operated—elements of the *V-25th Main Force Battalion* and the *T-89th Sapper Battalion* (VC) attacked at 0200, killing 74 civilians, many of them women and children, wounding 60 seriously, and destroying 156 houses.

11 June Thanh My Hamlet eight kilometers southwest of Hoi An, was attacked by the VC/NVA, resulting in 150 civilians killed and 60 wounded. In destroying the hamlet the enemy left behind 16 dead.

21 June Da Nang was hit by nine 122mm rockets, killing seven civilians, wounding 19, and destroying seven houses.

30 June The Naval Support Activity Da Nang was deactivated and the following day Army-Marine service support agreements went into effect.

1-2 July	Major General Alan J. Armstrong replaced Major General William G. Thrash as Commanding General, 1st MAW.
2 July	To unify command and strengthen the administration of the RVNAF President Nguyen Van Thieu incorporated the regional and popular forces into the Vietnamese Army and redesignated Corps Tactical Zones as Military Regions (MRs). Under the reorganization the corps deputy commander conducted major offensive operations in the MR while the MR deputy commander, in charge of territorial defense and pacification, commanded the RFs and PFs. Concurrently, MACV and the Vietnamese Joint General Staff completed plans to incorporate the Civilian Defense Groups into ARVN Border Defense Ranger Battalions.
3 July	The Hai Lang PF Platoon; RF group 1/11 and Companies 121 and 122; and CAPs 4-3-2 and 4-1-2, located nine kilometers southeast of Quang Tri City, were attacked by an enemy force of unknown size. Supported by gunships and artillery, the allies killed 135 enemy and captured 74 weapons while losing 16 killed and six missing in action.
6 July	A house fact-finding mission to South Vietnam filed a report expressing optimism about ending the war. The report also noted that South Vietnam's major problem was its economy.
15-16 July	Operation Barren Green was launched by elements of the 5th Marines in the northern Arizona Territory south of the Vu Gia River to prevent the VC/NVA from collecting the ripened corn of this fertile region. A second operation, Lyon Valley, was initiated by the 5th Marines on 16 August in the mountains bordering the Arizona Territory to further limit the movement of food to the *38th NVA Regiment*, known to be staged in base camps there.
16 July	Marine units, primarily of the 7th Marines, began Operation Pickins Forest south of the An Hoa in the Song Thu Bon Valley.
16 August	Operation Lien Valley was begun by 1st Battalion, 5th Marines (-) about 11 kilometers southwest of An Hoa.
20 August	A DOD study indicated that about three of 10 servicemen interviewed had used marjuana or other drugs.
30 August	Thirty South Vietnamese senators were elected in voting marked by terrorist attacks and charges of fraud. Forty-two civilians were killed.
September	By the end of the month, the 1st and 5th Marines and 2d Battalion, 7th Marines were the only maneuver units remaining in the field.
September	TAORs were realigned as 7th Marines and some combat and service support units stood down.
1 September	With the deactivation of all CAPs outside Quang Nam, XXIV Corps returned operational control of the CAF to III MAF.
5 September	The 5th Marines began shifting elements of its infantry regiments to assume responsibility of the 7th Marines' area of operations in the Que Son area, as the 7th Marines began preparations to stand down from combat operations.
21 September	The Combined Action Force headquarters in Chu Lai was deactivated, leaving only the 2nd CAG operating in Quang Nam Province.

The approximately 600 Marines and Navy corpsmen integrated their operations with 31 PF and three RF platoons distributed throughout Quang Nam.

1 October — In a ceremony attended by Lieutenant General McCutcheon, CG, III MAF; Lieutenant General Sutherland of XXIV Corps; Lieutenant General Lam of I Corps; and Major General Widdecke, CG, 1st Marine Division, the regimental colors of the 7th Marines were trooped for the last time in Vietnam. That same day the regimental command group departed Vietnam for Camp Pendleton, California.

8 October — MACV completed plans to redeploy another 40,000 troops by the end of the year, which would leave some 344,000 in Vietnam.

14 October — At the request of Colonel Clark V. Judge, Commander of the 5th Marines, the 1st MAW decentralized helicopter support by dispatching six CH-46Ds, four AH-1G gunships, one UH-1E command and control aircraft, and usually a CH-53 to LZ Baldy on a daily basis. The helicopter package, operating under the control of Colonel Judge, was provided to improve the regiment's mobility and tactical flexibility.

15 October — The last Marines left An Hoa, turning the base over to the South Vietnamese.

22 October — Employing the 51st ARVN Regiment, the 1st Ranger Group, the 2d and 3d Troops of the 17th Armored Cavalry Squadron, over 300 RF and PF platoons, the People's Self-Defense Force, and the national police in a province-wide offensive against the VC, Lieutenant General Lam launched Operation Hoang Dien, the I Corps commander's most ambitious, essentially South Vietnamese pacification operation to that date.

31 October — MACV promulgated the Allied Combined Campaign Plan for 1971. Reflecting the changing emphasis of the war, the plan emphasized the RVNAF's increasing assumption of tasks previously assigned the redeploying Americans.

2 November — A large construction effort got underway to repair damage caused by monsoon flood waters.

21 November — TG 79.4 was redesignated 31st Marine Amphibious Unit (31st MAU), no longer SLF Alpha.

23 November — Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird reported that a joint American force conducted an unsuccessful helicopter raid on Son Toy prisoner of war camp 20 miles west of Hanoi on 19 November. The prisoners had been moved some weeks before.

December — The 1st Marine Division, which had a strength of over 28,000 the previous January, had shrunk to some 12,500.

1 December — The 1st LAAM Battalion was deactivated in Twentynine Palms, California. The battalion was one of the first units to arrive in Vietnam in 1965.

3 December — American strength in Vietnam was down to 349,700, the lowest since 29 October 1966.

9 December — The Senior Marine Advisor, Colonel Francis W. Tief, relieved Captain Eugene I. Finke, USN, as commander of TG 116.1 at the Solid Anchor base in the Ca Mau peninsula.

10 December — President Nixon warned that if North Vietnamese forces increased the level of fighting in South Vietnam as American forces were withdrawn, he would begin bombing targets in North Vietnam again.

24 December — Lieutenant General Keith B. McCutcheon was relieved as Commanding General, III MAF by Lieutenant General Donn J. Robertson.

1971

1 January — RVNAF allies ceased to have Tactical Areas of Responsibility (TAORs). Instead, only the RVNAF had them, while allied units were assigned Tactical Areas of Interest (TAOIs), which generally encompassed the same areas as their previous TAORs. From then forward the ARVN assigned areas of responsibility to allied commands.

1-31 January — Enemy activity was in apparent decline. In January 1970, allied forces had sighted 4,425 enemy troops, but from September through December 1970 only 4,159 were spotted.

6 January — Secretary of Defense Laird said that Vietnamization was running ahead of schedule and that the combat mission of American troops would end the following summer.

23 January — CINCPac approved standing down ARG Bravo from 29 January-1 May 1971. ARG Alpha would remain on 120-hour reaction time during the period.

30 January — Phase I of Operation Lam Son 719 began with elements of the 1st Brigade, 5th Infantry Division (Mech), USA, advancing from FSB Vandegrift toward Khe Sanh. On 8 February the ARVN entered Laos to begin Phase II. The RVNAF units swept areas of operation from 7 to 16 March during Phase III and began Phase IV, the withdrawal, on 17 March. The last South Vietnamese troops exited Laos on 6 April.

3 February-10 March — During the RVNAF-coordinated Operation Hoang Dien 103, units of III MAF, 1st MAW, 2d ROKMC, 51st ARVN Regiment, 146th PF Platoon, 39th RF Company, and PSDF combed the Da Nang TAOR lowlands and lowland fringes, killing 330 VC/NVA, while the allies lost 46 killed, including two Americans.

8 February — President Thieu announced that South Vietnamese troops entered Laos in operation Lam Son 719. No American ground troops or advisors crossed the border.

12 February — Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) Alfa/31st Marine Amphibious Unit (MAU) arrived off the coast of North Vietnam, 50 miles east of the City of Vinh. From then until 6 March the ARG/MAU con-

ducted daily amphibious and communications exercises in an effort to cause the North Vietnamese to divert forces to respond to a potential raid at Vinh while Lam Son 719 was ongoing.

17 February — The MACV commander directed that from 1 May to 30 June during Keystone Robin Charlie the entire 3d MAB would be redeployed.

2 March — Brigade 147, VNMC made a heliborne assault into Laos during Lam Son 719, at FSB Delta, and relieving ARVN forces operating there.

24 March — DOD announced that the North Vietnamese had begun moving long-range artillery into the western end of the DMZ.

29 March — An estimated two battalions of the *38th NVA Regiment* reinforced by two Viet Cong battalions, attacked Duc Duc district headquarters just southwest of An Hoa, killing 103 civilians and kidnapping 37, while destroying 1,500 homes.

14 April — III MAF relocated to Okinawa this date and 3d MAB was officially established in RVN.

15 April — The strength of 3d MAB on its activation was 1,322 Marine and 124 Navy officers and 13,359 Marine and 711 Navy enlisted men. The ground combat element was the 1st Marines and the air element consisted of two aircraft groups, MAG-11 and MAG-16. The MAB also included numerous combat support and service support units.

15 April — The last four CUPP squads of Company M, 3d Battalion, 1st Marines were deactivated, ending the CUPP program. In 18 months of existence, the CUPP program had accounted for 578 enemy killed while Marines lost 46 killed.

30 April — President Nixon welcomed home the 1st Marine Division at Camp Pendleton.

30 April — At the end of April, 3d MAB included the following units: HQ, 3d MAB; RLT-1; 1/1; 2/1; 3/1; 1/11; Sub-Unit 1, 1st Anglico; MAG-11; VMA-311; Det, VMO-6; MAG-16; HML-367; HML-167; HMM-263; HMM-463.

14 April — Lieutenant General Robertson, Commanding General, III MAF, relocated to Camp Courtney, Okinawa. Major General Armstrong, CG, 1st MAW, assumed command of all units remaining in RVN, reporting to CG, XXIV Corps for operational control as CG, 3d MAB. Command of 1st MAW was passed to CG, 1st MAW (Rear) and Major General Widdecke, CG, 1st Marine Division relocated to MCB, Camp Pendleton, California, reporting to CG, FMFPac for operational control.

3-4 May — Marines from Quantico and Camp Lejeune were deployed in Washington, D.C. to assist the police in controlling anti-war protesters.

7 May — 3d MAB units ceased ground combat operations and fixed-wing aviation operations.

11 May — The 2d Combined Action Group headquarters was deactivated, signalling the end of Marine Corps pacification and civic action campaigns in Vietnam.

12 May	Operation Imperial Lake ended in which 305 VC/NVA were killed while Marines had 24 killed.
4 June	The 3d MAB turned over its last piece of real estate in Vietnam, Camp Books, to the U.S. Army.
9 June	Lieutenant General W. G. Dolvin, USA, relieved Lieutenant General J. W. Sutherland, USA, as Commanding General, XXIV Corps.
21 June	American troop strength in RVN was down to 244,900.
26 June	The 3d MAB closed its headquarters.
27 June	The 3d MAB was deactivated.