



Military History Anniversaries 15 thru 29 FEB

Events in History over the next 15 day period that had U.S. military involvement or impacted in some way on U.S military operations or American interests

- **Feb 15 1835 –Civil War Era: Alexander Stewart Webb Born** » Union General Alexander Stewart Webb is born in New York City. Webb's grandfather had fought at Bunker Hill during the American Revolution, and his father, James Watson Webb, was a prominent newspaper editor and diplomat who served as minister to Brazil during the Civil War. The younger Webb, known as Andy to his family, attended West Point, graduating in 1855. He taught mathematics at West Point and in Florida before the Civil War.



When the war broke out, Webb was assigned to defend Fort Pickens, Florida, but was soon called to Washington, D.C., and placed in the artillery in the army guarding the capital. He fought at the First Battle of Bull Run, Virginia, in July 1861 as assistant to the chief of artillery, Major William Barry. A year later, Webb was in charge of the artillery at the Battle of Malvern Hill, Virginia, at the end of the Seven Days Battles. In that engagement, Union cannon devastated attacking Confederate infantry, and Webb was commended for leading the artillery line. General Daniel Butterfield later said that Webb's leadership saved the Union army from destruction.

Despite his numerous achievements, Webb was constantly passed over for promotion due to politics within the Army of the Potomac. He was closely associated with General George McClellan, and McClellan's removal in late 1862 left Webb stalled at colonel. Even some of his West Point students became generals before Webb, but the promotion finally came in June 1863. The new brigadier general played a key role at the Battle of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, just a few weeks later. On July 3, Webb commanded troops defending the center of the Union line on Cemetery Ridge. He rallied his men as they received the brunt of Pickett's Charge, and his actions earned him the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Webb fought with the Army of the Potomac during the spring of 1864, and was wounded in the head at the Bloody Angle, the most vicious fighting in the Battle of Spotsylvania, Virginia. He was out of

action for nearly eight months. When he returned, he became chief of staff for army commander General George Meade. After the war, Webb taught at West Point, served as president of the College of the City of New York, and wrote extensively about the war. He died in Riverdale, New York, in 1911. A statue of Webb adorns the Gettysburg battlefield near the spot where he earned the Medal of Honor.

- **Feb 15 1862 – Civil War:** Union General Ulysses S. Grant launches a major assault on Fort Donelson, TN.
- **Feb 15 1861 – Civil War:** Confederate States Peace Commission » The newly formed Congress of the Confederate States of America adopted a resolution empowering the President-elect Jefferson Davis to appoint a commission of three men to negotiate “friendly relations” with the federal government of the United States. On 25 FEB, newly inaugurated President Davis chose Martin J. Crawford of Georgia, John Forsyth of Alabama, and Andre B. Roman of Louisiana to serve as commissioners. On 27 FEB, President Davis wrote a letter to Abraham Lincoln, President-elect of the United States, introducing the commissioners as representatives of the government of the Confederate States.

The commission was not received by Lincoln. On 12 MAR, a letter was sent to William H. Seward, Secretary of State of the United States, introducing the commissioners and explaining their peaceful intent. The commission was not received by Seward. On 15 MAR, the commission filed a memorandum which outlined how they had been ignored by Seward and Lincoln. The commissioners were rejected because acceptance of the commission would be considered recognition of the Confederate States of America.

- **Feb 15 1898 – U.S. Navy:** The USS Maine Explodes » A massive explosion of unknown origin sinks the battleship USS Maine in Cuba’s Havana harbor, killing 260 of the fewer than 400 American crew members aboard. One of the first American battleships, the Maine weighed more than 6,000 tons and was built at a cost of more than \$2 million. Ostensibly on a friendly visit, the Maine had been sent to Cuba to protect the interests of Americans there after a rebellion against Spanish rule broke out in Havana in January.



An official U.S. Naval Court of Inquiry ruled in March that the ship was blown up by a mine, without directly placing the blame on Spain. Much of Congress and a majority of the American public expressed little doubt that Spain was responsible and called for a declaration of war. Subsequent diplomatic failures to resolve the Maine matter, coupled with United States indignation over Spain’s brutal

suppression of the Cuban rebellion and continued losses to American investment, led to the outbreak of the Spanish-American War in April 1898.

Within three months, the United States had decisively defeated Spanish forces on land and sea, and in August an armistice halted the fighting. On December 12, 1898, the Treaty of Paris was signed between the United States and Spain, officially ending the Spanish-American War and granting the United States its first overseas empire with the ceding of such former Spanish possessions as Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines.

In 1976, a team of American naval investigators concluded that the Maine explosion was likely caused by a fire that ignited its ammunition stocks, not by a Spanish mine or act of sabotage.

- **Feb 15 1915 – WWI: *Mutiny Breaks out among Indian Soldiers in Singapore*** » Indian soldiers launch the first large-scale mutiny of World War I. Some 800 soldiers in the Indian army's 5th Light Infantry Brigade broke out of their barracks on the afternoon of February 15 and killed several British officers before moving on to other areas of the city. By the time the revolt was quashed, several days later, by British, French and Russian troops, the mutineers had killed 39 Europeans—both soldiers and civilians. British soldiers executed 37 of the mutiny's ringleaders by gunfire.



The Singapore Mutiny was intended by its organizers to be part of a general uprising being engineered by Sikh militants in neighboring India against British colonial rule. The Sikhs—whose religion combined elements of Hinduism and Islam—had earned favorable treatment from the British after their refusal to take part in an earlier mutiny in India in 1857, but some still chafed against the constraints of the empire. The Indian rebellion in 1915 enjoyed encouragement from the Germans, whose ship, the Bayern, had recently been intercepted by the Italians with a cargo of 500,000 revolvers, 100,000 rifles and 200,000 cases of ammunition intended to aid the militants. The rebels in India were betrayed in March 1915 by a police spy, and the leaders were arrested before they could signal the start of the revolt. Eighteen were hanged.

Despite such insurrections, many Indians from across the country continued to volunteer to serve the British Empire in World War I. The first Indian Victoria Cross for bravery had been awarded on the Western Front in January 1915. Mahatma Gandhi, champion of passive resistance and leader of the struggle for Indian home rule, played an active role in the recruitment of Indian soldiers during World War I, writing later that If we would improve our status through the help and cooperation of the British, it was our duty to win their help by standing by them in their hour of need.

- **Feb 15 1915 – U.S. Coast Guard: *Created*** » The United States Coast Guard is created, to be a military service and a branch of the armed forces of the United States at all times, by merging the US Life Saving Service & the US Revenue Cutter Service. In 1939, the United States Lighthouse Service was merged into the Coast Guard. The Coast Guard itself was moved to the Department of

Transportation in 1967, and on 25 February 2003 it became part of the Department of Homeland Security. However, under 14 U.S.C. § 3 as amended by section 211 of the Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Act of 2006, upon the declaration of war and when Congress so directs in the declaration, or when the President directs, the Coast Guard operates as a service in the Department of the Navy.

- **Feb 15 1933 – United States: FDR Escapes Assassination** » A deranged, unemployed brick layer named Giuseppe Zangara shouts "Too many people are starving!" and fires a gun at America's president-elect, Franklin D. Roosevelt. Roosevelt had just delivered a speech in Miami's Bayfront Park from the back seat of his open touring car when Zangara opened fire with six rounds. Five people were hit. The president escaped injury but the mayor of Chicago, Anton Cermak, who was also in attendance, received a mortal stomach wound in the attack. Several men tackled the assailant and might have beaten him to death if Roosevelt had not intervened, telling the crowd to leave justice to the authorities. Zangara later claimed I don't hate Mr. Roosevelt personally. I hate all officials and anyone who is rich. He also told the FBI that chronic stomach pain led to his action: Since my stomach hurt I want to make even with the capitalists by kill the president. My stomach hurt long time.

Zangara's extreme action reflected the anger and frustration felt among many working Americans during the Great Depression. At the time of the shooting, Roosevelt was still only the president-elect and had yet to be sworn in. His policies remained untested, but reports of Roosevelt's composure during the assassination attempt filled the following day's newspapers and did much to enforce Roosevelt's public image as a strong leader. Unsubstantiated reports later claimed that Zangara's real target had been Cermak and hinted at Zangara's connection to organized crime in Chicago. Zangara was initially tried for attempted murder and sentenced to 80 years in prison, but when Mayor Cermak later died of his wounds, Zangara was retried and sentenced to death. Zangara died on the electric chair on March 20, 1933.

- **Feb 15 1940 – WW2 Era:** Hitler orders that all British merchant ships will be considered warships.
- **Feb 15 1941 – WW2 Era:** Believing Hitler's boasts that he had already won the war, Bulgaria's King Boris chose to pitch his country's tent on the Axis side of the war by signing the Tripartite Pact.
- **Feb 15 1942 – Holocaust:** The first mass gassings of Jews at the Auschwitz death camp begin.
- **Feb 15 1942 – WW2: Singapore Falls to Japan** » In one of the greatest defeats in British military history, Britain's supposedly impregnable Singapore fortress surrenders to Japanese forces after a weeklong siege. More than 60,000 British, Australian, and Indian soldiers were taken prisoner, joining 70,000 other Allied soldiers captured during Britain's disastrous defense of the Malay Peninsula.

On December 8, 1941—the day after Japan bombed Pearl Harbor—the Japanese moved against British-controlled Malay, steamrolling across Thailand and landing in northern Malay. The Japanese made rapid advances against British positions, capturing British airfields and gaining air superiority. British General A.E. Percival was reluctant to leave Malay's roads and thus was outflanked again and again by the Japanese, who demonstrated an innovative grasp of the logistics of jungle warfare. The Allies could do little more than delay the Japanese and continued to retreat south.

By January, the Allied force was outnumbered and held just the lower half of the peninsula. General Tomoyuki Yamashita's 25th Army continued to push forward, and on 31 JAN the Allies were forced to retreat across the causeway over the Johor Strait to the great British naval base on the island of Singapore, located on the southern tip of the peninsula. The British dynamited the causeway behind them but failed to entirely destroy the bridge.

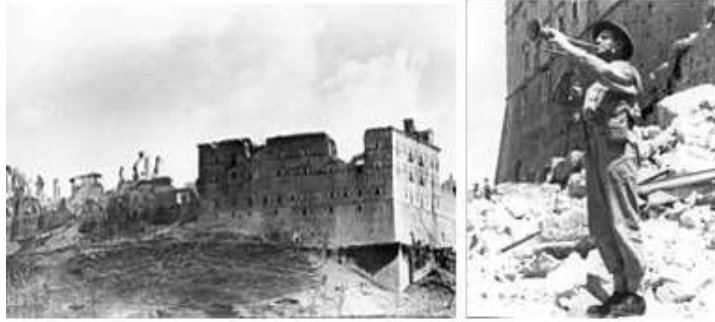
Singapore, with its big defensive guns, was considered invulnerable to attack. However, the guns, which used armor-piercing shells and the flat trajectories necessary to decimate an enemy fleet, were not designed to the events of 8 FEB when thousands of Japanese troops began streaming across the narrow waterway and established several bridgeheads. Japanese engineers quickly repaired the causeway, and troops, tanks, and artillery began pouring on to Singapore. The Japanese pushed forward to Singapore City, capturing key British positions and splitting the Allied defenders into isolated groups.



On 15 FEB, Percival—lacking a water supply and nearly out of food and ammunition—agreed to surrender. With the loss of Singapore, the British lost control of a highly strategic waterway and opened the Indian Ocean to Japanese invasion. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill called it the “worst disaster and largest capitulation in British history.” Many thousands of the 130,000 Allied troops captured died in Japanese captivity.

Later in the war, Lord Louis Mountbatten, the supreme Allied commander in Southeast Asia, made plans for the liberation of the Malay Peninsula, but Japan surrendered before they could be carried out.

- **Feb 15 1943 – WW2:** The Germans break the American Army's lines at the Fanid–Sened Sector in Tunisia, North Africa. Four days of successive defeats cost II the American II Corps 12,546 missing, 103 tanks, 280 vehicles, 18 field guns, 3 antitank guns, and one antiaircraft battery.
- **Feb 15 1944 – WW2:** The Narva 13 day Offensive begins with Soviet Leningrad Front and German army detachment "Narwa" for the strategically important Narva Isthmus in Estonia. At the time of the operation, Stalin was personally interested in taking Estonia, viewing it as a precondition for forcing Finland out of the war. By 28 FEB the Soviet offensive ended in a German defensive victory
- **Feb 15 1944 – WW2:** *The Assault On Monte Cassino Begins* - The Battle of Monte Cassino (also known as the Battle for Rome and the Battle for Cassino) was a costly series of four assaults by the Allies against the Winter Line in Italy held by Axis forces during the Italian Campaign of World War II. The intention was a breakthrough to Rome. Monte Cassino, a historic hilltop abbey founded in AD 529 by Benedict of Nursia, dominated the nearby town of Cassino and the entrances to the Liri and Rapido valleys. Lying in a protected historic zone, it had been left unoccupied by the Germans, although they manned some positions set into the steep slopes below the abbey's walls.



Monte Cassino in ruins (left) and A Polish bugler (right) plays the Hejnal mariacki, announcing the victory

Repeated pinpoint artillery attacks on Allied assault troops caused their leaders to conclude the abbey was being used by the Germans as an observation post, at the least. Fears escalated along with casualties and in spite of a lack of clear evidence, it was marked for destruction. On 15 February American bombers dropped 1,400 tons of high explosives, creating widespread damage. The raid failed to achieve its objective, as German paratroopers occupied the rubble and established excellent defensive positions amid the ruins.

On 16 May, soldiers from the Polish II Corps launched one of the final assaults on the German defensive position. On 18 May, a Polish flag followed by the British Union Jack were raised over the ruins. Following this Allied victory, the German Senger Line collapsed on 25 May. Between 17 January and 18 May, Monte Cassino and the Gustav defenses were assaulted four times by Allied troops, the last involving twenty divisions attacking along a twenty-mile front. The German defenders were finally driven from their positions, but at a high cost. The capture of Monte Cassino resulted in 55,000 Allied casualties, with German losses being far fewer, estimated at around 20,000 killed and wounded.

- **Feb 15 1945 – WW2:** Third and last day of bombing in Dresden. Roughly 25,000 people were killed, many of them civilians and refugees, and more than 75,000 buildings were destroyed. The scale and ferocity of the bombing, so late in the war, has led many to believe the attack was a war crime.



- **Feb 15 1950 – Cold War:** USSR and PRC sign mutual defense treaty » The Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, the two largest communist nations in the world, announce the signing of a mutual defense and assistance treaty.



The negotiations for the treaty were conducted in Moscow between PRC leaders Mao Zedong and Zhou En-lai, and Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin and Foreign Minister Andrei Vishinsky. The treaty's terms called for the Soviets to provide a \$300 million credit to the PRC. It also mandated that the Soviet Union return to the Chinese the control of a major railroad and the cities of Port Arthur and Dairen in Manchuria, all of which had been seized by Russian forces near the end of World War II. The mutual defense section of the agreement primarily concerned any future aggression by Japan and "any other state directly or indirectly associated" with Japan. Zhou En-lai proudly declared that the linking of the two communist nations created a force that was "impossible to defeat."

U.S. commentators viewed the treaty as proof positive that communism was a monolithic movement, being directed primarily from the Kremlin in Moscow. An article in the New York Times referred to the PRC as a Soviet "satellite." As events made clear, however, the treaty was not exactly a concrete bond between communist countries. By the late-1950s, fissures were already beginning to appear in the Soviet-PRC alliance. Publicly, the Chinese charged that the Soviets were compromising the principles of Marxism-Leninism by adopting an attitude of "peaceful coexistence" with the capitalist nations of the West. By the early-1960s, Mao Zedong was openly declaring that the Soviet Union was actually allying itself with the United States against the Chinese revolution.

- **Feb 15 1954 – Cold War:** Canada and the United States agree to construct the Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line, a system of radar stations in the far northern Arctic regions of Canada and Alaska.
- **Feb 15 1965 – Vietnam War:** Ambassador Maxwell Taylor informs South Vietnamese Premier Phan Huy Quat that the United States is preparing to send 3,500 U.S. Marines to Vietnam to protect the U.S. airbase at Da Nang. Three days later, a formal request was submitted by the U.S. Embassy, asking the South Vietnamese government to "invite" the United States to send the Marines.
- **Feb 15 1966 – Vietnam War:** *DeGaulle Offers To Help End Vietnam War* » In response to a letter from Ho Chi Minh asking that French President Charles De Gaulle use his influence to "prevent perfidious new maneuvers" by the United States in Southeast Asia, De Gaulle states that France is willing to do all that it could to end the war. As outlined by De Gaulle, the French believed that the Geneva agreements should be enforced, that Vietnam's independence should be "guaranteed by the nonintervention of any outside powers," and that the Vietnamese government should pursue a "policy of strict neutrality." President Lyndon Johnson saw De Gaulle's proposal as part of a continuing effort by the French leader to challenge U.S. leadership in Southeast Asia as well as in Europe. Seeing the American commitment in Vietnam as part of a larger global issue of American credibility, Johnson believed that the United States could not afford to abandon its South Vietnamese ally and rejected De Gaulle's proposal without consideration.

- **Feb 15 1967 – Vietnam War:** Thirteen U.S. helicopters are shot down in one day in Vietnam.
- **Feb 15 1989 – Russia*Afghanistan:** After nine years of intervention, the Soviet Union announces that the remainder of its troops had left Afghanistan.



Soviet troops waving as they leave Afghanistan

- **Feb 15 2003 – Iraq War:** Protests against the Iraq war take place in over 600 cities worldwide. It is estimated that between 8 million to 30 million people participate, making this the largest peace demonstration in history.

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- **Feb 16 1776 – American Revolution:** Siege of Boston » In advance of the Continental Army's occupation of Dorchester Heights, Massachusetts, General George Washington orders American artillery forces to begin bombarding Boston from their positions at Lechmere Point, northwest of the city center.



- **Feb 16 1778 – American Revolution:** John Adams Prepares To Sail For France » Two future presidents of the United States, John Adams and his son, 10-year-old John Quincy Adams, sit in Marblehead Harbor, off the coast of Massachusetts, on board the frigate, Boston, which is to take them to France, where John Adams will replace Silas Deane in Congress' commission to negotiate a treaty of alliance.

Silas Deane's son, Jesse Deane, who was 11 or 12 years old, was also on board and bore a letter from his uncle requesting that Adams take care of the child, whose Youth and Helplessness among such bad company would require "some friendly Montior (sic) to caution, and keep him from associating with the common hands on board."

Adam's newfound role as pater familias expanded further with the delivery of a letter from William Vernon, Esquire, a member of the Continental Navy Board in Boston. Vernon's son, a recent college graduate, was also on board the Boston. His father asked John Adams to find a merchant whom he could trust to educate his son in the business. Although sending him to a Catholic nation, the elder Vernon wished to see his son installed with a Protestant family of extensive Business in hopes that he "would hereafter be usefull (sic) to Society, and in particular to these American States." He entrusted Adams not only with his son, but also with his money, asking Adams to negotiate a price of approximately £100 sterling for room and board with an eminent merchant to train his son for two to three years.

Once in France, Jesse Deane joined John Quincy Adams and Benjamin Franklin's grandson, Benjamin Franklin Bache, at a pension in Passy, outside Paris; Vernon remained in Bordeaux. Two of the boys in Passy grew to be among the leaders of the next American generation. Benjamin Franklin Bache inherited his grandfather's skills as a journalist and founded *The Aurora*, a newspaper in which he attacked first George Washington's presidency and then John Adams'. Under the notoriously unconstitutional Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798, Bache was imprisoned for his opposition to Federalist Party policy. John Quincy Adams followed in his father's footsteps, serving as a foreign diplomat, Massachusetts state senator and president of the United States. Jesse Deane, like his father, faded into the backdrop of history.

- **Feb 16 1804 – First Barbary War:** *The Most Daring Act of the Age* » U.S. Lieutenant Stephen Decatur leads a military mission that famed British Admiral Horatio Nelson calls the "most daring act of the age."

In June 1801, President Thomas Jefferson ordered U.S. Navy vessels to the Mediterranean Sea in protest of continuing raids against U.S. ships by pirates from the Barbary states—Morocco, Algeria, Tunis, and Tripolitania. American sailors were often abducted along with the captured booty and ransomed back to the United States at an exorbitant price. After two years of minor confrontations, sustained action began in June 1803 when a small U.S. expeditionary force attacked Tripoli harbor in present-day Libya.

In October 1803, the U.S. frigate *Philadelphia* ran aground near Tripoli and was captured by Tripolitan gunboats. The Americans feared that the well-constructed warship would be both a formidable addition to the Tripolitan navy and an innovative model for building future Tripolitan frigates. Hoping to prevent the Barbary pirates from gaining this military advantage, Lieutenant Stephen Decatur led a daring expedition into Tripoli harbor to destroy the captured American vessel on February 16, 1804.

After disguising himself and his men as Maltese sailors, Decatur's force of 74 men, which included nine U.S. Marines, sailed into Tripoli harbor on a small two-mast ship. The Americans approached the *USS Philadelphia* without drawing fire from the Tripoli shore guns, boarded the ship, and attacked its Tripolitan crew, capturing or killing all but two. After setting fire to the frigate, Decatur and his men

escaped without the loss of a single American. The Philadelphia subsequently exploded when its gunpowder reserve was lit by the spreading fire.

Six months later, Decatur returned to Tripoli Harbor as part of a larger American offensive and emerged as a hero again during the so-called “Battle of the Gunboats,” a naval battle that saw hand-to-hand combat between the Americans and the Tripolitans.

- **Feb 16 1862 – Civil War: Capture of Fort Donelson** » General Ulysses S. Grant finishes a spectacular campaign by capturing Fort Donelson on the Cumberland River in Tennessee. This battle came 10 days after Grant’s capture of Fort Henry, just 10 miles to the west on the Tennessee River, and opened the way for Union occupation of central Tennessee.

After Grant surrounded Fort Henry and forced the surrender of 100 men, he moved east to the much more formidable Fort Donelson. The fort sat on a high bluff and had a garrison of 6,000 troops. After the fall of Fort Henry, an additional 15,000 reinforcements were sent to aid Fort Donelson. Grant crossed the narrow strip of land between the two rivers with only about 15,000 troops. One of Grant’s officers, Brigadier General John McClernand, initiated the battle on 13 FEB when he tried to capture a Rebel battery along Fort Donelson’s outer works. Although unsuccessful, this action probably convinced the Confederates that they faced a superior force, even though they actually outnumbered Grant.

Over the next three days, Grant tightened the noose around Fort Donelson by moving a flotilla up the Cumberland River to shell the fort from the east. On 15 FEB, the Confederates tried to break out of the Yankee perimeter. An attack on the Union right flank and center sent the Federals back in retreat, but then Confederate General Gideon Pillow made a fatal miscalculation. Thinking he could win the battle, Pillow threw away the chance to retreat from Fort Donelson. Instead, he pressed the attack but the Union retreat halted. Now, Grant assaulted the Confederate right wing, which he correctly suspected had been weakened to mount the attack on the other end of the line.



The Confederates were surrounded, with their backs to the Cumberland River. They made an attempt to escape, but only about 5,000 troops got away. These included Colonel Nathan Bedford Forrest and 500 cavalymen. Forrest later became a legendary leader in the West and his exploits over the next three years caused much aggravation to the Union Army. When the Rebels asked for terms of surrender, Grant replied that no terms “except unconditional and immediate surrender” would be acceptable. This earned Ulysses S. Grant the nickname “Unconditional Surrender.” The loss of Fort Henry and Fort

Donelson were unmitigated disasters for the Confederates. Kentucky was lost and Tennessee lay wide open to the Yankees. Casualties and losses: US 2691 - CSA 13,846

- **Feb 16 1916 – WW1 Era:** On the Western Front, the French launch their second offensive against German defense lines in Champagne. Once again they are hampered by the muddy winter weather and a lack of heavy artillery. After a month of fighting, suffering 240,000 casualties, the exhausted French break off the offensive.
- **Feb 16 1916 – WW1 Era:** Russians Capture Erzerum » After five days of intense fighting, the Russian army defeats the Third Turkish Army to capture Erzerum, a largely Armenian city in the Ottoman province of Anatolia, on this day in 1916.



The Central Powers considered Turkey, which entered World War I in November 1914, a valuable ally for two reasons: first, it could threaten British interests in the Middle East, and second, it could divert Russian troops from the front in Europe to the Caucasus. Unfortunately for the Turks, the success of this second objective resulted in the loss of the Turkish province of eastern Anatolia to the Russians in 1916.

The brilliant Russian campaign of February 1916 was commanded by General Nikolai Yudenich, one of the most successful and distinguished Russian commanders of the war. On 11 FEB, the Russian troops began their attack on Erzerum from the south, over Kop Mountain. Once the Russian forces broke through the Turkish lines to the south and began to attack other Turkish positions, the fall of Erzerum seemed inevitable. The Third Turkish Army began abandoning their equipment and retreating from their positions as the Russians entered the city. In total, the Russians captured more than 1,000 guns and artillery and took some 10,000 Turkish prisoners. With the capture of Erzerum, arguably the strongest and most important fortress in the Turkish Empire, the Russians had gained the upper hand in the battle for control on the Caucasus front. With this one victory, the Russians captured or controlled all the roads leading to Mesopotamia and Tabriz and, in essence, controlled western Armenia.

In the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in 1917 and the subsequent armistice between Russia and the Central Powers, Erzerum was returned to Turkish control. The transfer of power was made official under the terms of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918.

- **Feb 16 1943 – WW2:** Norwegian commandos trained by the British Special Operations Executive destroy a factory to prevent the German nuclear energy project from acquiring heavy water.

- **Feb 16 1944 – WW2:** Operation Hailstone begins. U.S. naval air, surface, and submarine attack against Truk (Chuuk), Japan's main base in the central Pacific, in support of the Eniwetok invasion.
- **Feb 16 1945 – WW2:** Bataan Recaptured » The Bataan Peninsula in the Philippines is occupied by American troops, almost three years after the devastating and infamous Bataan Death March.

On April 3, 1942, the Japanese infantry staged a major offensive against Allied troops in Bataan, the peninsula guarding Manila Bay of the Philippine Islands. The invasion of the Japanese 14th Army, led by Gen. Masaharu Homma, had already forced Gen. Douglas MacArthur's troops from Manila, the Philippine capital, into Bataan. By March, after MacArthur had left for Australia on President Roosevelt's orders and was replaced by Maj. Gen. Edward P. King Jr., the American Luzon Force and its Filipino allies were half-starved and suffering from malnutrition, malaria, beriberi, dysentery, and hookworm.



Homma, helped by reinforcements and an increase in artillery and aircraft activity, took advantage of the U.S. and Filipinos' weakened condition to launch another major offensive, which resulted in Admiral King's surrender on 9 APR. The largest contingent of U.S. soldiers ever to surrender was taken captive by the Japanese. The prisoners, both Filipino and American, were at once led 55 miles from Mariveles, on the southern end of the Bataan Peninsula, to San Fernando. The torturous journey became known as the "Bataan Death March." At least 600 Americans and 5,000 Filipinos died because of the extreme brutality of their captors, who starved, beat, kicked, and bayoneted those too weak to walk. Survivors were taken by rail from San Fernando to prisoner of war camps, where another 16,000 Filipinos and at least 1,000 Americans died from disease, mistreatment, and starvation.

America avenged its defeat in the Philippines generally, and Bataan specifically, with the invasion of Leyte Island in October 1944. General MacArthur, who in 1942 had famously promised to return to the Philippines, made good on his word. With the help of the U.S. Navy, which succeeded in destroying the Japanese fleet and left Japanese garrisons on the Philippine Islands without reinforcements, the Army defeated adamant Japanese resistance. In January 1945, MacArthur was given control of all American land forces in the Pacific. On January 9, 1945, U.S. forces sealed off the Bataan Peninsula in the north; on 16 FEB, the 8th Army occupied the southern tip of Bataan, as MacArthur drew closer to Manila and the complete recapture of the Philippines.

- **Feb 16 1951 – Cold War:** Joseph Stalin Attacks the United Nations » In a statement focusing on the situation in Korea, Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin charges that the United Nations has become "a weapon of aggressive war." He also suggested that although a world war was not inevitable "at the present time," "warmongers" in the West might trigger such a conflict.

Stalin's comments in response to queries from the Soviet newspaper Pravda were his first public statements about the nearly year-old conflict in Korea, in which the United States, South Korea, and other member nations of the United Nations were arrayed against forces of North Korea and communist China. Coming just over two weeks after the U.N. General Assembly's resolution condemning China as an aggressor, Stalin's statement turned the tables by declaring that the United Nations was "burying its moral prestige and dooming itself to disintegration." He warned that Western "warmongers," through their aggressive posture in Korea, would "manage to entangle the popular masses in lies, deceive them, and drag them into a new world war." In any event, he confidently predicted that Chinese forces in Korea would be victorious because the armies opposing them lacked morale and dedication to the war.

Despite the rather blistering tone of Stalin's words, Western observers were not unduly alarmed. Stalin's attacks on Western "aggression" were familiar, and some officials in Washington took comfort in the premier's assertion that a world war was not inevitable "at the present time." Indeed, there was some feeling that Stalin's denouncement of the United Nations' actions was actually a veiled call for negotiations through the auspices of that body. Stalin's comments, and the intense scrutiny they were subjected to in the West, were more evidence that in the Cold War, the "war of words" was almost as significant as any actual fighting.

- **Feb 16 1959 – Cold War: *Castro Sworn In*** » Fidel Castro is sworn in as prime minister of Cuba after leading a guerrilla campaign that forced right-wing dictator Fulgencio Batista into exile. Castro, who became commander in chief of Cuba's armed forces after Batista was ousted on 1 JAN, replaced the more moderate Miro Cardona as head of the country's new provisional government.

Castro was born in the Oriente province in eastern Cuba, the son of a Spanish immigrant who had made a fortune building rail systems to transport sugar cane. He became involved in revolutionary politics while a student and in 1947 took part in an abortive attempt by Dominican exiles and Cubans to overthrow Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo. In the next year, he took part in urban riots in Bogota, Colombia. The most outstanding feature of his politics during the period was his anti-American beliefs; he was not yet an overt Marxist. In 1951, he ran for a seat in the Cuban House of Representatives as a member of the reformist Ortodoxo Party, but General Batista seized power in a bloodless coup d'etat before the election could be held.



Fulgencio Batista, Castro's brother Raul, Ernesto "Che" Guevara, and Castro

Various groups formed to oppose Batista's dictatorship, and on July 26, 1953, Castro led some 160 rebels in an attack on the Moncada Barracks in Santiago de Cuba—Cuba's second largest military base. Castro hoped to seize weapons and announce his revolution from the base radio station, but the barracks were heavily defended, and more than half his men were captured or killed. Castro was himself arrested

and put on trial for conspiring to overthrow the Cuban government. During his trial, he argued that he and his rebels were fighting to restore democracy to Cuba, but he was nonetheless found guilty and sentenced to 15 years in prison.

Two years later, Batista felt confident enough in his power that he granted a general amnesty for all political prisoners, including Castro. Castro then went with his brother Raul to Mexico, and they organized the revolutionary 26th of July Movement, enlisting recruits and joining up with Ernesto “Che” Guevara, an idealist Marxist from Argentina.

On December 2, 1956, Castro and 81 armed men landed on the Cuban coast. All of them were killed or captured except for Castro, Raul, Che, and nine others, who retreated into the Sierra Maestra mountain range to wage a guerrilla war against the Batista government. They were joined by revolutionary volunteers from all over Cuba and won a series of victories over Batista’s demoralized army. Castro was supported by the peasantry, to whom he promised land reform, while Batista received aid from the United States, which bombed suspected revolutionary positions.

By mid-1958, a number of other Cuban groups were also opposing Batista, and the United States ended military aid to his regime. In December, the 26th of July forces under Che Guevara attacked the city of Santa Clara, and Batista’s forces crumbled. Batista fled for the Dominican Republic on January 1, 1959. Castro, who had fewer than 1,000 men left at the time, took control of the Cuban government’s 30,000-man army. The other rebel leaders lacked the popular support the young and charismatic Castro enjoyed, and on 16 FEB he was sworn in as prime minister.

The United States initially recognized the new Cuban dictator but withdrew its support after Castro launched a program of agrarian reform, nationalized U.S. assets on the island, and declared a Marxist government. Many of Cuba’s wealthier citizens fled to the United States, where they joined the CIA in its efforts to overthrow Castro’s regime. In April 1961, with training and support by the CIA, the Cuban exiles launched an ill-fated and unsuccessful invasion of Cuba known as the “Bay of Pigs.” The Soviet Union reacted to the attack by escalating its support to Castro’s communist government and in 1962 placed offensive nuclear missiles in Cuba. The discovery of the missiles by U.S. intelligence led to the tense “Cuban Missile Crisis,” which ended after the Soviets agreed to remove the weapons in exchange for a U.S. pledge not to invade Cuba.

Castro’s Cuba was the first communist state in the Western Hemisphere, and he would retain control of it into the 21st century, outlasting 10 U.S. presidents who opposed him with economic embargoes and political rhetoric. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Castro lost a valuable source of aid, but he made up for it by courting European and Canadian investment and tourism. In July 2006, Castro temporarily ceded power to his brother Raul after undergoing intestinal surgery. His struggles with illness continued, and he officially stepped down in February 2008. Castro died on November 25, 2016, at 90.

- **Feb 16 1960 – U.S. Navy:** The U.S. Navy submarine USS Triton begins Operation Sandblast, setting sail from New London, Connecticut, to begin the first submerged circumnavigation of the globe.
- **Feb 16 1968 – Vietnam War:** *Tet Offensive Results In Many New Refugees* » U.S. officials report that, in addition to the 800,000 people listed as refugees prior to 30 JAN, the fighting during the Tet Offensive has created 350,000 new refugees.

The communist attack known as the Tet Offensive had begun at dawn on 31 JAN, the first day of the Tet holiday truce. Viet Cong forces, supported by large numbers of North Vietnamese troops, launched the largest and best-coordinated offensive of the war, driving into the centers of South Vietnam's seven largest cities and attacking 30 provincial capitals ranging from the Delta to the DMZ.



Among the cities taken during the first four days of the offensive were Hue, Dalat, Kontum, and Quang Tri; in the north, all five provincial capitals were overrun. At the same time, enemy forces shelled numerous Allied airfields and bases. In Saigon, a 19-man Viet Cong suicide squad seized the U.S. Embassy and held it for six hours until an assault force of U.S. paratroopers landed by helicopter on the building's roof and routed them. Nearly 1,000 Viet Cong were believed to have infiltrated Saigon and it required a week of intense fighting by an estimated 11,000 U.S. and South Vietnamese troops to dislodge them. By 10 FEB, the offensive was largely crushed, but with a cost of heavy casualties on both sides.

Militarily, Tet was decidedly an Allied victory, but psychologically and politically, it was a disaster. The offensive was a crushing military defeat for the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese, but the size and scope of the communist attacks had caught the American and South Vietnamese allies completely by surprise. The early reporting of a smashing communist victory went largely uncorrected in the media and led to a psychological victory for the communists. The heavy U.S. and South Vietnamese casualties incurred during the offensive—and the disillusionment over the early, overly optimistic reports of progress in the war—accelerated the growing disenchantment with President Lyndon B. Johnson's conduct of the war.

- **Feb 16 2006 – U.S. Army:** The last Mobile Army Surgical Hospital (MASH) is decommissioned by the United States Army.

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- **Feb 17 1782 – American Revolution:** *French and British Battle in the Indian Ocean* » The worldwide implications of the American War for Independence are made clear on this day in history as the American-allied French navy begins a 14-month-long series of five battles with the British navy in the Indian Ocean.

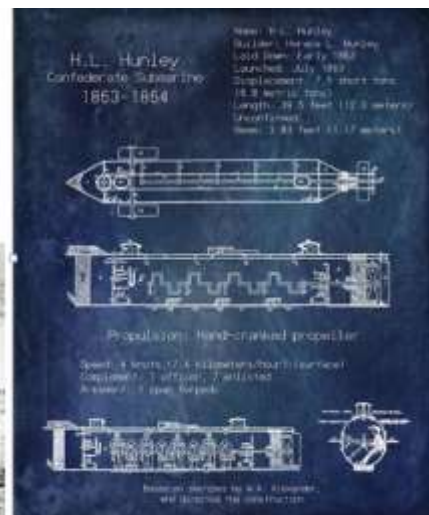


Adm. Bailli de Suffren, Battle of Trincomalee, & VAdm. Sir Edward Hughes

Between February 17, 1782, and September 3, 1782, French Admiral Pierre Andre de Suffren de Saint-Tropez, otherwise known as Bailli de Suffren, and British Vice-Admiral Sir Edward Hughes, commander in chief in the East Indies, engaged in four major battles in the Indian Ocean region: the Battle of Sadras on February 17, the Battle of Providien on April 12, the Battle of Negapatam on July 6 and the Battle of Trincomalee on September 3. The French attacked British possessions on the Indian coast and in Ceylon as part of the world war spawned by the American Revolution. Although Suffren failed to take any of Hughes' ships, he managed to prevent Hughes from taking any of his own fleet. This alone was a significant improvement in French performance when pitted against the legendary British navy. The fifth and final encounter of the two fleets—the Battle of Cuddalore on April 20, 1783—forced Hughes to leave for Madras, just before Suffren learned of the Treaty of Paris and returned to France.

En route home at the Cape of Good Hope, Suffren received compliments on his strategy from the English captains he had opposed in East India. Napoleon, too, had a high opinion of Suffren, commenting that he would have become France's Lord Nelson, had he survived. Instead, he died suddenly in France on December 8, 1788, of either a stroke or wounds from a duel. Admiral Hughes also profited from the East India campaign. He returned to Britain extremely wealthy from the various prizes and perquisites he won in the Indies and had his portrait painted in full naval splendor by the renowned Sir Joshua Reynolds.

- **Feb 17 1864 – Civil War: *First Submarine Sinking*** » The Confederate H.L. Hunley in Charleston Harbor, South Carolina becomes the first submarine to engage and sink a warship, the USS Housatonic.



H.L. Hunley, the Civil War's Lost Submarine - Civil War Soldiers

At just before 9pm Housatonic, commanded by Charles Pickering, was maintaining her station in the blockade outside the bar. Robert F. Flemming, Jr., a black landsman, first sighted an object in the water 100 yards off, approaching the ship. "It had the appearance of a plank moving in the water," Pickering later reported. Although the chain was slipped, the engine backed, and all hands were called to quarters, it was too late. Within two minutes of the first sighting, the Confederate submarine H. L. Hunley rammed her spar torpedo into Housatonic's starboard side, forward of the mizzenmast, in history's first successful submarine attack on a warship. Before the rapidly sinking ship went down, the crew managed to lower two boats which took all the men they could hold; most others saved themselves by climbing into the rigging which remained above water after the stricken ship settled on the bottom.

Two officers and three men in Housatonic died. The Confederate submarine escaped but was lost with all hands not long after this action; new evidence announced by archaeologists in 2013 indicates that the submarine may have been much closer to the point of detonation than previously realized, thus damaging the submarine as well. In 2017, researchers at Duke University further established through simulation that the Hunley's crew were most likely killed immediately at their posts by the blast's pressure wave damaging their lungs and brains. The wreck of Housatonic was largely scrapped in the 1870s–1890s and her location was eventually removed from coastal navigation charts and lost to history. The anchor of Housatonic can be found at the office of Wild Dunes on the Isle of Palms.

- **Feb 17 1865 – Civil War:** *Battle of Fort Anderson, NC (17-19 Feb)* » Union forces, in a combined land and sea attack, pelted the fort continuously for three days until Confederate forces retreated to Town Creek. The Union Army occupied Fort Anderson on 19 FEB, yet soon were assaulted with gunfire from their own navy who were unaware that Confederates had abandoned the fort. Union infantry waved sheets to signal to their navy to halt the friendly fire.
- **Feb 17 1865 – Civil War:** *Sherman Sacks Columbia, SC* » Soldiers from Union General William Tecumseh Sherman's army ransack the city and leave it charred city in their wake although it is not clear which side caused the fires.

Sherman is most famous for his March to the Sea in the closing months of 1864. After capturing Atlanta in September, Sherman cut away from his supply lines and cut a swath of destruction across Georgia on his way to Savannah. His army lived off the land and destroyed railroads, burned warehouses, and ruined plantations along the way. This was a calculated effort–Sherman thought that the war would end more quickly if civilians of the South felt some destruction personally, a view supported by General Ulysses S. Grant, commander of all Union forces, and President Abraham Lincoln.

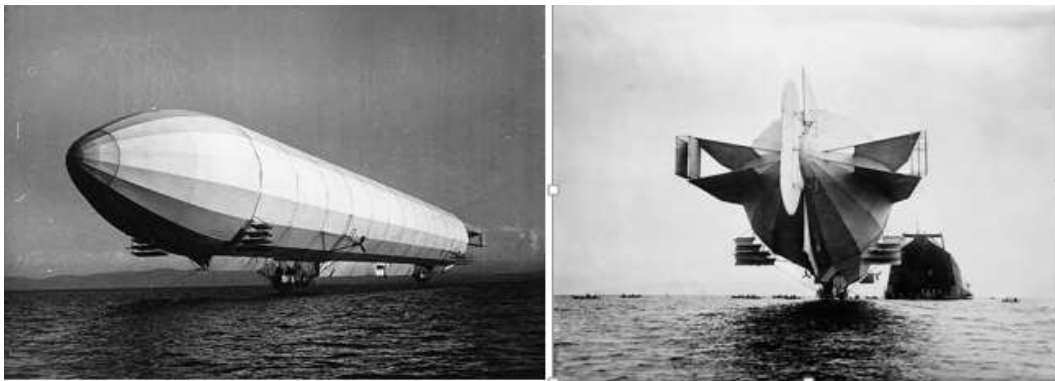
After spending a month in Savannah, Sherman headed north to tear the Confederacy into smaller pieces. The Yankee soldiers took particular delight in carrying the war to South Carolina, the symbol of the rebellion. It was the first state to secede and the site of Fort Sumter, where South Carolinians fired on the Federal garrison to start the war in April 1861. When Confederate General Wade Hampton's cavalry evacuated Columbia, the capital was open to Sherman's men.



Many of the Yankees got drunk before starting the rampage. Union General Henry Slocum observed: “A drunken soldier with a musket in one hand and a match in the other is not a pleasant visitor to have about the house on a dark, windy night.” Sherman claimed that the raging fires were started by evacuating Confederates and fanned by high winds. He later wrote: “Though I never ordered it and never wished it, I have never shed any tears over the event, because I believe that it hastened what we all fought for, the end of the War.”

Belatedly, some Yankees helped fight the fires, but more than two-thirds of the city was destroyed. Already choked with refugees from the path of Sherman’s army, Columbia’s situation became even more desperate when Sherman’s army destroyed the remaining public buildings before marching out of Columbia three days later.

- **Feb 17 1915 – WWI: Zeppelin L-4 Crashes Into North Sea** » After encountering a severe snowstorm on the evening of February 17, 1915, the German zeppelin L-4 crash-lands in the North Sea near the Danish coastal town of Varde.



The zeppelin, a motor-driven rigid airship, was developed by German inventor Ferdinand Graf von Zeppelin in 1900. Although a French inventor had built a power-driven airship several decades before, Zeppelin’s rigid dirigible, with its steel framework, was by far the largest airship ever constructed.

The L-4’s captain, Count Platen-Hallermund, and a crew of 14 men had completed a routine scouting mission off the Norwegian coast in search of Allied merchant vessels and were returning to their base in Hamburg, Germany, when the snowstorm flared up, bombarding the airship with gale-force winds. Unable to control the zeppelin in the face of such strong winds, the crew steered toward the Danish coast for an emergency landing, but was unable to reach the shore before crashing into the North Sea. The Danish coast guard rescued 11 members of the crew who had abandoned ship and jumped into the

sea prior to the crash; they were brought to Odense as prisoners to be interrogated. Four members of the crew were believed drowned and their bodies were never recovered.

One month earlier, the L-4 had taken part in the first-ever air raid on Britain in January 1915, when it and two other zeppelins dropped bombs on the towns of Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn on the eastern coast of England. Four civilians were killed in the raid, two in each town. Zeppelins would continue to wreak destruction on Germany's enemies throughout the next several years of war—by May 1916, 550 British civilians had been killed by aerial bombs.

- **Feb 17 1944 – WW2: Operation Hailstone (17-18 Feb)** » Carrier aircraft of U.S. Navy Task Force 58 begin two days of strikes against Truk Atoll, Japan's main base in the South Pacific Ocean; they are the first carrier strikes against Truk. An initial fighter sweep by 72 F6F Hellcats shoots down 30 Japanese fighters and destroys 45 more aircraft on the ground for the loss of four Hellcats; a follow-up strike by 18 TBF Avengers leaves fewer than 100 of the 365 Japanese aircraft that had been on Truk at daybreak operational. The carriers also launch 30 strikes, each larger than either of the two waves of Japanese aircraft that had attacked Pearl Harbor in December 1941, against shipping in the harbor during the day. In the evening, a Japanese torpedo bomber damages the aircraft carrier USS Intrepid (CV-11), knocking her out of action for several months.

On the 18th Task Force 58 aircraft complete their strikes, starting in the early morning hours with the first carrier-based night bombing attack in U.S. Navy history, a raid by 12 TBF-1C Avengers, which demonstrates the value of such raids by scoring 13 direct bomb hits and seven near misses on Japanese ships in the harbor. During the rest of the morning, U.S. Navy aircraft work over Japanese shore facilities on Truk; no Japanese aircraft rise to oppose the attacks. By the time Task Force 58 retires, its aircraft have flown a total of 1,250 combat sorties over the two days of strikes, dropping 400 tons (164,600 kg) of bombs and torpedoes against shipping and 94 tons (85,276 kg) of bombs against airfields and shore facilities, sinking two auxiliary cruisers, two destroyers, two submarine tenders, an aircraft ferry, and 23 merchant ships including six tankers and 17 cargo ships totaling 200,000 gross register tons of shipping, and destroying or damaging 250 to 275 Japanese aircraft, in exchange for the loss of 17 American aircraft in combat and eight to other causes.

- **Feb 17 1944 – WW2: Battle of Eniwetok (17-22 FEB)** - Eniwetok's islands and islets housed enough room for airfields critical for the upcoming invasion of the Marianas. Major General Yoshimi Nishida knew that it would be extremely difficult to hold the main island of Eniwetok against the invasion. He had roughly 4,000 troops, half of them Army soldiers, while the rest were a variety of Navy sailors. Since the Americans would be landing with naval and air support, therefore giving them the upper hand, he decided to stop them at the beaches.

On 17 FEB, a naval bombardment of Eniwetok Atoll began. This marked the beginning of Operation Catchpole. The same day, the 22 Marine Regiment under Colonel John Walker landed on the northern island of Engebi. The landings were a logistical nightmare, with American troops, gear, and supplies scattered along the beach. Walker and his Marines took the island on 18 FEB with 85 dead and 166 wounded. On 19 FEB, the 106th Infantry Regiment, under Lieutenant General Thomas E. Watson, landed on the main island of Eniwetok after a heavy bombardment. However, the Japanese spider holes and bunkers repelled much of the bombardment by battleships. The landing group also faced the same

logistical problems as the 22nd Infantry Regiment. Japanese forces concentrated in the southwest corner of the island counterattacked the American flank, forcing the Americans to attack mainly at night.

Eniwetok Island was captured on 21 FEB with the loss of 37 Americans and nearly 800 Japanese. On another one of Eniwetok's islands, Parry Island, the Americans used heavy gunfire support from battleships before the 22nd Marine Regiment, under Watson, waded ashore at Parry Island on 22 FEB. They captured the island and the entire atoll on 23 FEB. Of those engaged, 313 Americans died, 879 were wounded, and 77 were reported missing on Eniwetok, while the Japanese suffered 3,380 dead and 105 captured. This marked an end to the Marshall Islands campaign.

- **Feb 17 1947 – Cold War:** *Voice of America Begins Broadcasts to Russia* » With the words, “Hello! This is New York calling,” the U.S. Voice of America (VOA) begins its first radio broadcasts to the Soviet Union. The VOA effort was an important part of America’s propaganda campaign against the Soviet Union during the Cold War.



The VOA began in 1942 as a radio program designed to explain America’s policies during World War II and to bolster the morale of its allies throughout Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. After the war, VOA continued as part of America’s Cold War propaganda arsenal and was primarily directed toward the western European audience. In February 1947, VOA began its first Russian-language broadcasts into the Soviet Union. The initial broadcast explained that VOA was going to “give listeners in the USSR a picture of life in America.” News stories, human-interest features, and music comprised the bulk of the programming. The purpose was to give the Russian audience the “pure and unadulterated truth” about life outside the USSR. Voice of America hoped that this would “broaden the bases of understanding and friendship between the Russian and American people.”

By and large, the first program was a fairly dry affair. Much of it dealt with brief summaries of current events, discussions of how the U.S. budget and political system worked, and a rousing analysis of a “new synthetic chemical substance called pyribenzamine.” Music on the program was eclectic, ranging from “Turkey in the Straw” to Cole Porter’s “Night and Day.” In addition, due to bad weather and technical difficulties, the sound quality for the Russian audience was generally poor. According to U.S. officials in the Soviet Union, Russians rated the program “fair.”

VOA broadcasts into Russia did improve somewhat over the years, primarily because music played an increasingly prominent role. U.S. observers had discovered that the Soviet people’s appetite for American music, particularly jazz, was nearly insatiable. How many Russians actually ever heard the broadcasts is uncertain, but reports from behind the Iron Curtain indicated that many VOA programs, specifically the music segments, were eagerly awaited each night. By the 1960s, VOA was broadcasting to every continent in several dozen languages. Today, VOA continues to operate, bringing “Life in America” to the world. And with “Radio Marti,” which is aimed at communist Cuba, it continues its Cold War tradition.

- **Feb 17 1966 – Vietnam War:** Taylor Testifies On Operation Rolling Thunder » In testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Gen. Maxwell Taylor states that a major U.S. objective in Vietnam is to demonstrate that “wars of liberation” are “costly, dangerous and doomed to failure.” Discussing the American air campaign against North Vietnam, Taylor declared that its primary purpose was “to change the will

The decision to launch a bombing campaign against North Vietnam was controversial. President Lyndon B. Johnson deliberated for a year before deciding to undertake the sustained bombing of North Vietnam. Earlier in the month, he had ordered Operation Flaming Dart in response to communist attacks on U.S. installations in South Vietnam. It was hoped that these retaliatory raids would cause the North Vietnamese to cease support of Viet Cong forces in South Vietnam, but they did not have the desired effect. Out of frustration, Johnson initiated Operation Rolling Thunder.

The new bombing campaign was designed to interdict North Vietnamese transportation routes in the southern part of North Vietnam and thereby slow infiltration of personnel and supplies into South Vietnam. The first Rolling Thunder mission took place on March 2, 1965, when 100 U.S. Air Force and Republic of Vietnam Air Force (VNAF) planes struck the Xom Bang ammunition dump 100 miles southeast of Hanoi. Rolling Thunder continued, with occasional suspensions, until President Johnson, under intense domestic political pressure, halted it on October 31, 1968.

Operation Rolling Thunder was closely controlled by the White House and at times targets were personally selected by President Johnson. From 1965 to 1968, an estimated 643,000 tons of bombs were dropped on North Vietnam. A total of nearly 900 U.S. aircraft would be lost during Operation Rolling Thunder.

- **Feb 17 1968 – Vietnam War:** U.S. Casualty Rate Reaches Record High » American officials in Saigon report an all-time high weekly rate of U.S. casualties—543 killed in action and 2,547 wounded in the previous seven days. These losses were a result of the heavy fighting during the communist Tet Offensive.
- **Feb 17 1974 – U.S. Army:** White House Helicopter Incident » Robert K. Preston, a disgruntled U.S. Army private, a United States Army UH-1 Iroquois helicopter from Fort Meade, Maryland, flew it to Washington, D.C., and hovered for six minutes over the White House before descending on the south lawn, about 100 yards from the West Wing.



There was no initial attempt from the Executive Protective Service to shoot the helicopter down, and he later took off and was chased by two Maryland State Police helicopters. Preston forced one of the police helicopters down through his maneuvering of the helicopter, and then returned to the White House. This time, as he hovered above the south grounds, the Executive Protective Service fired at him with shotguns and submachine guns. Preston was injured slightly, and landed his helicopter.

In a plea bargain, he pled guilty to "wrongful appropriation and breach of the peace," and was sentenced to 1 year in prison and fined \$2,400. This amounted to a six-month sentence, since he had already been in prison for six months at the time. At the time of the incident, President Richard Nixon was travelling in Florida, and First Lady Pat Nixon was in Indianapolis, Indiana, visiting their sick daughter, Julie.

- **Feb 17, 1979 – China*Vietnam:** China Invades Vietnam » In response to the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia, China launches an invasion of Vietnam.

Tensions between Vietnam and China increased dramatically after the end of the Vietnam War in 1975. Attempting to expand its influence, Vietnam established a military presence in Laos; strengthened its ties with China's rival, the Soviet Union; and toppled the Cambodian regime of Pol Pot in 1979. Just over a month later, Chinese forces invaded, but were repulsed in nine days of bloody and bitter fighting. Tensions between China and Vietnam remained high throughout the next decade, and much of Vietnam's scarce resources were allocated to protecting its border with China and its interests in Cambodia.

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- **Feb 18 1776 – American Revolution:** Lord Dunmore Dispatches Note Of “Inexpressible Mortification” » From Norfolk, Virginia, Royal Governor John Murray, 4th Earl of Dunmore, dispatches a note to William Legge, 2nd Earl of Dartmouth, expressing his “inexpressible mortification” that British Major General Sir Henry Clinton had been ordered to the “insignificant province of North Carolina to the neglect of this the richest and powerfully important province in America.” Dunmore was facing expulsion from Virginia at the hands of the Patriots and was deeply insulted that the army chose to defend its claims to the less significant colony of North Carolina instead of the economically and politically vital colony of Virginia.



Lord Dunmore, John Murray, and General Sir Henry Clinton

Having departed New York on 12 FEB, General Clinton met with Governor Dunmore in Hampton Roads, Virginia, on 17 FEB while en route to Cape Fear, North Carolina; he was forced to remain in Hampton Roads until 27 FEB due to stormy weather. Clinton finally reached North Carolina on 12 MAR, by which time the North Carolina Loyalists had been routed at Moore's Creek Bridge on 27 FEB. The royal governors of North and South Carolina met Clinton to give him the bad news, but Commodore Peter Parker and Lieutenant General Charles Cornwallis had not yet arrived from Cork, Ireland, to support Clinton in his efforts to suppress the American rebellion. After waiting until May 31, 1776, for the last of the contingency to arrive from Cork, Clinton contemplated moving the British forces to the Chesapeake Bay, since North Carolina had already fallen to the Patriots, but Parker convinced him to head instead for Charleston, South Carolina.

Abandoned again, Dunmore returned to England after the publication of the Declaration of Independence in July 1776. The county named in his honor in 1772 was renamed Shenandoah County in 1778. His hunting lodge, Porto Bello, where he first fled the Patriot uprising, remains on the National Register of Historic Places for York County, Virginia.

Clinton, Parker and Cornwallis attacked Fort Sullivan outside Charleston to no avail and retreated to New York City.

- **Feb 18 1817 – Civil War Era:** Lewis Armistead Born » Confederate General Lewis Armistead is born in New Bern, North Carolina. Armistead is best known for leading Pickett's Charge at the 1863 Battle of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, where he was mortally wounded.

Armistead's father, Walker Keith Armistead, and his five uncles served in the military during the War of 1812. One of them, George Armistead, commanded Fort McHenry at Baltimore during the British bombardment, an event that inspired America's national anthem, "The Star-Spangled Banner." Lewis Armistead entered West Point in 1834 but did not graduate due to poor grades, although some sources indicate that the reason was a fight with another cadet, Jubal Early, who was later a comrade in the Army of Northern Virginia.

Despite not graduating from West Point, Armistead joined the military as a second lieutenant and fought in the Seminole War in Florida. Later, he was cited for heroism three times in the Mexican War (1846-48). During the 1850s, he served on the frontier and developed a friendship with another officer, Pennsylvanian Winfield Scott Hancock. When the Civil War broke out, Armistead resigned his commission to fight with the Confederates.

At the beginning of the war, Armistead commanded the 57th Virginia Infantry, and by April 1862 he was a brigadier general. He fought during the Seven Days Battles in June and July 1862, but played only minor roles at Antietam, Fredericksburg, and Chancellorsville. On July 3, 1863, he led a brigade in George Pickett's division during the climactic charge at Gettysburg. Armistead's men attacked Hancock's corps at the center of the Union line on Cemetery Ridge. Armistead crossed the wall that protected the Federal cannon, representing the so-called high-water mark of the Confederacy. He fell wounded there, and the attack stalled. Armistead was found by Union Captain Henry Bingham, an aide to Hancock, and Armistead told him: "Say to General Hancock for me that I have done him and done you all an injury which I shall regret the longest day that I live."

Armistead lingered for two days, and requested that his personal effects be given to Hancock, who was also seriously wounded that day. Armistead was buried in a family plot at St. Paul's Church in Baltimore, Maryland.

- **Feb 18 1861 – Civil War:** *Davis Becomes Provisional President of the Confederacy* » Jefferson Davis, a veteran of the Black Hawk and Mexican-American Wars, begins his term as provisional president of the Confederate States of America. As it turned out, Davis was both the first and last president of the ill-fated Confederacy, as both his term and the Confederacy ended with the Union's 1865 victory in the Civil War.



Born in Kentucky and raised in Mississippi, Davis graduated from West Point in 1828. In 1824, at the age of 26, he married his first wife, Sarah, the 16-year-old daughter of then-Colonel Zachary Taylor, against Taylor's wishes. The marriage ended after only three months when Sarah died of malaria. Davis remarried at age 37 in 1845, this time to a prominent 17-year-old Southern socialite and budding author named Varnia Howell.

Upon his election to the House of Representatives in 1844, Davis immediately put his pro-slavery vote into action, opposing the Compromise of 1850 and other policies that would have limited the expansion of slavery into new American territories. He interrupted his political service in 1851 to fight in the Mexican-American War, during which his bravery and success prompted then-General Taylor to declare 'My daughter, sir, was a better judge of men than I was'.

Following the war, Davis accepted an appointment to fill a suddenly vacant Mississippi seat in the U.S. Senate, but resigned after only a year to launch an unsuccessful bid for the governorship of Mississippi. Davis then campaigned for Franklin Pierce's presidential campaign; upon winning, Pierce rewarded him with the post of secretary of war in 1853. In this capacity, Davis proved instrumental in advocating for the development of a transcontinental railroad. When Pierce lost his presidential reelection bid, Davis ran for a Senate seat and won.

Although a staunch supporter of slavery, Davis vigorously opposed the secessionist movement until 1860 when Abraham Lincoln came to power. Davis' attempts to solidify states' rights failed repeatedly and, disillusioned, he decided to resign from the Senate. On January 10, 1861, Davis led Mississippi in following South Carolina's example and seceding from the Union. The following month, he was sworn in as provisional president of the Confederate States of America. (Davis was referred to as the provisional president because he had been appointed by the Confederate Congress rather than elected by the populace.) He moved his family to the southern White House in Richmond, Virginia, and prepared for a six-year presidential term.

Davis' refusal to appoint a general commander of southern forces and his attempt to manage the Southern army and government at the same time is thought to have contributed to the South's defeat.

After the fall of Atlanta in 1865, he was captured in Georgia, clapped in irons and indicted for treason. After two years, he was finally released on bail; charges against him were not dropped until 1869. While in prison he staved off financial ruin by selling his Mississippi estate to a former slave. A rebel to the end, Davis refused to swear an oath of allegiance that would have reinstated his U.S. citizenship even after his release from prison. The time spent incarcerated impacted his health, and on December 6, 1889, Davis died in New Orleans.

- **Feb 18 1865 – Civil War:** Union forces under Major General William T. Sherman set the South Carolina State House on fire during the burning of Columbia.
- **Feb 18 1865 – Civil War:** *Battle of Fort Moultrie, SC* » In April 1863, Federal ironclads and shore batteries began a bombardment of Fort Moultrie and the other forts around Charleston harbor. Over the ensuing twenty months, Union bombardment reduced Fort Sumter to a rubble pile and pounded Fort Moultrie below a sand hill, which protected it against further bombardment. The Rifled cannon proved its superiority to brickwork fortifications but not to the endurance of the Confederate artillerymen who continued to man Fort Moultrie. In February 1865, as General Sherman marched through South Carolina, the Confederate soldiers finally abandoned the rubble of Fort Moultrie and evacuated the city of Charleston.
- **Feb 18 1915 – WWI Era:** The first German U-Boat campaign of the war begins with unrestricted attacks against merchant and passenger ships in the waters around the British Isles. Within six months, Allied shipping losses at sea surpass the number of new ships being built. However, the unrestricted attacks also arouse the anger of the neutral United States as Americans are killed.
- **Feb 18 1916 – WWI Era:** The last German garrison (Mora) in the German African colony of Cameroons surrenders. At the outbreak of World War I, French, Belgian and British troops invaded the German colony in 1914 and fully occupied it during the Kamerun campaign. Following Germany's defeat, the Treaty of Versailles divided the territory into two League of Nations mandates (Class B) under the administration of Great Britain and France. French Cameroun and part of British Cameroons reunified in 1961 as Cameroon.
- **Feb 18 1918 – WWI:** Germany renews its offensive against the Russians, making dramatic gains against disorganized and dispirited Russian troops
- **Feb 18 1942 – WW2:** *The Sook Ching* » Following the Battle of Singapore the Imperial Japanese Army began a systematic extermination of perceived hostile elements among the Chinese in Singapore from 18 February to 4 March 1942 at various places in the region. The operation was overseen by the Imperial Japanese Army's Kenpeitai secret police and subsequently extended to include the Chinese population in Malaya. The purge was planned before Japanese troops landed in Singapore. The military government section of the 25th Army had already drawn up a plan entitled "Implementation Guideline for Manipulating Overseas Chinese" on or around 28 December 1941. This guideline stated that anyone who failed to obey or co-operate with the occupation authorities should be eliminated.



Scholars agree the massacre took place, but Japanese and Singaporean sources disagree about the number of deaths. According to Hirofumi Hayashi, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs "accepted that the Japanese military had carried out mass killings in Singapore ... During negotiations with Singapore, the Japanese government rejected demands for reparations but agreed to make a 'gesture of atonement' by providing funds in other ways." Officially, Japan says that fewer than 5,000 deaths occurred, while Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore's first prime minister, said "verifiable numbers would be about 70,000". In 1966, Japan agreed to pay US\$50 million in compensation, half of which was a grant and the rest as a loan. They did not make an official apology.

- **Feb 18 1942 – WW2:** Japanese troop land on Bali, Indonesia.
- **Feb 18 1943 – WW2:** *Nazis Arrest White Rose Resistance Leaders* » Hans Scholl and his sister Sophie, the leaders of the German youth group Weisse Rose (White Rose), are arrested by the Gestapo for opposing the Nazi regime.

The White Rose was composed of university (mostly medical) students who spoke out against Adolf Hitler and his regime. The founder, Hans Scholl, was a former member of Hitler Youth who grew disenchanted with Nazi ideology once its real aims became evident. As a student at the University of Munich in 1940-41, he met two Roman Catholic men of letters who redirected his life. Turning from medicine to religion, philosophy, and the arts, Scholl gathered around him like-minded friends who also despised the Nazis, and the White Rose was born.

During the summer of 1942, Scholl and a friend composed four leaflets, which exposed and denounced Nazi and SS atrocities, including the extermination of Jews and Polish nobility, and called for resistance to the regime. The literature was peppered with quotations from great writers and thinkers, from Aristotle to Goethe, and called for the rebirth of the German university. It was aimed at an educated elite within Germany.

The risks involved in such an enterprise were enormous. The lives of average civilians were monitored for any deviation from absolute loyalty to the state. Even a casual remark critical of Hitler or the Nazis could result in arrest by the Gestapo, the regime's secret police. Yet the students of the White Rose (the origin of the group's name is uncertain; possibly, it came from the picture of the flower on their leaflets) risked all, motivated purely by idealism, the highest moral and ethical principles, and sympathy for their Jewish neighbors and friends. (Despite the risks, Hans' sister, Sophie, a biology student at her brother's university, begged to participate in the activities of the White Rose when she discovered her brother's covert operation.)

On 18 FEB, Hans and Sophie left a suitcase filled with copies of yet another leaflet in the main university building. The leaflet stated, in part: "The day of reckoning has come, the reckoning of our German youth with the most abominable tyranny our people has ever endured. In the name of the entire

German people we demand of Adolf Hitler's state the return of personal freedom, the most precious treasure of the Germans which he cunningly has cheated us out of." The pair were spotted by a janitor and reported to the Gestapo and arrested. Turned over to Hitler's "People's Court," basically a kangaroo court for dispatching dissidents quickly, the Scholls, along with another White Rose member who was caught, were sentenced to death. They were beheaded—a punishment reserved for "political traitors"—on 23 FEB, but not before Hans Scholl proclaimed "Long live freedom!"

- **Feb 18 1955 – Cold War:** Operation Teapot test shot "Wasp" is successfully detonated at the Nevada Test Site with a yield of 1.2 kilotons. Wasp is the first of fourteen shots of the Teapot series.



Teapot MET (Military Effects Test)

- **Feb 18 1963 – Cuba:** Premier Khrushchev informs President Kennedy that "several thousand" Soviet troops in Cuba would be withdrawn by 15 MAR, however one Soviet division (2,600 soldiers) remains in Cuba in case of U.S. invasion. Meanwhile, three days later, the Joint Chiefs of Staff undertake a comprehensive study of how to overthrow Cuba through an internal revolt.
- **Feb 18 1964 – Cold War:** United States Punishes Nations for Trading with Cuba » The U.S. cuts off military assistance to Britain, France, and Yugoslavia in retaliation for their continuing trade with the communist nation of Cuba. The action was chiefly symbolic, but represented the continued U.S. effort to destabilize the Cuban regime of Fidel Castro.

The amount of aid denied was miniscule—approximately \$100,000 in assistance to each nation. None of the nations indicated that the aid cut-off would affect their trade with Cuba in the least. America's decision to terminate the trade, therefore, hardly had a decisive effect. Many commentators at the time concluded that the U.S. action was largely a result of frustration at not being able to bring down the Castro government.

Since Castro came to power in 1959, the United States had tried various methods to remove him and his communist government. First, the U.S. severed diplomatic relations and enacted a trade embargo. In 1961, it unleashed a force of Cuban exiles (which it had armed, trained, and financed) against Castro in the unsuccessful Bay of Pigs invasion. In 1962, the United States set up a naval blockade around Cuba to prevent the shipment of Soviet missiles to the island. Rumors also flew fast and furious about other U.S. efforts, including talks with the Mafia about assassinating the Cuban leader. Despite all of these efforts, Castro survived and prospered, simply replacing most U.S. trade and aid with the same from the communist bloc. The American obsession with Castro provoked the New York Times to observe that the U.S. policies toward Cuba "suggest an extraordinary sensitivity that does not in fact correspond to basic policy judgments."

The decision to cut off military assistance to Britain, France, and Yugoslavia did little to help in this regard. The three nations continued their trade with Cuba and expressed their resentment at the U.S. action.

It wasn't until July 2015, more than 50 years later, that the two nations formally and fully normalized relations, with the easing of travel restrictions and the opening of embassies and diplomatic missions in both countries.

- **Feb 18 1965 – Vietnam:** *United States Warns Of Forthcoming Bombing Operations* » The State Department sends secret cables to U.S. ambassadors in nine friendly nations advising of forthcoming bombing operations over North Vietnam, and instructs them to inform their host governments “in strictest confidence” and to report reactions. President Lyndon Johnson wanted these governments to be aware of what he was planning to do in the upcoming bombing campaign.

Johnson made the controversial decision to undertake the sustained bombing of North Vietnam because of the deteriorating military conditions in South Vietnam. Earlier in the month, he had ordered Operation Flaming Dart in response to communist attacks on U.S. installations in South Vietnam. It was hoped that these retaliatory raids would cause the North Vietnamese to cease support of Viet Cong forces in South Vietnam, but they did not have the desired effect. Out of frustration, Johnson turned to a more extensive use of airpower.

Called Operation Rolling Thunder, the bombing campaign was designed to interdict North Vietnamese transportation routes in the southern part of North Vietnam and thereby slow infiltration of personnel and supplies into South Vietnam. The first Rolling Thunder mission took place on March 2, 1965, when 100 U.S. Air Force and Republic of Vietnam Air Force (VNAF) planes struck an ammunition dump 100 miles southeast of Hanoi. The operation would continue, with occasional suspensions, until President Johnson, under increasing domestic political pressure, halted it on October 31, 1968.

- **Feb 18 2001 – U.S.*Russia:** *FBI Defector* » In 1979, three years after joining the FBI, Agent Robert Hanssen approached the Soviet Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU) to offer his services, launching his first espionage cycle, which lasted until 1981. Hanssen restarted his espionage activities in 1985 and continued until 1991 when he broke off communications during the collapse of the Soviet Union, fearing he would be exposed. He restored communications the next year and continued until his arrest on this date. Throughout his spying, Hanssen remained anonymous to the Russians.

Hanssen sold thousands of classified documents to the KGB that detailed U.S. strategies in the event of nuclear war, developments in military weapons technologies, and aspects of the U.S. counterintelligence program. He was spying at the same time as Aldrich Ames in the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Both Ames and Hanssen compromised the names of KGB agents working secretly for the United States, some of whom were executed for their betrayal. Hanssen also revealed a multimillion-dollar eavesdropping tunnel built by the FBI under the Soviet Embassy in Washington. After Ames's arrest in 1994, some of these intelligence breaches still remained unsolved. The FBI paid \$7 million to a KGB agent to obtain a file on an anonymous mole, whom the FBI later identified as Hanssen through fingerprint and voice analysis. He is currently serving 15 consecutive life sentences at ADX Florence, a federal supermax prison near Florence, Colorado.

- **Feb 19 1807 - General:** *Aaron Burr Arrested For Treason* » Former U.S. vice president Aaron Burr is arrested in Alabama on charges of plotting to annex Spanish territory in Louisiana and Mexico to be used toward the establishment of an independent republic.

In November 1800, in an election conducted before presidential and vice-presidential candidates shared a single ticket, Thomas Jefferson and his running mate, Aaron Burr, defeated Federalist incumbent John Adams with 73 electoral votes each. The tie vote then went to the House to be decided, and Federalist Alexander Hamilton was instrumental in breaking the deadlock in Jefferson's favor. Burr, because he finished second, became vice president.



During the next few years, President Jefferson grew apart from his vice president and did not support Burr's renomination to a second term in 1804. A faction of the Federalists, who had found their fortunes drastically diminished after the ascendance of Jefferson, sought to enlist the disgruntled Burr into their party. However, Alexander Hamilton opposed such a move and was quoted by a New York newspaper saying that he "looked upon Mr. Burr to be a dangerous man, and one who ought not to be trusted with the reins of government." The article also referred to occasions when Hamilton had expressed an even "more despicable opinion of Burr." Burr demanded an apology, Hamilton refused, so Burr challenged his old political antagonist to a duel.

On July 11, 1804, the pair met at a remote spot in Weehawken, New Jersey. Hamilton, whose son was killed in a duel in 1801, deliberately fired into the air, but Burr fired with intent to kill. Hamilton, fatally wounded, died in New York City the next day. The questionable circumstances of Hamilton's death effectively brought Burr's political career to an end.

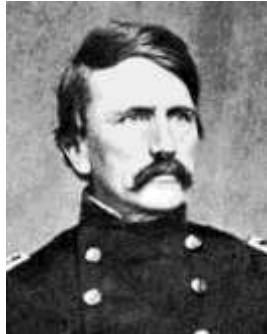
Fleeing to Virginia, he traveled to New Orleans after finishing his term as vice president and met with U.S. General James Wilkinson, who was an agent for the Spanish. The exact nature of what the two plotted is unknown, but speculation ranges from the establishment of an independent republic in the American Southwest to the seizure of territory in Spanish America for the same purpose.

In the fall of 1806, Burr led a group of well-armed colonists toward New Orleans, prompting an immediate investigation by U.S. authorities. General Wilkinson, in an effort to save himself, turned against Burr and sent dispatches to Washington accusing Burr of treason. On February 19, 1807, Burr was arrested in Alabama for treason and sent to Richmond, Virginia, to be tried in a U.S. circuit court.

On September 1, 1807, he was acquitted on the grounds that, although he had conspired against the United States, he was not guilty of treason because he had not engaged in an "overt act," a requirement of treason as specified by the U.S. Constitution. Nevertheless, public opinion condemned him as a

traitor, and he spent several years in Europe before returning to New York and resuming his law practice.

- **Feb 19 1821 –Civil War Era: Francis Preston Blair, Jr. Born** » Union General Francis Preston Blair Jr. is born in Lexington, Kentucky. The colorful Blair was instrumental in keeping Missouri part of the Union during the early stages of the Civil War.



Blair's father served as an advisor to several presidents. His namesake and youngest son was privileged and rebellious as a youth. As a college student, the younger Blair was expelled from the University of North Carolina and Yale for misconduct. He finally finished his degree at Princeton, but was denied graduation for participating in a wild party in his final week. Blair's degree was bestowed a year later after an influential friend intervened on his behalf.

Blair studied law in Kentucky and went onto practice in Missouri with his brother, Montgomery, who would later serve as U.S. postmaster general under President Abraham Lincoln. During the 1850s, Francis ran an anti-slave newspaper in St. Louis and served in the Missouri legislature. He was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1856. Blair was opposed to the extension of slavery, even though he owned a few slaves himself. His stance led to his defeat for re-election in 1858.

In 1860, Blair campaigned for Abraham Lincoln and also regained his congressional seat. When the Civil War erupted, he organized Missouri's Unionist forces and helped save the federal arsenal in St. Louis from the Confederates. Blair personally organized seven regiments from Missouri, and became a brigadier general, winning the respect of his superiors, Ulysses S. Grant and William T. Sherman. Blair commanded a corps during Sherman's March to the Sea in Georgia in 1864. After the war, Blair served in the U.S. Senate, but a stroke ended his political career. He died in 1875.

- **Feb 19 1915 – WWI Era: Dardanelles Forts Bombarded** » British and French battleships launch a massive attack on Turkish positions at Cape Helles and Kum Kaleh at the entrance to the Dardanelles, the narrow strait separating Europe from Asia in northwestern Turkey and the only waterway linking the Mediterranean Sea to the Black Sea.

With Turkey's entrance into World War I in November 1914 on the side of the Central Powers, the Dardanelles were controlled by Germany and its allies, thus isolating the Russian navy from the Allied naval forces and preventing cooperation between the two, as well as blocking passage of Russian wheat and British arms back and forth. An attack on the Dardanelles was thus a key objective of the Allies from the beginning of the war.



The British, and especially Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill, became convinced that it was possible to win control of the strait by a purely naval attack, avoiding the diversion of soldiers from the battlegrounds on the Western Front. At the end of January 1915, the British War Office approved a plan to bombard the Turkish positions at the Dardanelles; the initial bombardments would make way, they hoped, for British forces to move on Constantinople, knock Turkey out of the war and open a path to Russia.

Churchill set the date for the attack as 19 FEB; on that day, a combined British and French fleet commanded by Admiral Sackville Carden opened fire with long-range guns on the outer Turkish fortresses, Cape Helles and Kum Kaleh. The bombardments made little initial impact, however, as the Turks were not caught unawares: they had long known an attack on the Dardanelles was a strong possibility and had been well fortified by their German allies.

The largely unsuccessful Allied efforts to force their way into the Dardanelles continued over the next two months, including a disastrous attempt on March 18 in which three ships were sunk and three more badly damaged by Turkish mines before the attack had even begun. Over Churchill's protests, the naval attack was called off and a larger land invasion involving 120,000 troops was planned.

On 25 APR, troops from Britain, Australia and New Zealand launched a ground invasion of the Gallipoli Peninsula, which bordered the northern side of the strait. The Turkish defense soon pushed the Allies back to the shore, inflicting heavy casualties. Trenches were dug, and the conflict settled into a bloody stalemate for the next eight months. Some 250,000 Allied soldiers died at Gallipoli; Turkish casualty rates were roughly the same. In December, the exhausted and frustrated Allied forces began their retreat. The last Allied soldiers left Gallipoli on January 8, 1916. As a result of the disastrous campaign, Winston Churchill resigned as first lord of the Admiralty and accepted a commission to command an infantry battalion in France.

- **Feb 19 1917 – Mexican Expedition:** American troops are recalled from the Mexican border after failed in one of its major objectives of capturing Pancho Villa. However, between the date of the American withdrawal and Villa's retirement in 1920, Villa's troops did not again successfully raid the United States.
- **Feb 22 1941 – Holocaust:** Following another violent incident in Koco Amsterdam a few days before between Jews and German police, 389 young Jews were arrested and sent to KZ Buchenwald (concentration camp), where fifty of them died within three months. The remainder were deported to

KZ Mauthausen. In protest at the brutal German behavior, the Dutch population declared a general strike in Amsterdam on 25 FEB. The entire transport system, large factories and public services came to a standstill. After spreading to other cities, the strike was eventually suppressed two days later. To penalize the Dutch for their behavior, the Germans imposed fines on three cities: 15 million guilders on Amsterdam, 2.5 million guilders on Hilversum, 0.5 million guilders on Zaandam.

The strike was to have fatal consequences for Holland's Jews. The Dutch realized that it had not produced any meaningful results, since the Germans refused to make any concessions concerning their treatment of the Jews. For their part, the Germans, recognizing that there was no support for their anti-Semitic policies among the Dutch population, decided to adopt a more radical posture regarding the "Jewish question".

In spring 1941, a Central Office for Jewish Emigration (*Zentralstelle*) was set up. Officially under Willy Lages, head of the SD in Amsterdam, it was administered on a daily basis by Ferdinand Aus der Fünten. A branch office of the RSHA department IV B 4, headed by Adolf Eichmann, the *Zentralstelle*'s purpose was to round up and deport the Jews. It operated with a staff of 20 Germans and 100 Dutch employees. Two men seasoned in the murder of Jews in Eastern Europe were to subsequently take up office in Holland. Erich Naumann was appointed commander of the Security Police in September 1943, to be succeeded by Karl Schöngarth in June 1944. The Jewish Council (*Joodsche Raad*) had been made subordinate to the *Zentralstelle*, and in late 1941, forced-labor camps were set up for which the *Joodsche Raad* had to supply workers.

- **Feb 19 1942 – WW2: *Bombing of Port Darwin, Australia*** » The Bombing of Darwin, also known as the Battle of Darwin, on 19 FEB was the largest single attack ever mounted by a foreign power on Australia. On that day, 242 Japanese aircraft, in two separate raids, attacked the town, ships in Darwin's harbor and the town's two airfields in an attempt to prevent the Allies from using them as bases to contest the invasion of Timor and Java during World War II. Most of the cargo shipping available to support efforts in Java and the Philippines with Java was lost effectively halting further surface shipments from Australia. Darwin was lightly defended relative to the size of the attack, and the Japanese inflicted heavy losses upon Allied forces at little cost to themselves. The urban areas of Darwin also suffered some damage from the raids and there were a number of civilian casualties. More than half of Darwin's civilian population left the area permanently, before or immediately after the attack. The two Japanese air raids were the first, and largest, of more than 100 air raids against Australia during 1942–43.



The explosion of an oil storage tank and clouds of smoke from other oil tanks, hit during the first Japanese air raid on Australia's mainland at Darwin

- **Feb 19 1942 – WW2: *Roosevelt Signs Executive Order 9066*** » U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed an Executive Order initiating a controversial World War II policy with lasting consequences for Japanese Americans. The document ordered the removal of resident enemy aliens from parts of the West vaguely identified as military areas.

After the bombing of Pearl Harbor by the Japanese in 1941, Roosevelt came under increasing pressure by military and political advisors to address the nation's fears of further Japanese attack or sabotage, particularly on the West Coast, where naval ports, commercial shipping and agriculture were most vulnerable. Included in the off-limits military areas referred to in the order were ill-defined areas around West Coast cities, ports and industrial and agricultural regions. While 9066 also affected Italian and German Americans, the largest numbers of detainees were by far Japanese.

On the West Coast, long-standing racism against Japanese Americans, motivated in part by jealousy over their commercial success, erupted after Pearl Harbor into furious demands to remove them en masse to relocation camps for the duration of the war. Japanese immigrants and their descendants, regardless of American citizenship status or length of residence, were systematically rounded up and placed in detention centers. Evacuees, as they were sometimes called, could take only as many possessions as they could carry and were housed in crude, cramped quarters. In the western states, camps on remote and barren sites such as Manzanar and Tule Lake housed thousands of families whose lives were interrupted and in some cases destroyed by Executive Order 9066. Many lost businesses, farms and loved ones as a result.

Roosevelt delegated enforcement of 9066 to the War Department, telling Secretary of War Henry Stimson to be as reasonable as possible in executing the order. Attorney General Francis Biddle recalled Roosevelt's grim determination to do whatever he thought was necessary to win the war. Biddle observed that Roosevelt was [not] much concerned with the gravity or implications of issuing an order that essentially contradicted the Bill of Rights. By June, more than 110,000 Japanese Americans were relocated to remote internment camps built by the U.S. military in scattered locations around the country. In her memoirs, Eleanor Roosevelt recalled being completely floored by her husband's action. A fierce proponent of civil rights, Eleanor hoped to change Roosevelt's mind, but when she brought the subject up with him, he interrupted her and told her never to mention it again.

During the war, the U.S. Supreme Court heard two cases challenging the constitutionality of Executive Order 9066, upholding it both times. On December 17, 1944, U.S. Major General Henry C. Pratt issued Public Proclamation No. 21, declaring that, effective January 2, 1945, Japanese-American "evacuees" from the West Coast could return to their homes. During the course of World War II, 10 Americans were convicted of spying for Japan, but not one of them was of Japanese ancestry. Finally, on February 19, 1976, decades after the war, Gerald Ford formally rescinded Executive Order 9066 with Proclamation 4417, an order prohibiting the executive branch from re-instituting the notorious and tragic World War II order. In 1988, President Ronald Reagan issued a public apology on behalf of the government and authorized a \$20,000 tax-free reparation for each former Japanese internee or their descendants.

- **Feb 19 1942 – Holocaust:** Jews at the Dvinsk concentration camp are forced to witness the execution of a Jewish woman who exchanged a piece of cloth with a non-Jewish inmate for a box of flour.

- **Feb 19 1943 – WW2: *Battle of the Kasserine Pass*** » First large-scale meeting of American and German forces in World War II. Inexperienced and poorly led American troops suffered many casualties and were quickly pushed back over 50 miles (80 km) from their positions west of Faïd Pass by Field Marshal Erwin Rommel. This result confirmed a prediction of Winston Churchill, who had strongly advocated that the invasion of France as laid out in the proposed 1942 plan Operation Roundup be delayed until the Allies could support such an ambitious undertaking, which would give the American troops time to get up to speed with the realities of war against the experienced and well-equipped Italians.



Kasserine Pass

After the early defeat, elements of the U.S. II Corps, with British reinforcements, rallied and held the exits through mountain passes in western Tunisia, defeating the Axis offensive. As a result of the battle, the U.S. Army instituted sweeping changes of unit organization and replaced commanders and some types of equipment. Casualties and losses US/UK/FR 10,000 & 183 tanks – GER/IT 2,000 & 34 tanks.

- **Feb 19 1943 – WW2: USS Grampus (SS-207)** sunk either by Japanese naval aircraft (958th Kokutai) southeast of New Britain this day or by destroyer the Japanese destroyer Minegumo in Blackett Strait on the night of 5–6 March. There were no survivors from the crew of 71.
- **Feb 19 1944 – WW2: U-264**, a Type VIIC U-boat of Nazi Germany, is sunk off Ireland by British warships. The entire crew survived and were taken prisoner,
- **Feb 19 1944 – WW2: *British Bomb Leipzig, Germany (19-20 Feb)*** » 823 British bombers attack Leipzig, Germany. Night fighters intercept them over the coast of the Netherlands and attack them all the way to the target, where four bombers are lost in collisions and 20 more are shot down by anti-aircraft guns. Leipzig is cloud-covered and most of the bombs are scattered. Seventy-eight bombers (9.5 percent of the force) fail to return – Bomber Command's highest losses on a single raid thus far in World War II – and the high loss rate among Halifaxes (34 aircraft, or 13.3 percent of the Halifaxes dispatched and 14.9 of those which do not turn back early) prompts Bomber Command to withdraw Halifax IIs and Halifax Vs permanently from further operations over Germany.
- **Feb 19 1945 – WW2: *Marines Invade Iwo Jima*** » Operation Detachment, the U.S. Marines' invasion of Iwo Jima, is launched. Iwo Jima was a barren Pacific island guarded by Japanese artillery, but to American military minds, it was prime real estate on which to build airfields to launch bombing raids against Japan, only 660 miles away.

The Americans began applying pressure to the Japanese defense of the island in February 1944, when B-24 and B-25 bombers raided the island for 74 days. It was the longest pre-invasion bombardment of the war, necessary because of the extent to which the Japanese—21,000 strong—fortified the island, above and below ground, including a network of caves. Underwater demolition teams (“frogmen”) were dispatched by the Americans just before the actual invasion. When the Japanese fired on the frogmen, they gave away many of their “secret” gun positions.



The amphibious landings of about 30,000 Marines began the morning of 19 FEB as the secretary of the navy, James Forrestal, accompanied by journalists, surveyed the scene from a command ship offshore. As the Marines made their way onto the island, seven Japanese battalions opened fire on them. By evening, more than 550 Marines were dead and more than 1,800 were wounded. The capture of Mount Suribachi, the highest point of the island and bastion of the Japanese defense, took four more days and many more casualties. It was a 36 day long battle to seize complete control of the island. When the American flag was finally raised on Iwo Jima, the memorable image was captured in a famous photograph that later won the Pulitzer Prize. Casualties and losses: US 26,038 - JP 22,060. Almost 50% of the battle's participants were killed or wounded.

- **Feb 19 1945 – WW2:** 980 Japanese soldiers reportedly killed by crocodiles in 2 days on Ramree Island, Burma.
- **Feb 19 1965 – Vietnam War:** *Unsuccessful South Vietnamese Coup* » Dissident officers move several battalions of troops into Saigon on this day with the intention of ousting Gen. Nguyen Khanh from leadership.



Khanh, Ky, & Westmoreland

General Khanh escaped to Dalat with the aid of Air Vice Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky, commander of the South Vietnamese Air Force, who then threatened to bomb Saigon and the Tan Son Nhut Airport unless the rebel troops were withdrawn. Ky was dissuaded from this by Gen. William Westmoreland,

Commander of U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam, who told Ky that more political instability might have a negative impact on continued U.S. aid. Khanh was able to get troops to take over from the insurgents without any resistance on February 20.

Meanwhile, Ky met with the dissident officers and agreed to their demand for the dismissal of Khanh. On February 21, the Armed Forces Council dismissed Khanh as chairman and as commander of the armed forces. General Lam Van Phat replaced him. The next day, Khanh announced that he had accepted the council's decision, after which he was appointed a "roving ambassador," assigned first to go to the United Nations and present evidence that the war in South Vietnam was being directed from Hanoi by the North Vietnamese.

- **Feb 19 1966 – Vietnam War:** Robert F. Kennedy suggests the U.S. offer the Vietcong a role in governing South Vietnam.
- **Feb 19 1970 – Vietnam:** *Chicago Seven Sentenced* » The Chicago Seven (formerly the Chicago Eight—one defendant, Bobby Seale, was being tried separately) are acquitted of riot conspiracy charges, but found guilty of inciting riot. The eight antiwar activists were charged with the responsibility for the violent demonstrations at the August 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago. The defendants included David Dellinger of the National Mobilization Committee (NMC); Rennie Davis and Thomas Hayden of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS); Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin, founders of the Youth International Party ("Yippies"); Bobby Seale of the Black Panthers; and two lesser known activists, Lee Weiner and John Froines.

The defendants were charged with conspiracy to cross state lines with intent to incite a riot. Attorneys William Kunstler and Leonard Weinglass represented all but Seale. The trial, presided over by Judge Julius Hoffman, turned into a circus as the defendants and their attorneys used the court as a platform to attack Nixon, the Vietnam War, racism, and oppression. Their tactics were so disruptive that at one point, Judge Hoffman ordered Seale gagged and strapped to his chair; Seale's behavior eventually caused the judge to try him separately.

By the time the trial ended in February 1970, Hoffman had found the defendants and their attorneys guilty of 175 counts of contempt of court and sentenced them to terms between two to four years. Although declaring the defendants not guilty of conspiracy, the jury found all but Froines and Weiner guilty of intent to riot. The others were each sentenced to five years and fined \$5,000. However, none served time because in 1972, a Court of Appeal overturned the criminal convictions and eventually most of the contempt charges were also dropped.

- **Feb 19 1981 – Cold War:** *U.S. Calls El Salvador Situation a Communist Plot* » The U.S. government releases a report detailing how the "insurgency in El Salvador has been progressively transformed into a textbook case of indirect armed aggression by communist powers." The report was another step indicating that the new administration of Ronald Reagan was prepared to take strong measures against what it perceived to be the communist threat to Central America.

When the Reagan administration took office in 1981, it faced two particularly serious problems in Central America. In Nicaragua, the Reagan administration was worried about the Sandinista regime, a leftist government that took power in 1979 after the fall of long-time dictator Anastacio Somoza. In El

Salvador, the administration was concerned about a growing civil war between government forces and leftist rebels. Brutal violence on the part of the Salvadoran military—offenses that included the 1980 rape and murder of four U.S. missionaries—had caused the Jimmy Carter administration to cut off aid to the country.

In both nations, Reagan officials were convinced that the Soviet Union was the catalyst for the troubles. To address the situation in Nicaragua, the Reagan administration began to covertly assist the so-called Contras-rebel forces that opposed the Sandinista regime and were based primarily in Honduras and Costa Rica. For El Salvador, the 19 FEB report was the first volley. The State Department memorandum indicated that the “political direction, organization and arming of the Salvadoran insurgency is coordinated and heavily influenced by Cuba with the active support of the Soviet Union, East Germany, Vietnam and other communist states.” It thereupon provided a “chronology” of the communist involvement in El Salvador.

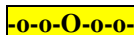
In response to this perceived threat, the U.S. dramatically increased its military assistance to the government of El Salvador, provided U.S. advisors to the Salvadoran armed forces, and began a series of National Guard “training exercises” in and around El Salvador. To no one’s surprise, the conflict in El Salvador escalated quickly and charges of torture, kidnapping, and assassination flew from both sides of the civil war. During the 1980s, U.S. military assistance to El Salvador topped nearly \$5 billion, but the violence and instability continued unabated. In 1992, the United Nations and President Oscar Arias of Costa Rica arbitrated an agreement between the warring factions in El Salvador. A U.N. commission also condemned U.S. complicity in atrocities committed by the Salvadoran military. President George Bush (who served as Reagan’s vice-president in the previous administration) discounted the U.N. accusations, but claimed that peace in El Salvador was the product of a vigorous U.S. response to communist subversion in the western hemisphere.

- **Feb 19 1986 – Russia:** The Soviet Union launched the Mir space station.
- **Feb 19 1999 – U.S. Army:** President Bill Clinton issues a posthumous pardon for first African American graduate of West Point, U.S. Army Lt. Henry Ossian Flipper. In 1881 he was court martialed and dismissed from the US Army on rumors alleging improprieties.



- **Feb 19 2011 – Iran:** A U.S. intelligence report said Iran had resumed research on development of a nuclear bomb.

- **Feb 19 2015 – Terrorism:** President Barack Obama urged delegates from 63 countries at a summit on violent extremism to "confront the warped ideology" espoused by terror groups, particularly using Islam to justify violence,
- **Feb 19 2019 – U.S. Military:** President Donald Trump directed the Pentagon to develop plans for a new Space Force within the Air Force, accepting less than the full-fledged department he had wanted.



- **Feb 20 1725 – Native Americans:** New Hampshire militiamen commit the first recorded scalping of Indians by whites in North America.
- **Feb 20 1864 – Civil War: *Battle of Olustee*** » The Battle was the largest conflict fought in Florida during the Civil War. A Confederate force under General Joseph Finegan decisively defeated an army commanded by General Truman Seymour. The victory kept the Confederates in control of Florida's interior for the rest of the war.

Olustee was the climax to a Union invasion of Florida a few weeks before. General Quincy Gilmore, commander of the Union's Department of the South, dispatched Seymour to Jacksonville on February 7. Seymour's troops secured the town and began to send cavalry raiders inland to Lake City and Gainesville. Just behind the troops came John Hay, private secretary to President Abraham Lincoln. Hay began issuing loyalty oaths to residents in an effort to form a new, Republican state government in time to send delegates to the 1864 party convention. Under the president's plan of reconstruction, a new state government could be formed when 10 percent of the state's prewar voting population had taken a loyalty oath.

Seymour began moving towards Lake City, west of Jacksonville, to destroy a railroad bridge and secure northern Florida. Finegan possessed only 500 men at Lake City, but reinforcements were arriving. By the time the two sides began to skirmish near the Olustee railroad station, each side had about 5,000 troops. Throughout the day on February 20, a pitched battle raged. The Confederates were close to breaking the Yankee lines when they ran low on ammunition. When more cartridges arrived, the attack continued. By late afternoon, Seymour realized the fight was lost and he began to retreat.

The Yankees suffered around 1,800 killed, wounded, or captured, while the Confederates lost about 900 men. The battle did disrupt the flow of supplies from Florida to other Confederate armies, but it failed to bring about a new state government. Most of Florida remained in Confederate hands until the end of the war.

- **Feb 20 1938 –WW2 Era:** Nazi Hitler demands self-determination for Germans in Austria and Czechoslovakia.
- **Feb 20 1938 – WW2 Era: *Nazi Rally in Madison Square Garden*** » Six and a half months before Adolf Hitler invaded Poland, New York City's Madison Square Garden hosted a rally to celebrate the rise of Nazism in Germany. Inside, more than 20,000 attendees raised Nazi salutes toward a 30-foot-tall portrait of George Washington flanked by swastikas. Outside, police and some 100,000 protestors gathered. The organization behind the 20 FEB event—advertised on the arena's marquee as a "Pro

American Rally”—was the German American Bund (“Bund” is German for “federation”). The anti-semitic organization held Nazi summer camps for youth and their families during the 1930s. The Bund’s youth members were present that night, as were the Ordnungsdienst, or OD, the group’s vigilante police force who dressed in the style of Hitler’s SS officers.



Banners at the rally had messages like “Stop Jewish Domination of Christian Americans” and “Wake Up America. Smash Jewish Communism.” When the Bund’s national leader, Fritz Kuhn, gave his closing speech, he referred to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt as “Rosenfield,” and Manhattan District Attorney Thomas Dewey as “Thomas Jewey.” “We, with American ideals, demand that our government shall be returned to the American people who founded it,” declared Kuhn, a naturalized American who lost his citizenship during World War II. “If you ask what we are actively fighting for under our charter: First, a socially just, white, Gentile-ruled United States. Second, Gentile-controlled labor unions, free from Jewish Moscow-directed domination.”

Kuhn’s speech was interrupted by a Jewish-American man named Isadore Greenbaum who charged the stage in protest. Police and the vigilante force quickly tackled him, and proceeded to beat him up on stage. The crowd cheered as they threw him off stage, pulling his pants down in the process. Police charged Greenbaum with disorderly conduct and gave him a \$25 fine, about \$450 in 2019 dollars. At the time the rally took place, Hitler was completing his sixth concentration camp; and protesters—many of them Jewish Americans—called attention to the fact that what was happening in Germany could happen in the U.S. “Don’t wait for the concentration camps—Act now!” proclaimed fliers advertising the protest. Outside the rally, people carried signs with messages like “Smash Anti-Semitism” and “Give me a gas mask, I can’t stand the smell of Nazis.”

In some cases, police responded to the protesters with violent attacks. In one instance, a protester escaped a mounted police officer who’d grabbed him by punching his horse in the face. As the rally broke up that night, some protesters were able to slip by police and punch departing Nazis in the face.

- **Feb 20 1942 – WW2:** *Pilot O’Hare Becomes First American WWII Flying Ace* » Lt. Edward O’Hare takes off from the aircraft carrier Lexington in a raid against the Japanese position at Rabaul and minutes later becomes America’s first flying ace.



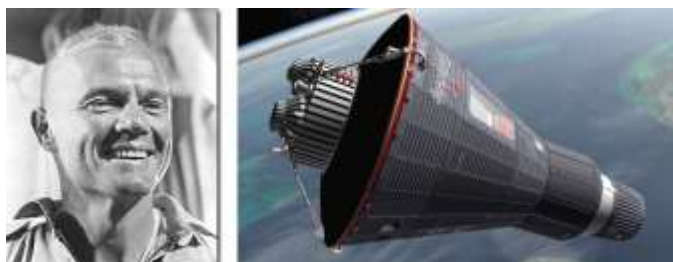
In mid-February 1942, the Lexington sailed into the Coral Sea. Rabaul, a town at the very tip of New Britain, one of the islands that comprised the Bismarck Archipelago, had been invaded in January by the Japanese and transformed into a stronghold—in fact, one huge airbase. The Japanese were now in prime striking position for the Solomon Islands, next on the agenda for expanding their ever-growing Pacific empire. The Lexington's mission was to destabilize the Japanese position on Rabaul with a bombing raid.

Aboard the Lexington was U.S. Navy fighter pilot Lt. Edward O'Hare, attached to Fighting Squadron 3 when the United States entered the war. As the Lexington left Bougainville, the largest of the Solomon Islands in the South Pacific (and still free from Japanese control), for Rabaul, ship radar picked up Japanese bombers headed straight for the carrier. O'Hare and his team went into action, piloting F4F Wildcats. In a mere four minutes, O'Hare shot down five Japanese G4M1 Betty bombers—bringing a swift end to the Japanese attack and earning O'Hare the designation “ace” (given to any pilot who had five or more downed enemy planes to his credit).

Although the Lexington blew back the Japanese bombers, the element of surprise was gone, and the attempt to raid Rabaul was aborted for the time being. O'Hare was awarded the Medal of Honor for his bravery—and excellent aim.

- **Feb 20 1944 – WW2: *Operation Argument*** » The U.S. Army Air Force's Eighth Air Force begins Operation Argument, a six-day campaign to defeat the Luftwaffe by staging major attacks on the German aircraft industry while luring Luftwaffe aircraft into aerial combat; the operation later becomes known informally as "Big Week." On the first day, 1,003 Eighth Air Force bombers escorted by 835 fighters strike targets in Germany, including Leipzig-Mockau Airfield, Tutow Airfield, Abnaundorf, Bernburg, Braunschweig, Gotha, Heiterblick, Neupetrirtor, Oschersleben, Rostock, and Wilhelmstorf. The force suffers the loss of 21 bombers and four fighters, and claims 126 German aircraft shot down, 40 probably shot down, and 66 damaged in aerial combat.
- **Feb 20 1944 – WW2: *Battle of Eniwetok (18-21 FEB)*** » The long thin atoll of Eniwetock in the Marshall Islands, under control by the Japanese during WW2 was invaded by American forces as Operation Catchpole. It was part of a campaign to secure three islands in the Enewetak Atoll aiming to gain a base with an airfield for future campaigns. American naval warships began an initial bombardment on the 18th before landing their forces. The island was declared secured by American command on the 21st. 37 American lives were lost with 94 injured while Japanese forces counted 800 dead with just 23 prisoners.

- **Feb 20 1943 – WW2:** German troops of the Afrika Korps break through the Kasserine Pass, defeating the U.S. forces.
- **Feb 20 1944 – WW2:** The ‘Big Week’ began with American bomber raids on German aircraft manufacturing centers. In 3500 sorties 10,000 tons of bombs were dropped seriously disrupting German fighter production.
- **Feb 20 1962 – Space Travel:** *American Orbits Earth* » From Cape Canaveral, Florida, John Hershel Glenn Jr. is successfully launched into space aboard the Friendship 7 spacecraft on the first orbital flight by an American astronaut.



Glenn, a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Marine Corps, was among the seven men chosen by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in 1959 to become America’s first astronauts. A decorated pilot, he flew nearly 150 combat missions during World War II and the Korean War. In 1957, he made the first nonstop supersonic flight across the United States, flying from Los Angeles to New York in three hours and 23 minutes.

Glenn was preceded in space by two Americans, Alan B. Shepard Jr. and Virgil I. “Gus” Grissom, and two Soviets, Yuri A. Gagarin and Gherman S. Titov. In April 1961, Gagarin was the first man in space, and his spacecraft Vostok 1 made a full orbit before returning to Earth. Less than one month later, Shepard was launched into space aboard Freedom 7 on a suborbital flight. In July, Grissom made another brief suborbital flight aboard Liberty Bell 7. In August, with the Americans still having failed to make an orbital flight, the Russians sprinted further ahead in the space race when Titov spent more than 25 hours in space aboard Vostok 2, making 17 orbits. As a technological power, the United States was looking very much second-rate compared with its Cold War adversary. If the Americans wanted to dispel this notion, they needed a multi-orbital flight before another Soviet space advance arrived.

It was with this responsibility in mind that John Glenn lifted off from the launch pad at Cape Canaveral at 9:47 a.m. on February 20, 1962. Some 100,000 spectators watched on the ground nearby and millions more saw it on television. After separating from its launching rocket, the bell-shaped Friendship 7 capsule entered into an orbit around Earth at a speed of about 17,500 miles per hour. Smoothing into orbit, Glenn radioed back, “Capsule is turning around. Oh, that view is tremendous.”

During Friendship 7’s first orbit, Glenn noticed what he described as small, glowing fireflies drifting by the capsule’s tiny window. It was some time later that NASA mission control determined that the sparks were crystallized water vapor released by the capsule’s air-conditioning system. Before the end of the first orbit, a more serious problem occurred when Friendship 7’s automatic control system began to malfunction, sending the capsule into erratic movements. At the end of the orbit, Glenn switched to manual control and regained command of the craft.

Toward the end of Glenn's third and last orbit, mission control received a mechanical signal from the spacecraft indicating that the heat shield on the base of the capsule was possibly loose. Traveling at its immense speed, the capsule would be incinerated if the shield failed to absorb and dissipate the extremely high reentry temperatures. It was decided that the craft's retrorockets, usually jettisoned before reentry, would be left on in order to better secure the heat shield. Less than a minute later, Friendship 7 slammed into Earth's atmosphere.

During Glenn's fiery descent back to Earth, the straps holding the retrorockets gave way and flapped violently by his window as a shroud of ions caused by excessive friction enveloped the spacecraft, causing Glenn to lose radio contact with mission control. As mission control anxiously waited for the resumption of radio transmissions that would indicate Glenn's survival, he watched flaming chunks of retrorocket fly by his window. After four minutes of radio silence, Glenn's voice crackled through loudspeakers at mission control, and Friendship 7 splashed down safely in the Atlantic Ocean. He was picked up by the USS destroyer Noa, and his first words upon stepping out of the capsule and onto the deck of the Noa were, "It was hot in there." He had spent nearly five hours in space. Glenn was hailed as a national hero, and on February 23 President John F. Kennedy visited him at Cape Canaveral. He later addressed Congress and was given a ticker-tape parade in New York City.

Out of a reluctance to risk the life of an astronaut as popular as Glenn, NASA essentially grounded the "Clean Marine" in the years after his historic flight. Frustrated with this uncharacteristic lack of activity, Glenn turned to politics and in 1964 announced his candidacy for the U.S. Senate from his home state of Ohio and formally left NASA. Later that year, however, he withdrew his Senate bid after seriously injuring his inner ear in a fall. In 1970, following a stint as a Royal Crown Cola executive, he ran for the Senate again but lost the Democratic nomination to Howard Metzenbaum. Four years later, he defeated Metzenbaum, won the general election, and went on to win reelection three times. In 1984, he unsuccessfully sought the Democratic nomination for president.

In early 1998, NASA announced it had approved Glenn to serve as a payload specialist on the space shuttle Discovery. On October 29, 1998, nearly four decades after his famous orbital flight, the 77-year-old Glenn became the oldest human ever to travel in space. During the nine-day mission, he served as part of a NASA study on health problems associated with aging. In 1999, he retired from his U.S. Senate seat after four consecutive terms in office, a record for the state of Ohio.

- **Feb 20 1963 – Cold War:** Moscow offers to allow on-site inspections of nuclear testing.
- **Feb 20 1964 – Cold War:** After operating for 22 years, the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization concludes its final military exercise and quietly shuts down. SEATO had been one of the bulwarks of America's Cold War policies in Asia, but the Vietnam War did much to destroy its cohesiveness and question its effectiveness.
- **Feb 20 1965 – Space Travel:** Ranger 8 hits the moon and sends back 7,000 photos to the United States.
- **Feb 20 1968 – Vietnam War:** *Hearings Begin on American Policy in Vietnam* » The U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee begins hearings to investigate American policy in Vietnam. This was a

direct result of the Tet Offensive, in which Viet Cong forces, supported by large numbers of North Vietnamese troops, launched the largest and best-coordinated offensive of the war. During the attack, the Viet Cong drove into the center of South Vietnam's seven largest cities and attacked 30 provincial capitals ranging from the Delta to the DMZ.

Efforts to assess the offensive's impact began well before the fighting officially ended. Militarily, Tet was decidedly an Allied victory, but psychologically and politically, it was a disaster. The offensive had indeed been a crushing military defeat for the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese, but the size and scope of the communist attacks had caught the American and South Vietnamese allies completely by surprise. The early reporting of a smashing communist victory went largely uncorrected in the media and led to a psychological victory for the communists. The heavy U.S. and South Vietnamese casualties incurred during the offensive, coupled with the disillusionment over the earlier overly optimistic reports of progress in the war, accelerated the growing disenchantment with President Johnson's conduct of the war. This disenchantment caused congressional opponents to call for hearings.

Early sessions in the congressional hearings focused on the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin incident, which had led to the passage of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, the legal basis for Johnson's escalation of the war. Senators William Fulbright (D-Arkansas) and Wayne Morse (D-Oregon) charged that the Defense Department had withheld information on U.S. naval activities in the Gulf that provoked North Vietnam, leading to the charge of a "credibility gap." At issue was whether the administration had provided Congress with truthful data at the time it was seeking passage of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution in August 1964, which had considerably broadened the president's war-making authority in Southeast Asia. There was no firm resolution of the charges, but the debate reached a new intensity when the New York Times reported that General William Westmoreland, U.S. commander in Saigon, had requested another 206,000 troops. The possibility of another major troop increase provoked a stormy reaction in Congress—both Democrats and Republicans demanded an explanation and insisted that Congress share in any decision to expand the war. In March, 139 members of the House of Representatives sponsored a resolution calling for a full review of American policy in Vietnam.

Eventually the Tet Offensive and the subsequent congressional reaction helped convince Johnson, who was frustrated with his inability to reach a solution in Vietnam, to announce that he would neither seek nor accept the nomination of his party for president.

- **Feb 20 1968 – Vietnam War:** The North Vietnamese army chief in Hue orders all looters to be shot on sight.
- **Feb 20 1979 – China*Vietnam:** *China Invades Vietnam* » After weeks of tension and a military build-up along the border China reports it has "taught Vietnam a lesson" and pulled its troops back across the border, just three days after their entered Vietnam. Peking radio reported the operation was considered a success. Radio Hanoi reported the Chinese troops were "in place" and had advanced no further than they had on the first day; some six miles into Vietnam. Hanoi said its troops had killed some 1,500 Chinese the day before, and that was down from the total of 3,500 they claimed to have killed in the first two days of fighting.

Sources said the Vietnamese had held back their best regular army units from the border throughout the fighting, apparently trying to avoid being dragged into a battle with the Chinese they might lose. It

appeared the Chinese were pulling back their 100,000 men who were inside Vietnam before the Soviet Union would feel compelled to come to the aid of Hanoi and possibly set off a larger conflict.

Other reports claimed China had miscalculated Vietnam's military strength, as a result the invading Chinese did not fight any Vietnamese regular army troops, instead fighting border guards and Vietnamese Militia units. One unidentified Chinese source said it was Beijing's aim to inflict heavy damage on Vietnam's regular Army forces as a way to exact punishment for Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia.

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- **Feb 21 1861 – Civil War: CSN Formed** » Navy of the Confederate States was established by an act of the Confederate Congress this date. The three major tasks of the Confederate navy during the whole of its existence were the protection of Confederate harbors and coastlines from outside invasion, making the war costly for the U.S. by attacking American merchant ships worldwide and breaking the U.S. blockade by drawing off U.S. Navy ships in pursuit of the Confederate raiders. The Confederate navy could never achieve numerical equality with the U.S. Navy, so it used technological innovation, such as ironclads, submarines, torpedo boats, and naval mines (then known as torpedoes) to gain advantage. In February 1861 the Confederate Navy had 30 vessels, only 14 of which were seaworthy. The Union Navy had 90 vessels. The C. S. Navy eventually grew to 101 ships to meet the rise in naval threats and conflicts.
- **Feb 21 1862 – Civil War: Battle of Val Verde** » At the Battle Confederate troops under General Henry Hopkins Sibley attack Union troops commanded by Colonel Edward R. S. Canby near Fort Craig in New Mexico Territory. The first major engagement of the Civil War in the far West, the battle produced heavy casualties but no decisive result.



This action was part of the broader movement by the Confederates to capture New Mexico and other parts of the West, and thereby secure territory that the Rebels thought was rightfully theirs but had been denied them by political compromises made before the Civil War. Furthermore, the cash-strapped Confederacy could use Western mines to fill its treasury. From San Antonio, the Rebels moved into southern New Mexico (which included Arizona) and captured the towns of Mesilla and Tucson. Sibley, with 3,000 troops, now moved north against the Federal stronghold at Fort Craig on the Rio Grande.

At Fort Craig, Canby was determined to make the Confederates lay siege to the post. The Rebels, Canby reasoned, could not wait long before running low on supplies. He knew that Sibley did not possess sufficiently heavy artillery to attack the fort. When Sibley arrived near Fort Craig on February 15, he ordered his men to swing east of the fort, cross the Rio Grande, and capture the Val Verde fords

of the Rio Grande. He hoped to cut off Canby's communication and force the Yankees out into the open.

At the fords, five miles north of Fort Craig, a Union detachment attacked part of the Confederate force. They pinned the Texans in a ravine and were on the verge of routing the Rebels when more of Sibley's men arrived and turned the tide. Sibley's second in command, Colonel Tom Green, filling in for an ill Sibley, made a bold counterattack against the Union left flank. The Yankees fell back in retreat, and headed back to Fort Craig.

The Union suffered 68 killed, 160 wounded, and 35 missing out of 3,100 engaged. The Confederates suffered 31 killed, 154 wounded, and 1 missing out of 2,600 troops. It was a bloody but indecisive battle. Sibley's men continued up the Rio Grande. Within a few weeks, they captured Albuquerque and Santa Fe before they were stopped at the Battle of Glorieta Pass on March 28.

- **Feb 21 1867 –WW2 Era: *French General Weygand Is Born*** » Gen. Maxime Weygand is born in Belgium. He was one of the commanders who accepted the German surrender at the close of World War I only to advise the French government to surrender to the Germans early in World War II.

Although born in Belgium (his actual ancestry is uncertain), Weygand was educated in France and graduated from the Saint-Cyr training school for officers in 1888 with honors. He taught at a cavalry school where, in 1914, he won the respect of Gen. Ferdinand Foch, who made Weygand his chief of staff during the World War I. Weygand held a variety of positions between the wars, including a post as adviser to the Polish army in 1920, and a stint as inspector general of the French army. He retired from active service in 1935, at age 68.



When the Germans invaded France in May 1940, Weygand was recalled into service to take command of the Allied troops in France-after the Germans were already overrunning much of the country. As the British Expeditionary Force was pushed to the Channel by the Germans and then finally pushed out of France, things looked increasingly desperate for the French. Britain attempted to keep hope alive-Prime Minister Winston Churchill ordered more British troops into France and British bombers continued to attack German lines of communication. But despite the British reinforcements and encouragement, Weygand ordered the French military governor of Paris to ensure that the French capital remained an open city-in other words, there was to be no armed resistance to the Germans. Orders to this effect meant that Weygand was pushing for an armistice, a capitulation-the enemy would be allowed to pass through unchallenged. Weygand addressed his cabinet with his assessment of the situation: "A cessation of hostilities is compulsory." France capitulated.

Weygand served in the new German-loyal Vichy government as minister of defense, delegate general to French Africa, and governor-general of Algeria. He was dismissed in December 1941 and sent to Cannes to retire on a pension. He tried to get back into the fray in 1942 by flying to Algiers when the Allies invaded North Africa, but he was caught by the Germans and transported to Austria, where he sat imprisoned in an Austrian castle. Upon the surrender of Germany, he was released by U.S. troops of liberation but then rearrested on orders of Gen. Charles de Gaulle and charged with enemy collaboration. Weygand was “rehabilitated” within three years and pardoned for his concession to the Germans. De Gaulle was forced to admit that by the time Weygand took command of the army in France, “It was too late, without any doubt, to win the battle of France.”

- **Feb 21 1881 – U.S.: Washington Monument Dedicated** » Built in honor of America’s revolutionary hero and first president, the monument is dedicated in Washington, D.C. The 555-foot-high marble obelisk was first proposed in 1783, and Pierre L’Enfant left room for it in his designs for the new U.S. capital. After George Washington’s death in 1799, plans for a memorial for the “father of the country” were discussed, but none were adopted until 1832—the centennial of Washington’s birth. Architect Robert Mills’ hollow Egyptian obelisk design was accepted for the monument, and on July 4, 1848, the cornerstone was laid. Work on the project was interrupted by political quarreling in the 1850s, and construction ceased entirely during the American Civil War. Finally, in 1876, Congress, inspired by the American centennial, passed legislation appropriating \$200,000 for completion of the monument.



In February 1885, the Washington Monument was formally dedicated, and three years later it was opened to the public, who were permitted to climb to the top of the monument by stairs or elevator. The monument was the tallest structure in the world when completed and remains today, by District of Columbia law, the tallest building in the nation’s capital.

- **Feb 21 1916 – WWI Era: Battle of Verdun Begins** » At 7:12 a.m. in the morning a shot from a German Krupp 38-centimeter long-barreled gun—one of over 1,200 such weapons set to bombard French forces along a 20-kilometer front stretching across the Meuse River—strikes a cathedral in Verdun, France, beginning the Battle of Verdun, which would stretch on for 10 months and become the longest conflict of World War I.

By the beginning of 1916, the war in France, from the Swiss border to the English Channel, had settled into the long slog of trench warfare. Despite the hard conditions in the trenches, Erich von

Falkenhayn, chief of staff of the German army, believed that the key to winning the war lay not in confronting Russia in the east but in defeating the French in a major battle on the Western Front. In December 1915, Falkenhayn convinced the kaiser, over the objections of other military leaders such as Paul von Hindenburg, that in combination with unrestricted submarine warfare at sea, a major French loss in battle would push the British—whom Falkenhayn saw as the most potent of the Allies—out of the war.

The chosen mark of Falkenhayn's offensive was the fortress city of Verdun, on the Meuse River in France. The city was selected because in addition to its symbolic importance—it was the last stronghold to fall in 1870 during the Franco-Prussian War—it was possible to attack the fortress city from three sides, which made it a good strategic target. Ignoring intelligence that warned of a possible German attack in the region, French command had begun in 1915 to strip its forces at Verdun of the heavy artillery essential to defensive warfare, 21 FEB caught the French relatively unprepared.

From the beginning, the Battle of Verdun resulted in heavy losses on both sides. Falkenhayn famously admitted that he did not aim to take the city quickly and decisively, but to bleed the French white, even if it meant an increased number of German casualties. Within four days of the start of the bombardment on the Meuse, the French forward divisions had suffered over 60 percent casualties; German losses were almost as heavy. After a few quick German gains of territory, the battle settled into a stalemate, as casualties swiftly mounted on both sides. The newly promoted French commander in the region, Henri-Philippe Petain, was determined to inflict the maximum amount of damage on the German forces, famously pledging to his commander-in-chief, Joseph Joffre, that, They shall not pass.

By the latter half of 1917, German resources were stretched thinner by having to confront both a British-led offensive on the Somme River and Russia's Brusilov Offensive on the Eastern Front. In July, the Kaiser, frustrated by the state of things at Verdun, removed Falkenhayn and sent him to command the 9th Army in Transylvania; Paul von Hindenburg took his place. Petain had been replaced in April by Robert Nivelle, who by early December had managed to lead his forces in the recapture of much of their lost territory. From 15 to 18DEC, the French took 11,000 German prisoners; on 18 DEC, Hindenburg finally called a stop to the German attacks after ten long months. With a German death toll of 143,000 (out of 337,000 total casualties) and a French one of 162,440 (out of 377,231), Verdun would come to signify, more than any other battle, the grinding, bloody nature of warfare on the Western Front during World War I.

- **Feb 21 1917 – WWI Era:** British troopship SS Mendi sinks » The Mendi was transporting 823 members of the 5th Battalion, South African Native Labor Corps to France. She had sailed from Cape Town via Lagos, where a gun was fitted to her stern, to Plymouth, before proceeding towards Le Havre. At 5 a.m., while under escort of the destroyer HMS Brisk, she was struck and cut almost in half by the 11.000 BRT SS Darro an empty meat ship that was bound for Argentina. 616 South Africans (607 of them black troops) plus 30 British crew members died in the disaster.

Notably, the crew of the Darro made no attempt to rescue survivors. Lifeboats from HMS Brisk rowed among the survivors, trying to rescue them. The investigation into the accident found the captain of the Darro, Henry W Stump, to be at fault for "having travelled at a dangerously high speed in thick fog, and of having failed to ensure that his ship emitted the necessary fog sound signals." As a result, the captain of the Darro had his license suspended for a year. His failure to render assistance to the

Mendi's survivors has been the source of much controversy. Some historians have suggested that racial prejudice influenced his conduct, while others hold that he merely lost his nerve.

- **Feb 21 1918 – WWI:** *Capture of Jericho (19-21 1918)* » On 19 FEB, Commanded by British General Edmund Allenby, the combined Allied forces of British troops and Australian mounted cavalry began the offensive of the city of Jericho in Palestine on the outskirts of Jerusalem. Despite battling adverse weather conditions and a determined enemy in the Turkish troops the Allies were able to move nearly 20 miles toward Jericho in just three days.

On the morning of 21 FEB, it was apparent that the Turkish line had been broken, and the Allied forces entered the holy city of Jericho without much resistance at just after 8 a.m. Upon realizing they had lost control of the city, Turkish troops chose to retreat rather than fight. During the three-day battle, Allied troops captured 46 Turkish prisoners. The capture of Jericho proved to be an important strategic victory for the Allies, who now controlled some of the most important roads in the region, including the main road to the coast and the mountain highway leading to Jerusalem, and had reached the northern end of the Dead Sea, the lowest point on earth at 1,290 feet below sea level.

- **Feb 21 1944 – WW2:** *Hideki Tojo Makes Himself “Military Czar”* » The prime minister of Japan, grabs even more power as he takes over as army chief of staff, a position that gives him direct control of the Japanese military.



After graduating from the Imperial Military Academy and the Military Staff College, Tojo was sent to Berlin as Japan's military attaché after WWI. Having earned a reputation for sternness and discipline, Tojo was given command of the 1st Infantry Regiment upon returning to Japan. In 1937, he was made chief of staff of the Kwantung Army in Manchuria, China. When he returned again to his homeland, Tojo assumed the office of vice-minister of war and quickly took the lead in the military's increasing control of Japanese foreign policy, advocating the signing of the 1940 Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy that made Japan an “Axis” power.

In July 1940, he was made minister of war and soon clashed with the Prime Minister, Prince Fumimaro Konoye, who had been fighting for reform of his government, namely, demilitarization of its politics. In October, Konoye resigned because of increasing tension with Tojo, who succeeded him as prime minister. Not only did Tojo keep his offices of army minister and war minister when he became prime minister, he also assumed the offices of minister of commerce and industry.

Tojo, now a virtual dictator, quickly promised a “New Order in Asia,” and toward this end supported the bombing of Pearl Harbor despite the misgivings of several of his generals. Tojo's aggressive policies paid big dividends early on, with major territorial gains in Indochina and the South Pacific. But

despite Tojo's increasing control over his own country—tightening wartime industrial production and assuming yet another title, chief of staff of the army, on February 21, 1944 – he could not control the determination of the United States, which began beating back the Japanese in the South Pacific. When Saipan fell to the U.S. Marines and Army on June 22, 1944, Tojo's government collapsed. Upon Japan's surrender, Tojo tried to commit suicide by shooting himself with an American .38 pistol but he was saved by an American physician who gave him a blood transfusion. He was convicted of war crimes by an international tribunal and was hanged on December 22, 1948.

- **Feb 21 1945 – WW2:** Japanese Kamikaze planes sink the escort carrier Bismarck Sea and damage the Saratoga.
- **Feb 21 1945 – WW2:** The U.S. Army's 94th Infantry and 10th Armored divisions break through the Orscholz line and cross the Saar River. This was a military defensive "switch" position and part of the Siegfried Line (Westwall) located in the triangle between the rivers Saar and Moselle. It was built in 1939 and 1940 and incorporated 75 bunkers as well as 10.2 km of tank obstacles in the form of dragon's teeth. This defensive line ran from Trier to Nennig along the Moselle and from Nennig in an easterly direction to Orscholz on the loop in the Saar River at Mettlach.
- **Feb 21 1945 – WW2:** Operation Veritable (8–21 FEB) » The Operation, also known as the Battle of the Reichswald, was the northern part of an Allied pincer movement that took place during the final stages of the War. The operation was conducted by Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery's Anglo-Canadian 21st Army Group, primarily consisting of the First Canadian Army and the British XXX Corps. Operation Veritable was a Northern pincer movement and started with XXX Corps advancing through the forest while the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division, in amphibious vehicles, cleared German positions in the flooded Rhine plain;

The Operation began at 10:30 when five infantry divisions (50,000 men) with 500 tanks, attacked in line. XXX Corps advanced with heavy fighting along the narrow neck of land between the Meuse and the Waal east of Nijmegen, but Operation Grenade (the southern pincer arm) had to be postponed for two weeks when the Germans released the waters from the Roer dams and river levels rose; the U.S. Ninth Army was unable to move and no military actions could proceed across the Roer until the water subsided. During the two weeks of flooding, Hitler forbade Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt to withdraw east behind the Rhine, arguing that it would only delay the inevitable fight. Rundstedt was ordered to fight where his forces stood; the imposed American standstill allowed German forces to be concentrated against the Anglo-Canadian assault.

At first, XXX Corps made rapid progress across most of its front but after the first day, German reinforcements appeared and violent clashes were reported with a regiment of the 6th Parachute Division and armored detachments. The 43rd (Wessex) Division was ordered to advance past Kleve into the German rear; this resulted in the greatest traffic jam in the history of modern warfare. With only one road available, units of the 43rd, 15th and Canadian divisions became inextricably mixed in a column 10 miles long. Two "natural" impediments to the Allied advance, flooding and the dense forest, failed to disrupt it.

The 15th Division had orders to capture Kleve, but on the night of 9 February they were held up on the outskirts; the 47 Panzer Corps was directed to Kleve and the Reichswald. On 11 FEB the 15th had

cleared the town. Having expanded the front line to 14 miles, the II Canadian Corps, with the 2nd and 3rd Divisions and the 4th Armoured Division, became responsible for the drive along the Rhine to Kalkar and Xanten. XXX Corps were to operate on the right and take Goch before swinging towards the Rhine and linking with the Americans – once Operation Grenade had been launched.

The 3rd Division used Buffalo amphibious vehicles to move through the flooded areas; the water rendered the German field defenses and minefields ineffective and isolated their units on islands where they could be picked off, one by one. XXX Corps had rehearsed forest warfare tactics and were able to bring armor forward with them (despite a high rate of damage due to the natural conditions combined with the age of the tanks) the German defenses had not anticipated such tactics, so these tanks, including Churchill Crocodile flame-throwers, had great shock value.

On 22 FEB, once clear of the Reichswald (German: Imperial Forest), and with the towns of Kleve and Goch in their control, the offensive was renewed as Operation Blockbuster and linked up with the U.S. Ninth Army near Geldern on 4 MAR after the execution of Operation Grenade. Fighting continued as the Germans sought to retain a bridgehead on the west bank of the Rhine at Wesel and evacuate as many men and as much equipment as possible. Finally, on 10 MAR, the German withdrawal ended and the last bridges were destroyed.

- **Feb 21 1951 – Cold War: *Alger Hiss Convicted Of Perjury*** » In the conclusion to one of the most spectacular trials in U.S. history, former State Department official Alger Hiss is convicted of perjury. He was convicted of having perjured himself in regards to testimony about his alleged involvement in a Soviet spy ring before and during World War II. Hiss served nearly four years in jail, but steadfastly protested his innocence during and after his incarceration.



The case against Hiss began in 1948, when Whittaker Chambers, an admitted ex-communist and an editor with Time magazine, testified before the House Un-American Activities Committee and charged that Hiss was a communist in the 1930s and 1940s. Chambers also declared that Hiss, during his work in the Department of State during the 1930s, had passed him top secret reports.

Hiss appeared before HUAC and vehemently denied the charges, stating that he did not even know Chambers. Later, after confronting Chambers face to face, Hiss admitted that he knew him, but that Chambers had been using another name at the time. In short order, Chambers produced the famous “Pumpkin Papers”—copies of the documents he said Hiss passed him during the 1930s. They were dubbed the “Pumpkin Papers” because Chambers kept them hidden in a pumpkin in his pumpkin patch.

Charges and countercharges about the spy accusations soon filled the air. Defenders of Hiss, such as Secretary of State Dean Acheson, declared that President Truman’s opponents were making a sacrificial lamb out of Hiss. Truman himself declared that HUAC was using “red herrings” to defame Hiss. Critics

fired back that Truman and Acheson were “coddling” communists, and that Hiss was only the tip of the iceberg—they claimed that communists had penetrated the highest levels of the American government.

Eventually, Hiss was brought to trial. Because the statute of limitations had run out, he was not tried for treason. Instead, he was charged with two counts of perjury—for lying about passing government documents to Chambers and for denying that he had seen Chambers since 1937. In 1949, the first trial for perjury ended in a deadlocked jury. The second trial ended in January 1950 with a guilty verdict on both counts.

The battle over the Hiss case continued long after the guilty verdict was handed down. Though many believed that Hiss was a much-maligned official who became a victim of the anticommunist hysteria of the late-1940s, others felt strongly that he was a lying communist agent. Until his death at the age of 92 on November 15, 1996, Hiss never deviated from his claim of innocence.

- **Feb 21 1951 – Korea:** The U. S. Eighth Army launches Operation Killer, a counterattack to push Chinese forces north of the Han River in Korea.
- **Feb 21 1967 – Vietnam War:** *Bernard Fall Killed By Mine In South Vietnam* » Writer and historian Bernard B. Fall is killed by a Viet Cong mine while accompanying a U.S. Marine patrol along the seacoast about 14 miles northwest of Hue, on a road known as the “Street Without Joy” (which Fall had used for the title of one of his books about the war). A professor of international relations at Howard University in Washington, D.C., Fall was a French citizen and noted expert on the war in Vietnam. He was killed while gathering material for his eighth book. A U.S. Marine photographer was also killed.



- **Feb 21 1968 – Vietnam War:** *Battle for Khe Sanh Begins* » One of the most publicized and controversial battles of the Vietnam War begins at Khe Sanh, 14 miles below the DMZ and six miles from the Laotian border. Seized and activated by the U.S. Marines a year earlier, the base, which had been an old French outpost, was used as a staging area for forward patrols and was a potential launch point for contemplated future operations to cut the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos.

The battle began on this date with a brisk firefight involving the 3rd Battalion, 26th Marines and a North Vietnamese battalion entrenched between two hills northwest of the base. The next day North Vietnamese forces overran the village of Khe Sanh and North Vietnamese long-range artillery opened fire on the base itself, hitting its main ammunition dump and detonating 1,500 tons of explosives. An incessant barrage kept Khe Sanh’s Marine defenders pinned down in their trenches and bunkers. Because the base had to be resupplied by air, the American high command was reluctant to put in any more troops and drafted a battle plan calling for massive artillery and airstrikes.



During the 66-day siege, U.S. planes, dropping 5,000 bombs daily, exploded the equivalent of five Hiroshima-sized atomic bombs in the area. The relief of Khe Sanh, called Operation Pegasus, began in early April as the 1st Cavalry (Airmobile) and a South Vietnamese battalion approached the base from the east and south, while the Marines pushed westward to re-open Route 9. The siege was finally lifted on 6 APR when the cavalrymen linked up with the 9th Marines south of the Khe Sanh airstrip. In a final clash a week later, the 3rd Battalion, 26th Marines drove enemy forces from Hill 881 North. Gen. William Westmoreland, commander of U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam, contended that Khe Sanh played a vital blocking role at the western end of the DMZ, and asserted that if the base had fallen, North Vietnamese forces could have outflanked Marine defenses along the buffer zone.

Various statements in the North Vietnamese Communist Party newspaper suggested that Hanoi saw the battle as an opportunity to re-enact its famous victory at Dien Bien Phu, when the communists had defeated the French in a climactic decisive battle that effectively ended the war between France and the Viet Minh.

- **Feb 21 1970 – Vietnam War: Peace Negotiations** » National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger begins secret peace talks with North Vietnamese representative Le Duc Tho, the fifth-ranking member of the Hanoi Politburo, at a villa outside Paris.



Le Duc Tho stated that the North Vietnamese position continued to require an unconditional U.S. withdrawal on a fixed date and the abandonment of the Thieu government as a precondition for further progress, which stalled the negotiations. The North Vietnamese rejected Kissinger's proposals for a mutual withdrawal of military forces, the neutralization of Cambodia, and a mixed electoral commission to supervise elections in South Vietnam. The other two meetings, in which there was a similar lack of progress, were held on March 16 and April 4.

- **Feb 21 1972 – Vietnam War: Nixon visits China** » President Richard Nixon visits the People's Republic of China. After arriving in Beijing, the president announced that his breakthrough visit to China is "The week that changed the world." In meeting with Nixon, Prime Minister Zhou Enlai urged early peace in Vietnam, but did not endorse North Vietnam's political demands. North Vietnamese officials and peace negotiators took a dim view of Nixon's trip, fearing that China and the United States would make a deal behind their backs. Nixon's promise to reduce the U.S. military presence on Taiwan

seemed to confirm North Vietnam's fears of a Chinese-American sellout-trading U.S. military reduction in Taiwan for peace in Vietnam. Despite Hanoi's fears, China continued to supply North Vietnam levels of aid that had increased significantly in late 1971. This aid permitted the North Vietnamese to launch a major new offensive in March 1972.

- **Feb 21 1977 – Post Vietnam:** *President Carter Pardons Draft Dodgers* » U.S. President Jimmy Carter grants an unconditional pardon to hundreds of thousands of men who evaded the draft during the Vietnam War. In total, some 100,000 young Americans went abroad in the late 1960s and early 70s to avoid serving in the war. Ninety percent went to Canada, where after some initial controversy they were eventually welcomed as immigrants. Still others hid inside the United States. In addition to those who avoided the draft, a relatively small number—about 1,000—of deserters from the U.S. armed forces also headed to Canada. While the Canadian government technically reserved the right to prosecute deserters, in practice they left them alone, even instructing border guards not to ask too many questions.



For its part, the U.S. government continued to prosecute draft evaders after the Vietnam War ended. A total of 209,517 men were formally accused of violating draft laws, while government officials estimate another 360,000 were never formally accused. If they returned home, those living in Canada or elsewhere faced prison sentences or forced military service. During his 1976 presidential campaign, Jimmy Carter promised to pardon draft dodgers as a way of putting the war and the bitter divisions it caused firmly in the past. After winning the election, Carter wasted no time in making good on his word. Though many transplanted Americans returned home, an estimated 50,000 settled permanently in Canada, greatly expanding the country's arts and academic scenes and pushing Canadian politics decidedly to the left.

Back in the U.S., Carter's decision generated a good deal of controversy. Heavily criticized by veterans' groups and others for allowing unpatriotic lawbreakers to get off scot-free, the pardon and companion relief plan came under fire from amnesty groups for not addressing deserters, soldiers who were dishonorably discharged or civilian anti-war demonstrators who had been prosecuted for their resistance.

Years later, Vietnam-era draft evasion still carries a powerful stigma. Though no prominent political figures have been found to have broken any draft laws, Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush and Vice-Presidents Dan Quayle and Dick Cheney—none of whom saw combat in Vietnam—have all been accused of being draft dodgers at one time or another. Although there is not currently a draft in the U.S., desertion and conscientious objection have remained pressing issues among the armed forces during the recent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

- **Feb 22 1777 – American Revolution: Archibald Bulloch's Death** » Revolutionary War leader and Georgia's first Provisional Governor Archibald Bulloch dies under mysterious circumstances just hours after Georgia's Council of Safety grants him the powers of a dictator in expectation of a British invasion. As a leader in the state's Liberty Party he was elected to the Commons House of Assembly in 1768, to the post of speaker of the Georgia Royal Assembly in 1772 and finally to the Continental Congress in 1775. On June 20, 1776, Bulloch was elected the first president and commander in chief of Georgia's temporary government, posts he held until February 5, 1777, when Georgia adopted its state constitution. Just over three weeks later, on 22 FEB Georgia faced a British invasion, and the state's new government granted Bulloch executive power to head off the British forces. A few hours later, Bulloch was dead. The cause of his death remains unknown but unsubstantiated rumors of his poisoning persist.
- **Feb 22 1847 – Mexican*American War: Battle of Buena Vista Begins** » During the Mexican-American War, Mexican General Santa Anna surrounds the outnumbered forces of U.S. General Zachary Taylor at the Angostura Pass in Mexico and demands an immediate surrender. Taylor refused, allegedly replying, "Tell him to go to hell," and early the next morning Santa Anna dispatched some 15,000 troops to move against the 5,000 Americans. The superior U.S. artillery was able to halt one of the two advancing Mexican divisions, while Jefferson Davis' Mississippi riflemen led the defense of the extreme left flank against the other Mexican advance. By five o'clock in the afternoon, the Mexicans begin to withdraw.

The Mexican-American War began with a dispute over the U.S. government's 1845 annexation of Texas. In January 1846, President James K. Polk, a strong advocate of westward expansion, ordered General Taylor to occupy disputed territory between the Nueces and Rio Grande rivers. Mexican troops attacked Taylor's forces, and in May 1846 Congress approved a declaration of war against Mexico.



At Buena Vista in February 1847, and at Monterrey in September, Taylor proved a brilliant military commander, earning the nickname "Old Rough and Ready" while emerging from the war a national hero. He won the Whig presidential nomination in 1848 and defeated the Democratic candidate, Lewis Cass, in November. The other hero of the Battle of Buena Vista, Jefferson Davis, became secretary of war under President Franklin Pierce in 1853 and president of the Confederate States of America in 1861.

- **Feb 22 1864 – Civil War: *Battle of West Point*** » Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest routs a Union force three times the size of his army at the Battle of West Point, Mississippi, helping to end Union General William T. Sherman's expedition into Alabama.



Sherman was marching an army east across Mississippi from Vicksburg to Meridian. He had captured and destroyed a vital Confederate supply center at Meridian and was planning to move further east to Selma, Alabama, another Rebel supply base. Sherman was relying on cavalry support from General William Sooy Smith, who was coming southeast from Memphis, Tennessee. Sherman directed Smith to meet him at Meridian on 10 FEB, but Sherman did not occupy Meridian until 14 FEB. Meanwhile, Smith dallied in Tennessee waiting for the arrival of Colonel George Waring Jr.'s cavalry brigade from Kentucky, and did not leave for Mississippi until 11 FEB.

On 20 FEB, some of Smith's men skirmished with Confederates near West Point, just over 100 miles north of Meridian. The Yankee troops slowly drove the Confederates back through West Point. The next day, more skirmishing flared as the troops continued south. The Confederates were led by Jeffrey Forrest, Nathan's younger brother. The elder Forrest waited south of West Point with the intent of drawing Smith's force into a swampy area between two rivers. Smith caught on to the plan just before it was too late and began a retreat back through West Point. On 22 FEB, the Yankees made a stand north of West Point and fought off a Confederate attack during which Jeffrey Forrest was killed. With the older Forrest blocking his way to Meridian, Smith retreated back to Memphis.

The Confederates suffered 144 men killed, wounded, or missing, while the Union lost 324. The engagement was significant because Sherman was forced to return to Vicksburg. The battle also lifted Confederate morale and enhanced the reputation of Nathan Bedford Forrest, who had taken on a much larger Union force and won.

- **Feb 22 1864 – Civil War: *First Battle of Dalton*** » A series of skirmishes that took place between February 22 and 27 FEB in Whitfield County, Georgia. At the suggestion of Union Major General Ulysses S. Grant, Major General George H. Thomas, decided to probe General Joseph E. Johnston's strength to determine if the loss of two full divisions to reinforce Confederate forces elsewhere had made the Confederate Army of Tennessee vulnerable to Union attack. On 22 FEB Thomas began the reconnaissance movement, which consisted of three columns of Union troops. After several days of intense skirmishing, Thomas's army retreated, since it was obvious that Johnston was still capable of repelling a major Union assault. Thomas's force had lost 300 officers and men killed or wounded, against 140 men for the Confederates.

- **Feb 22 1899 – Philippine*American War:** Filipino forces led by General Antonio Luna counterattacks for the first time against the American forces but fail to regain Manila from the Americans.
- **Feb 22 1909 – U.S. Navy:** The sixteen battleships of the Great White Fleet, led by the USS Connecticut (BB-18), return to the United States after a voyage around the world.



- **Feb 22 1915 – WWI Era:** Germany institutes unrestricted submarine warfare.
- **Feb 22 1917 – WWI Era:** Sergeant Benito Mussolini is wounded by the accidental explosion of a mortar bomb on the Isonzo section of the Italian Front. The explosion during a training exercise killed four of Mussolini's fellow soldiers. He escaped alive, but spent six months in the hospital, where 44 fragments of shell were removed from his body. Discharged from the army after his release from the hospital, Mussolini headed back to Milan, where he started his own newspaper, *Il Popolo d'Italia* (The People of Italy), in which he published articles attacking those in Italy who voiced anti-war sentiments.
- **Feb 22 1942 – WW2:** *President Roosevelt to MacArthur: Get Out of the Philippines* » President Franklin D. Roosevelt orders Gen. Douglas MacArthur out of the Philippines, as the American defense of the islands collapses.

The Philippines had been part of the American commonwealth since it was ceded by Spain at the close of the Spanish-American War. When the Japanese invaded China in 1937 and signed the Tripartite Pact with fascist nations Germany and Italy in 1940, the United States responded by, among other things, strengthening the defense of the Philippines. General MacArthur was called out of retirement to command 10,000 American Army troops, 12,000 Filipino enlisted men who fought as part of the U.S. Army, and 100,000 Filipino army soldiers, who were poorly trained and ill prepared. MacArthur radically overestimated his troops' strength and underestimated Japan's determination. The Rainbow War Plan, a defensive strategy for U.S. interests in the Pacific that was drawn up in the late 1930s and later refined by the War Department, required that MacArthur withdraw his troops into the mountains of the Bataan Peninsula and await better-trained and -equipped American reinforcements. Instead, MacArthur decided to take the Japanese head on—and he never recovered.

On the day of the Pearl Harbor bombing, the Japanese destroyed almost half of the American aircraft based in the Philippines. Amphibious landings of Japanese troops along the Luzon coast followed. By

late December, MacArthur had to pull his forces back defensively to the Bataan Peninsula—the original strategy belatedly pursued. By January 2, 1942, the Philippine capital of Manila fell to the Japanese. President Roosevelt had to admit to himself (if not to the American people, who believed the Americans were winning the battle with the Japanese in the Philippines), that the prospects for the American forces were not good—and that he could not afford to have General MacArthur fall captive to the Japanese. A message arrived at Corregidor on February 20, ordering MacArthur to leave immediately for Mindanao, then on to Melbourne, Australia, where “You will assume command of all United States troops.” MacArthur at first balked; he was fully prepared to fight alongside his men to the death if necessary. MacArthur finally obeyed the president’s order in March.

- **Feb 22 1942 – Holocaust:** Ten thousand Jews are deported from the Łódź Ghetto to the Chelmno extermination camp, where they are gassed.
- **Feb 22 1944 - WW2:** Dutch Towns Allegedly Bombed Mistakenly » The so-called 'Big Week' (official name: Operation Argument), a series of Allied bombardments on German aircraft factories to weaken the Luftwaffe in preparation for D-Day, included a planned raid on the city of Gotha. On 20 and 21 FEB, the first bombings had been carried out. However, on the 22nd American aircraft were said to have mistakenly bombed the Dutch towns of Nijmegen, Arnhem, Enschede and Deventer.

Nijmegen was then occupied by Nazi Germany. In terms of the number of victims, it was one of the largest bombardments of a Dutch city during World War II. Officially, nearly 800 people (almost all civilians) were killed by accident due to inaccurate bombing but, because people in hiding could not be counted, the actual death toll was probably higher. A large part of the historic city center was destroyed, including Saint Steven's Church. Saint Augustine's Church and Nijmegen railway station (the intended target) were heavily damaged as well.



At the time, it was common within the Allied air forces to attack secondary targets if the primary target could not be reached. These secondary targets were called targets of opportunity. Because a bombing raid was risky and expensive (because of enemy fire and fuel), and the main target could often not be hit, an opportunistic bombing attack could still deal an important blow to the enemy, thus turning the operation into a partial success, and providing some return for the costs and risks. The railway station area of Nijmegen was marked as such a target of opportunity, because the Allies knew that the Germans were using it for weapons transport. There was pressure on the flyers to bomb anything if possible, because it was unsafe to land with unexpended bombs and, once the flyers had carried out 25 raids, they were given leave of absence.

Because the Dutch government-in-exile in London tried to avoid criticism against the countries it was relying on for its liberation and future security, it and local authorities largely remained silent on the unfortunate event for decades, leaving survivors with unaddressed grief and questions, and allowing wild conspiracy theories to thrive. Although officials long maintained it had been an "erroneous bombardment", as if Nijmegen was the wrong target, historical research has shown that the attack was intentional, but had been executed poorly.

- **Feb 22 1946 – Cold War:** *George Kennan Sends “Long Telegram” To State Department* » George Kennan, the American charge d’affaires in Moscow, sends an 8,000-word telegram to the Department of State detailing his views on the Soviet Union, and U.S. policy toward the communist state. Kennan’s analysis provided one of the most influential underpinnings for America’s Cold War policy of containment.



Kennan was among the U.S. diplomats to help establish the first American embassy in the Soviet Union in 1933. While he often expressed respect for the Russian people, his appraisal of the communist leadership of the Soviet Union became increasingly negative and harsh. Throughout World War II he was convinced that President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s spirit of friendliness and cooperation with Soviet leader Joseph Stalin was completely misplaced. Less than a year after Roosevelt’s death, Kennan, then serving as U.S. charge d’affaires in Moscow, released his opinions in what came to be known as the “long telegram.”

The lengthy memorandum began with the assertion that the Soviet Union could not foresee “permanent peaceful coexistence” with the West. This “neurotic view of world affairs” was a manifestation of the “instinctive Russian sense of insecurity.” As a result, the Soviets were deeply suspicious of all other nations and believed that their security could only be found in “patient but deadly struggle for total destruction of rival power.” Kennan was convinced that the Soviets would try to expand their sphere of influence, and he pointed to Iran and Turkey as the most likely immediate trouble areas. In addition, Kennan believed the Soviets would do all they could to “weaken power and influence of Western Powers on colonial backward, or dependent peoples.” Fortunately, although the Soviet Union was “impervious to logic of reason,” it was “highly sensitive to logic of force.” Therefore, it would back down “when strong resistance is encountered at any point.” The United States and its allies, he concluded, would have to offer that resistance.

Kennan’s telegram caused a sensation in Washington. Stalin’s aggressive speeches and threatening gestures toward Iran and Turkey in 1945-1946 led the Truman administration to decide to take a tougher stance and rely on the nation’s military and economic muscle rather than diplomacy in dealing with the Soviets. These factors guaranteed a warm reception for Kennan’s analysis. His opinion that Soviet

expansionism needed to be contained through a policy of “strong resistance” provided the basis for America’s Cold War diplomacy through the next two decades. Kennan’s diplomatic career certainly received a boost—he was named U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union in 1952.

After leaving government service, Kennan served on the faculty of the Institute for Advanced Study until his death in 2005 at the age of 101.

- **Feb 22 1951 – Cold War:** The Atomic Energy Commission discloses information about the first atomic-powered airplane.
- **Feb 22 1954 – Cold War:** The United States is to install 60 Thor nuclear missiles in Britain.
- **Feb 22 1963 – Cuban Missile Crisis:** Moscow warns the United States that an attack on Cuba would mean war.
- **Feb 22 1965 – Vietnam War:** *Gen. Westmoreland Asks For Marines* » The commander of Military Assistance Command Vietnam, cables Washington, D.C., to request that two battalions of U.S. Marines be sent to protect the U.S. airbase at Da Nang.

Ambassador Maxwell Taylor, aware of Westmoreland’s plan, disagreed and cabled President Lyndon B. Johnson from Saigon to warn that such a step would encourage South Vietnam to “shuck off greater responsibilities.” The Joint Chiefs of Staff, however, supported Westmoreland’s request and on 26 FEB, White House officials cabled Taylor and Westmoreland that the troops would be sent, and that Taylor should “Secure GVN [Government of South Vietnam] approval.” General Westmoreland later insisted that he did not regard his request as “the first step in a growing American commitment,” but by 1969 there were over 540,000 American troops in South Vietnam.

- **Feb 22 1967 – Vietnam War:** *Operation Junction City Begins* » The Operation is launched to ease pressure on Saigon. It was an effort to smash the Viet Cong’s stronghold in Tay Ninh Province and surrounding areas along the Cambodian border northwest of Saigon.

The purpose of the operation was to drive the Viet Cong away from populated areas and into the open, where superior American firepower could be more effectively used. In the largest operation of the war to date, four South Vietnamese and 22 U.S. battalions were involved—more than 25,000 troops. The first day’s operation was supported by 575 aircraft sorties, a record number for a single day in South Vietnam. The operation was marked by one of the largest airmobile assaults in history when 240 troop-carrying helicopters descended on the battlefield. There were 2,728 enemy casualties by the end of the operation on 17 MAR.

- **Feb 22 1968 – Vietnam War:** *Tet Offensive Ends* » The American war effort in Vietnam was hit hard by the North Vietnamese Tet Offensive, which ended on this day in 1968. Claims by President Lyndon Johnson that the offensive was a complete failure were misleading. Though the North Vietnamese death toll was 20 times that of its enemies, strongholds previously thought impenetrable had been shaken. The prospect of increasing American forces added substantial strength to the anti-war movement and led to Johnson’s announcement that he would not seek re-election.

- **Feb 22 1973 – Cold War:** Following President Richard Nixon's visit to the People's Republic of China, the two countries agree to establish liaison offices.
- **Feb 22 1984 – Iraq:** Britain and the U.S. send warships to the Persian Gulf following an Iranian offensive against Iraq.

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- **Feb 23 1778 – American Revolution:** *Friedrich Von Steuben Arrives At Valley Forge* » Friedrich Wilhelm Rudolf Gerhard August, Freiherr von Steuben, a Prussian military officer, arrives at General George Washington's encampment at Valley Forge on this day in 1778 and commences training soldiers in close-order drill, instilling new confidence and discipline in the demoralized Continental Army.



Baron von Steuben, as he is better known, was the son of a military engineer and became a Prussian officer himself at the age of 17. He served with distinction and was quickly promoted from infantry to Frederick the Great's General Staff. In 1763, at age 33 and with the rank of captain, he was discharged for unknown reasons. His title of freiherr, or baron, came with his subsequent post as chamberlain (or palace manager) to the petty court of Hohenzollern-Hechingen in Swabia, or the southwestern Holy Roman Empire, in what is now Baden-Wuerttemberg. Employed by an indebted prince, von Steuben searched for more lucrative employment in foreign armies. The French minister of war recommended von Steuben to Benjamin Franklin as a resource to the Continental Army in 1777. Franklin in turn passed on word of Steuben's availability to George Washington, and by February 23, 1778, he was among the desperate Continentals camped at Valley Forge.

Von Steuben, who did not speak English, drafted a drill manual in French, which Alexander Hamilton and Nathanael Greene then translated into English. The Prussian drill techniques he shared were far more advanced than those of other European armies, let alone those of the ragtag Patriots. The ego-crushing methods of modern boot camp were practiced among the shoeless soldiers of Valley Forge with remarkable efficacy. Most important for 18th-century battle was an efficient method of firing and reloading weapons, which von Steuben forced the Patriots to practice until it became second nature.

Before von Steuben's arrival, colonial American soldiers were notorious for their slovenly camp conditions. Von Steuben insisted on reorganization to establish basic hygiene. He demanded that

kitchens and latrines be put on opposite sides of the camp, with latrines facing a downhill slope. (Just having latrines was novelty to the Continental troops who were accustomed to living among their own filth.)

On the merit of his efforts at Valley Forge, Washington recommended that von Steuben be named inspector general of the Continental Army; Congress complied. In this capacity, von Steuben propagated his methods throughout the Patriot forces by circulating his Blue Book, entitled Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States.

- **Feb 23 1836 – Mexican*American War:** Mexican General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna began his 13 day siege of the Alamo Spanish mission in San Antonio, Texas.
- **Feb 23 1847 – Mexican*American War:** Battle of Buena Vista ends – In Mexico, American troops under General Zachary Taylor defeat Mexican General Antonio López de Santa Anna.
- **Feb 23 1861 – Civil War:** *Lincoln Arrives in Washington* » President-elect Abraham Lincoln arrives in Washington, D.C. amid secrecy and tight security. With seven states having already seceded from the Union since Lincoln's election, the threat of civil war hung in the air.

Allen Pinkerton, head of a private detective agency, had uncovered a plot to assassinate Lincoln when he passed through Baltimore on his way to the capital. Lincoln and his advisors disagreed about how to respond to the threat. Some, including Pinkerton, wanted Lincoln to slip secretly into Washington, which would mean skipping an address to the Pennsylvania legislature in Harrisburg. Lincoln did not want to appear cowardly, but felt the threats were serious.



Pinkerton, Lamon, & Washburne

Lincoln agreed to the covert arrival. With Pinkerton and Ward Hill Lamon, his former law partner, Lincoln slipped out of the hotel in Harrisburg on the evening of 22 FEB. He wore a soft felt hat instead of his customary stovepipe hat, and draped an overcoat over his shoulders and hunched slightly to disguise his height. The group boarded a sleeper car and arrived in Baltimore in the middle of the night. They slipped undetected from the Calvert Street station to Camden station across town. There, they boarded another train and arrived without incident in Washington at 6 a.m. On the platform, the party was surprised when a voice boomed, “Abe, you can’t play that on me.” It was Congressman Elihu B. Washburne, a friend of Lincoln’s from Illinois. Washburne escorted Lincoln to the Willard Hotel.

A myth arose that Lincoln had dressed as a woman to avoid detection, but this was not the case. He did draw considerable criticism in the press for his unceremonious arrival. Northern diarist George Templeton Strong commented that if convincing evidence of a plot did not surface, “the surreptitious

nocturnal dodging...will be used to damage his moral position and throw ridicule on his Administration.” Lincoln later regretted the caper and commented to a friend: “I did not then, nor do I now believe I should have been assassinated had I gone through Baltimore...” Regardless of how he had arrived, Lincoln was safely in Washington, ready to assume the difficult task ahead.

- **Feb 23 1903 – U.S.*Cuba:** Cuba leases Guantánamo Bay to the United States ‘in perpetuity’.
- **Feb 23 1917 – WWI:** Germans begin withdrawal to the Hindenburg Line » German troops begin a well-planned withdrawal—ordered several weeks previously by Kaiser Wilhelm—to strong positions on the Hindenburg Line, solidifying their defense and digging in for a continued struggle on the Western Front in World War I.

One month after Paul von Hindenburg succeeded Erich von Falkenhayn as chief of the German army’s general staff in August 1916, he ordered the construction of a heavily fortified zone running several miles behind the active front between the north coast of France and Verdun, near the border between France and Belgium. Its aim would be to hold the last line of German defense and brutally crush any Allied breakthrough before it could reach the Belgian or German frontier. The British referred to it as the Hindenburg Line, for its mastermind; it was known to the Germans as the Siegfried Line.

In the wake of exhausting and bloody battles at Verdun and the Somme, and with the U.S edging ever closer to entering the war, Germany’s leaders looked to improve their defensive positions on the Western Front. The withdrawal to the Hindenburg Line meant that German troops were removed to a more uniform line of trenches, reducing the length of the line they had to defend by 25 miles and freeing up 13 army divisions to serve as reserve troops. On their way, German forces systematically destroyed the land they passed through, burning farmhouses, poisoning wells, mining abandoned buildings and demolishing roads.

The German command correctly estimated that the move would gain them eight weeks of respite before the Allies could begin their attacks again; it also threw a wrench into the Allied strategy by removing their army from the very positions that British and French joint command had planned to strike next. After the withdrawal, which was completed May 5, 1917, the Hindenburg Line, considered impregnable by many on both sides of the conflict, became the German army’s stronghold. Allied armies did not break it until October 1918, one month before the armistice.

- **Feb 23 1942 – WW2:** A Japanese submarine surfaced off the coast of California, shelling the coastline near the town of Ellwood. The first Axis explosives to hit American soil.
- **Feb 23 1945 – WW2:** *Bombing of Pforzheim, Germany* » During the latter stages of the war, Pforzheim, a town in southwestern Germany, was bombed several times. The largest raid, one of the most devastating area bombardments of the war, was carried out by 367 Avro Lancaster bombers and 13 Mosquito fighters of the Royal Air Force (RAF) on the evening of 23 FEB. Of the town's population 31.4% were killed. About 83% of the town's buildings were destroyed, two-thirds of the complete area of Pforzheim and between 80% and 100% of the inner city. In an area about 3 km long and 1.5 km wide, all buildings were reduced to rubble. 17,600 citizens were officially counted as dead and thousands were injured. People died from the immediate impact of explosions, from burns due to burning incendiary materials that seeped through basement windows into the cellars of houses where they hid, from poisonous gases, lack of oxygen, and collapsing walls of houses. Some of them drowned in

the Enz or Nagold rivers into which they had jumped while trying to escape from the burning incendiary materials in the streets, but even the rivers were burning as the phosphorus floated on the water.

After the attack, about 30,000 people had to be fed by makeshift public kitchens because their housing had been destroyed. Many Pforzheim citizens were buried in common graves at Pforzheim's main cemetery because they could not be identified. There are many graves of complete families. The labor office of 1942 listed 2,980 foreigners in Pforzheim, and one source puts the number of foreign laborers who died in the bombings at 498. Twelve aircraft of the bomber fleet did not return to their bases. Eleven of them were shot down by Luftwaffe fighters, and another was assumed to have been accidentally hit by "friendly" bombs. After the devastating air raid of 23 FEB, there were smaller air raids on Pforzheim. On 4 MAR, USAAF B-24 Liberator aircraft bombed the area around "Kupferhammer". On March 14, 16, 18th, 19th, 20th and 24th, the railway facilities were bombed. On March 17, the motorway at Pforzheim was bombed, and on March 23 the area in Eutingen Valley was bombed

The reason for the large raid is attributed to a report compiled for RAF Bomber Command dated 28 June 1944, stated that Pforzheim was "one of the centers of the German jewelry and watch making trade and is therefore likely to have become of considerable importance to the production of precision instruments [of use in the war effort]." An Allied report issued in August 1944 stated that "almost every house in this town center is a small workshop" and that there were a few larger factories in the south and one in the north of the city center. An attack on the city would destroy the "built-up area, the associated industries and rail facilities". There were no war-crucial targets; only war-relevant ones. In November 1944, Pforzheim was placed for the first time on a target list of the Allied Forces, but with the lowest priority of category five. In that report, the city was described as being suitable for a raid, because the road and rail communications through the easily spotted old city was known to be flammable. Pforzheim was used in the transfer of troops.

- **Feb 23 1945 – WW2: *Marines Raise The Flag On Mt. Suribachi*** » During the bloody Battle for Iwo Jima, U.S. Marines from the 3rd Platoon, E Company, 2nd Battalion, 28th Regiment of the 5th Division take the crest of Mount Suribachi, the island's highest peak and most strategic position, and raise the U.S. flag. Marine photographer Louis Lowery was with them and recorded the event. American soldiers fighting for control of Suribachi's slopes cheered the raising of the flag, and several hours later more Marines headed up to the crest with a larger flag. Joe Rosenthal, a photographer with the Associated Press, met them along the way and recorded the raising of the second flag along with a Marine still photographer and a motion-picture cameraman.



Rosenthal took three photographs atop Suribachi. The first, which showed five Marines and one Navy corpsman struggling to hoist the heavy flag pole, became the most reproduced photograph in history and won him a Pulitzer Prize. The accompanying motion-picture footage attests to the fact that the picture was not posed. Of the other two photos, the second was similar to the first but less affecting, and the third was a group picture of 18 soldiers smiling and waving for the camera. Many of these men, including three of the six soldiers seen raising the flag in the famous Rosenthal photo, were killed before the conclusion of the Battle for Iwo Jima in late March.

In early 1945, U.S. military command sought to gain control of the island of Iwo Jima in advance of the projected aerial campaign against the Japanese home islands. Iwo Jima, a tiny volcanic island located in the Pacific about 700 miles southeast of Japan, was to be a base for fighter aircraft and an emergency-landing site for bombers. On February 19, 1945, after three days of heavy naval and aerial bombardment, the first wave of U.S. Marines stormed onto Iwo Jima's inhospitable shores.

The Japanese garrison on the island numbered 22,000 heavily entrenched men. Their commander, General Tadamichi Kuribayashi, had been expecting an Allied invasion for months and used the time wisely to construct an intricate and deadly system of underground tunnels, fortifications, and artillery that withstood the initial Allied bombardment. By the evening of the first day, despite incessant mortar fire, 30,000 U.S. Marines commanded by General Holland Smith managed to establish a solid beachhead.



During the next few days, the Marines advanced inch by inch under heavy fire from Japanese artillery and suffered suicidal charges from the Japanese infantry. Many of the Japanese defenders were never seen and remained underground manning artillery until they were blown apart by a grenade or rocket, or incinerated by a flame thrower.

While Japanese kamikaze flyers slammed into the Allied naval fleet around Iwo Jima, the Marines on the island continued their bloody advance across the island, responding to Kuribayashi's lethal defenses with remarkable endurance. On 23 FEB, the crest of 550-foot Mount Suribachi was taken, and the next day the slopes of the extinct volcano were secured.

By 3 MAR, U.S. forces controlled all three airfields on the island, and on 26 MAR the last Japanese defenders on Iwo Jima were wiped out. Only 200 of the original 22,000 Japanese defenders were captured alive. More than 6,000 Americans died taking Iwo Jima, and some 17,000 were wounded.

- **Feb 23 1945 – WW2:** The 11th Airborne Division, with Filipino guerrillas, free the captives of the Los Baños internment camp.
- **Feb 23 1945 – WW2:** The capital of the Philippines, Manila, is liberated by American forces.
- **Feb 23 1955 – Cold War:** *First Council Meeting Of SEATO* » In the first council meeting of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles declares the United States is committed to defending the region from communist aggression. The meeting, and American participation in SEATO, set the stage for the U.S. to take a more active role in Vietnam.



SEATO had been established in Manila in 1954, at a meeting called by Secretary Dulles. The United States, Great Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, Pakistan, and the Philippines became the member states of the regional defense organization. The U.S. established SEATO primarily in response to what it viewed as a deteriorating situation in Southeast Asia. Earlier in 1954, the French, who had been fighting to regain control of their former colony since 1946, agreed to withdraw from Vietnam. The country was divided, and the communist forces of Ho Chi Minh took control in North Vietnam pending nationwide elections for reunification in two years. U.S. policymakers believed that North Vietnam was the first “domino” to fall to communism in Southeast Asia, and that other nations in the region would also soon come under threat of communist control. Dulles pointed to communist China as the main threat to peace and security in the region. Communist China responded by claiming that SEATO was another part of “United States aggression against Asian nations.”

SEATO became more important to the United States as the situation in Vietnam eventually resulted in the commitment of U.S. combat troops to South Vietnam in 1965. Unfortunately for U.S. officials, only a few of the SEATO member countries actively supported the U.S. action. Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, and the Philippines sent troops or other assistance, but Great Britain, France, and Pakistan refused to become involved. Eventually, France, Pakistan, and Australia withdrew from the organization. SEATO faded away as a component of U.S. policy in Asia during the 1970s. It formally ceased operations in 1976.

- **Feb 23 1966 – Vietnam War:** Desertion up in South Vietnamese army » According to the U.S. military headquarters in Saigon, 90,000 South Vietnamese deserted in 1965. This number was almost 14 percent of total South Vietnamese army strength and was twice the number of those that deserted in 1964. By contrast, the best estimates showed that fewer than 20,000 Viet Cong defected during the previous year.
- **Feb 23 1967 – Vietnam War:** U.S. troops begin the largest offensive of the war, near the Cambodian border.
- **Feb 23 1971 – Vietnam War:** *South Vietnamese Advance Stalls* » In Operation Lam Son 719, the South Vietnamese advance into Laos grinds to a halt. The operation began on 8 FEB. It included a limited incursion by South Vietnamese forces into Laos to disrupt the communist supply and infiltration network in Laos along Route 9 adjacent to the two northern provinces of South Vietnam. The operation was supported by U.S. airpower (aviation and airlift) and artillery (firing across the border from firebases inside South Vietnam).



Observers described the drive on Hanoi's supply routes and depots as some of the "bloodiest fighting" of the war. Enemy resistance was initially light as a 12,000-man spearhead of the South Vietnamese army thrust its way across the border into the communists' deepest jungle stronghold, with the town of Tchepone, a major enemy supply center on Route 9 in Laos, as the major objective. However, resistance stiffened in the second week as the North Vietnamese rushed reinforcements to the area. On this day, the big push bogged down around 16 miles from the border, after bloody fighting in which the communist troops overran two South Vietnamese battalions.

- **Feb 23 1991 – Gulf War:** Ground troops cross the Saudi Arabian border and enter Iraq, thus starting the ground phase of the war.
- **Feb 23 2008 – U.S. Air Force:** A United States Air Force B-2 Spirit bomber crashes on Guam. It is the first operational loss of a B-2.

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- **Feb 24 1813 – War of 1812:** The American ship USS Hornet sank the British sloop HMS Peacock in an action off the coast of Guiana (north coast of South America).
- **Feb 24 1836 - Mexican*American War:** *Alamo Defenders Call For Help* » In San Antonio, Texas, Colonel William Travis issues a call for help on behalf of the Texan troops defending the Alamo, an old Spanish mission and fortress under attack by the Mexican army.



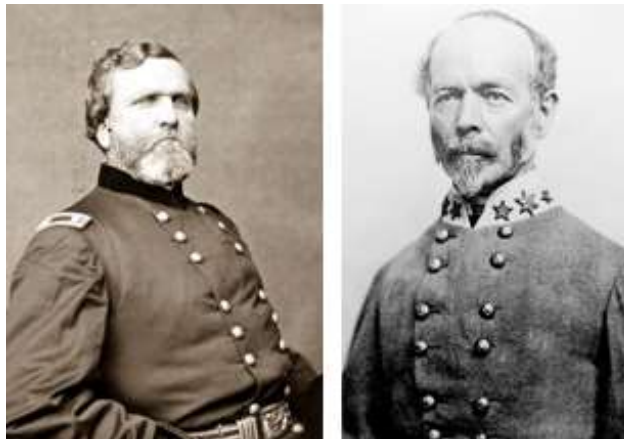
A native of Alabama, Travis moved to the Mexican state of Texas in 1831. He soon became a leader of the growing movement to overthrow the Mexican government and establish an independent Texan republic. When the Texas revolution began in 1835, Travis became a lieutenant-colonel in the revolutionary army and was given command of troops in the recently captured city of San Antonio de Bexar (now San Antonio). On February 23, 1836, a large Mexican force commanded by General Antonio Lopez de Santa Ana arrived suddenly in San Antonio. Travis and his troops took shelter in the Alamo, where they were soon joined by a volunteer force led by Colonel James Bowie.

Though Santa Ana's 5,000 troops heavily outnumbered the several hundred Texans, Travis and his men determined not to give up. On 24 FEB, they answered Santa Ana's call for surrender with a bold shot from the Alamo's cannon. Furious, the Mexican general ordered his forces to launch a siege. Travis immediately recognized his disadvantage and sent out several messages via couriers asking for reinforcements. Addressing one of the pleas to "The People of Texas and All Americans in the World," Travis signed off with the now-famous phrase "Victory or Death."

Only 32 men from the nearby town of Gonzales responded to Travis' call for help, and beginning at 5:30 a.m. on 6 MAR, Mexican forces stormed the Alamo through a gap in the fort's outer wall, killing Travis, Bowie and 190 of their men. Despite the loss of the fort, the Texan troops managed to inflict huge losses on their enemy, killing at least 600 of Santa Ana's men.

The brave defense of the Alamo became a powerful symbol for the Texas revolution, helping the rebels turn the tide in their favor. At the crucial Battle of San Jacinto on April 21, 910 Texan soldiers commanded by Sam Houston defeated Santa Ana's army of 1,250 men, spurred on by cries of "Remember the Alamo!" The next day, after Texan forces captured Santa Ana himself, the general issued orders for all Mexican troops to pull back behind the Rio Grande River. On May 14, 1836, Texas officially became an independent republic.

- **Feb 24 1864 – Civil War:** *Battle of Dalton, Georgia Begins* » Union General George Thomas attacks General Joseph Johnston's Confederates near Dalton, Georgia, as the Yankees probe Johnston's defenses in search of a weakness. Thomas found the position too strong and ceased the offensive the next day, but the Yankees learned a lesson they would apply during the Atlanta campaign that summer.



Thomas & Johnston

General Ulysses S. Grant, the overall commander of Union troops in the West, drove the Confederates out of Tennessee at the battles of Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge in November 1863. The Army of Tennessee, then commanded by General Braxton Bragg, fell back to northern Georgia, where Bragg was replaced by Johnston. The defensive-minded Johnston arranged his force along the imposing Rocky Face Ridge near Dalton.

Grant sent part of his army under General William T. Sherman to Mississippi for a campaign against Meridian, a major supply center. This forced Johnston to send part of his army to reinforce Leonidas Polk, who was defending Meridian against Sherman. When Grant became aware of this transfer, he

sent Thomas to probe Johnston's defenses in hopes of finding a weak spot among the depleted Confederates. The Yankees enjoyed initial success but soon found that Johnston's troops were strong. The reinforcements sent towards Mississippi were no longer needed after Polk abandoned Meridian, so they returned to Johnston's army. Now, Thomas was outnumbered and was forced to retreat after February 25.

Casualties were light. Thomas suffered fewer than 300 men killed, wounded, or captured, while Johnston lost around 140 troops. The Union generals did learn a valuable lesson, however; a direct attack against Rocky Face Ridge was foolish. Three months later, Sherman, in command after Grant was promoted to commander of all forces, sent part of his army further south to another gap that was undefended by the Confederates. The intelligence garnered from the Battle of Dalton helped pave the way for a Union victory that summer.

- **Feb 24 1881 – Russia*China: Treaty of Ili (St. Petersburg) Signed** » The Treaty provided for the return to China of the eastern part of the Ili Basin region, also known as Zhetysu occupied by Russia in 1871 during the Dungan Revolt up to 1881. According to its articles:
 - ❖ The Chinese government agreed (Article 2) to hold the residents of the area, regardless of their ethnicity and religion, harmless for their actions during the rebellion.
 - ❖ The residents of the area would be allowed (Article 3) to stay or to move to Russian Empire; they would be asked about their choice before the withdrawal of the Russian troops.
 - ❖ Chinese government (Article 6) would pay Russia 9,000,000 rubles to serve as a payment for the occupation costs, compensation for the claims of Russian subjects who lost their property during the rebellion, and for material assistance to the families of Russian subjects killed during the rebellion.
 - ❖ The new international border was set in the Ili Valley (Article 7). The area west of the border was retained by Russia "for the settlement of the region's residents who will choose to become Russian subjects and will have to leave the lands that they have owned" east of the new border.
 - ❖ Russia was allowed (Article 10) to expand its consular network in the northwestern parts of the Chinese Empire.
 - ❖ Article 12 affirmed the right of duty-free trade for Russian traders in Mongolia and Xinjiang. The treaty also contained various provisions designed to facilitate activities of Russian merchants and to regulate bilateral trade. An appendix to the treaty specified the list of border crossings the two countries were to operate.

The Qing dynasty forced Russia to hand over disputed territory in the Treaty in what was seen as a "diplomatic victory" against Russia. Russia acknowledged that Qing China potentially posed a serious military threat. Mass media in the west during this era portrayed China as a rising military power due to its modernization programs and as a major threat to the western world, invoking fears that China would successfully conquer western colonies like Australia

- **Feb 24 1917 – WWI: Zimmermann Note Presented To U.S. Ambassador** » During World War I, British authorities give Walter H. Page, the U.S. ambassador to Britain, a copy of the "Zimmermann Note," a coded message from Arthur Zimmermann, the German foreign secretary, to Count Johann von Bernstorff, the German ambassador to Mexico. In the telegram, intercepted and deciphered by British intelligence in late January, Zimmermann stated that in the event of war with the United States, Mexico

should be asked to enter the conflict as a German ally. In return, Germany promised to restore to Mexico the lost territories of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona.



After receiving the telegram, Page promptly sent a copy to U.S. President Woodrow Wilson who learned of its contents on 26 FEB. The next day he proposed to Congress that the U.S. should start arming its ships against possible German attacks. He also authorized the State Department to make public the Zimmermann Telegram. On 1 MAR the U.S. State Department published the note. The press initially treated the telegram as a hoax, but Arthur Zimmermann himself confirmed its authenticity two days later. Germany had already aroused Wilson's ire—and that of the American public—with its policy of unrestricted submarine warfare and its continued attacks against American ships. Some of those in the United States who still held out for neutrality at first claimed the telegram was a fake.

Public opinion in the United States now swung firmly toward American entrance into World War I. On 2 APR Wilson, who had initially sought a peaceful resolution to end World War I, went before Congress to deliver a message of war. The United States formally entered the conflict four days later.

- **Feb 24 1917 – WWI Era:** The Allied war against Turkish forces gains momentum (and ground) in Mesopotamia as British and Indian troops move along the Tigris River recapturing the city of Kut-al-Amara and taking 1,730 Turkish prisoners on February 24.
- **Feb 24 1942 – WWII:** *Battle of Los Angeles* » Unidentified flying objects caused a succession of alerts in southern California. A warning issued by naval intelligence indicated that an attack could be expected within the next ten hours. That evening a large number of flares and blinking lights were reported from the vicinity of defense plants. Air raid sirens sounded throughout Los Angeles County. At 3:16 am the 37th Coast Artillery Brigade began firing .50 caliber machine guns and 12.8-pound anti-aircraft shells into the air at reported aircraft; over 1,400 shells would eventually be fired. The artillery fire continued sporadically until 4:14 am.

The "all clear" was sounded and the blackout order lifted at 7:21 am. Several buildings and vehicles were damaged by shell fragments, and five civilians died as an indirect result of the anti-aircraft fire: three killed in car accidents in the ensuing chaos and two of heart attacks attributed to the stress of the hour-long action.



The incident, now referred to as the Battle of L.A., occurred less than three months after the Pearl Harbor attack and two days after a Japanese submarine shelled an oil facility near Santa Barbara. At the end of the war, the Japanese stated that they did not send planes over the area at the time of this alert. Balloons known to have been released over Los Angeles may have caused the initial alarm. After the firing started, careful observation was difficult because of drifting smoke from shell bursts.

Reporter Ernie Pyle witnessed the shooting and wrote that he was never able to make out an airplane. There are many stories in newspapers of the time with witnesses stating seeing airplanes, balloons, lights, and large unknown objects floating in the sky. The entire country was on edge at the time and within hours of the end of the air raid, Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox held a press conference, saying the entire incident was a false alarm due to anxiety and "war nerves."

- **Feb 24 1942 – Holocaust:** More than 30,000 Jews deported from Łódź Ghetto to Chelmno. Also, The ship SS Struma, flying a neutral Panamanian flag and carrying Jewish refugees fleeing from Romania, is sunk in the Black Sea after Britain pressures Turkey to turn the ship back from Istanbul. More than 700 Jewish passengers attempting to save their lives by reaching Palestine are drowned. Only one passenger survives.
- **Feb 24 1942 – WW2:** The Voice of America went on the air for the first time. Its mission was to broadcast accurate, balanced, and comprehensive news and information to an international audience, and it defines the legally mandated standards in the VOA journalistic code. The Office of War Information, when organized in the middle of 1942, officially took over VOA's operations.
- **Feb 24 1944 – WW2:** Maj. Gen. Frank Merrill's guerrilla force, nicknamed "Merrill's Marauders," a specially trained group of American soldiers, begin their 1,000 mile journey in a ground campaign against Japan into Burma.
- **Feb 24 1968 – Vietnam War:** Tet Offensive Halted » The Tet Offensive ends as U.S. and South Vietnamese troops recapture the ancient capital of Hue from communist forces. Although scattered fighting continued across South Vietnam for another week, the battle for Hue was the last major engagement of the offensive, which saw communist attacks on all of South Vietnam's major cities. In the aftermath of Tet, public opinion in the United States decisively turned against the Vietnam War.



Imperial Palace of Hue

As 1968 began—the third year of U.S. ground-troop fighting in Vietnam—U.S. military leadership was still confident that a favorable peace agreement would soon be forced on the North Vietnamese and their allies in South Vietnam, the Viet Cong. Despite growing calls at home for an immediate U.S. withdrawal, President Lyndon Johnson’s administration planned to keep the pressure on the communists through increased bombing and other attrition strategies. General William Westmoreland, commander of U.S. operations in Vietnam, claimed to see clearly “the light at the end of the tunnel,” and Johnson hoped that soon the shell-shocked communists would stumble out of the jungle to the bargaining table.

However, on January 30, 1968, the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese launched their massive Tet Offensive all across South Vietnam. It was the first day of Tet—Vietnam’s lunar New Year and most important holiday—and many South Vietnamese soldiers, expecting an unofficial truce, had gone home. The Viet Cong were known for guerrilla tactics and had never launched an offensive on this scale; consequently, U.S. and South Vietnamese forces were caught completely by surprise.

In the first day of the offensive, tens of thousands of Viet Cong soldiers, supported by North Vietnamese forces, overran the five largest cities of South Vietnam, scores of smaller cities and towns, and a number of U.S. and South Vietnamese bases. The Viet Cong struck at Saigon—South Vietnam’s capital—and even attacked, and for several hours held, the U.S. embassy there. The action was caught by U.S. television news crews, which also recorded the brutal impromptu street execution of a Viet Cong rebel by a South Vietnamese military official.

As the U.S. and South Vietnamese fought to regain control of Saigon, the cities of Hue, Dalat, Kontum, and Quangtri fell to the communists. U.S. and South Vietnamese forces recaptured most of these cities within a few days, but Hue was fiercely contested by the communist soldiers occupying it. After 26 days of costly house-to-house fighting, the South Vietnamese flag was raised again above Hue on 24 FEB and the Tet Offensive came to an end. During the communist occupation of Hue, numerous South Vietnamese government officials and civilians were massacred, and many civilians died in U.S. bombing attacks that preceded the liberation of the city.

In many respects, the Tet Offensive was a military disaster for the communists: They suffered 10 times more casualties than their enemy and failed to control any of the areas captured in the opening days of the offensive. They had hoped that the offensive would ignite a popular uprising against South Vietnam’s government and the presence of U.S. troops. This did not occur. In addition, the Viet Cong,

which had come out into the open for the first time in the war, were all but wiped out. However, because the Tet Offensive crushed U.S. hopes for an imminent end to the conflict, it dealt a fatal blow to the U.S. military mission in Vietnam.

In Tet's aftermath, President Johnson came under fire on all sides for his Vietnam policy. General Westmoreland requested 200,000 more troops to overwhelm the communists, and a national uproar ensued after this request was disclosed, forcing Johnson to recall Westmoreland to Washington. On March 31, Johnson announced that the United States would begin de-escalation in Vietnam, halt the bombing of North Vietnam, and seek a peace agreement to end the conflict. In the same speech, he also announced that he would not seek reelection to the presidency, citing what he perceived to be his responsibility in creating the national division over Vietnam.

- **Feb 24 1968 – Vietnam War:** *Airman Wins Medal Of Honor For Action On This day* » After a North Vietnamese mortar shells rocks their Douglas AC-47 gunship, Airman First Class John L. Levitow throws himself on an activated, smoking magnesium flare, drags himself and the flare to the open cargo door, and tosses it out of the aircraft just before it ignites. For saving his fellow crewmembers and the gunship, Airman Levitow was later awarded the Medal of Honor. He was one of only two enlisted airmen to win the Medal of Honor for service in Vietnam and was one of only five enlisted airmen ever to win the medal.



- **Feb 24 1982 – Cold War:** *Reagan Announces Caribbean Basin Initiative* » President Ronald Reagan announces a new program of economic and military assistance to nations of the Caribbean designed to “prevent the overthrow of the governments in the region” by the “brutal and totalitarian” forces of communism. The Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) was part of the Reagan administration’s effort to curb what it perceived to be the dangerous rise in communist activity in Central America and the Caribbean.

In the course of an address to the Organization of American States, Reagan argued that a massive new aid program to the Caribbean region was vitally necessary. “If we do not act promptly and decisively in defense of freedom, new Cubas will arise from the ruins of today’s conflicts. We will face more totalitarian regimes tied militarily to the Soviet Union, more regimes exporting subversion, more regimes so incompetent yet so totalitarian that their citizens’ only hope becomes that of one day migrating to other American nations as in recent years they have come to the United States.” Specifically, the President called for increases of \$350 million in economic aid and \$60 million in military assistance to the Caribbean. He also pledged U.S. assistance in increasing Caribbean trade with the United States and encouraging private investment in the Caribbean.

Reagan's proposal was in response to what he and his advisors believed to be an increasing Soviet presence in the Caribbean and Central America. In Nicaragua, the leftist Sandinista regime had come to power in 1979. El Salvador was involved in a bloody and brutal conflict between government forces supported by the United States and leftist rebels. And on the island nation of Grenada, the government of Maurice Bishop was establishing close ties to Cuba and Fidel Castro.

The CBI, however, had little impact on improving the economic situation of the nations it was trying to aid. Eventually the entire concept was allowed to simply fade away, and the Reagan administration chose to employ more forceful anti-communist measures in the region. These included support of the anti-Sandinista Contras, massive military aid to the Salvadoran government, and, in 1983, the invasion of Grenada to remove its leftist government.

- **Feb 24 1983 – Post WWII:** A special commission of the U.S. Congress releases a report that condemns the practice of Japanese internment during World War II.
- **Feb 24 1991 – Gulf War:** *Gulf War Ground Offensive Begins* » After six weeks of intensive bombing against Iraq and its armed forces, U.S.-led coalition forces launch a ground invasion of Kuwait and Iraq.

On August 2, 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait, its tiny oil-rich neighbor, and within hours had occupied most strategic positions in the country. One week later, Operation Shield, the American defense of Saudi Arabia, began as U.S. forces massed in the Persian Gulf. Three months later, the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution authorizing the use of force against Iraq if it failed to withdraw from Kuwait by January 15, 1991.



At 4:30 p.m. EST on January 16, 1991, Operation Desert Storm, a massive U.S.-led offensive against Iraq, began as the first fighter aircraft were launched from Saudi Arabia and off U.S. and British aircraft carriers in the Persian Gulf. All evening, aircraft from the U.S.-led military coalition pounded targets in and around Baghdad as the world watched the events transpire in television footage transmitted live via satellite from Baghdad and elsewhere.

Operation Desert Storm was conducted by an international coalition under the command of U.S. General Norman Schwarzkopf and featured forces from 32 nations, including Britain, Egypt, France, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait. During the next six weeks, the allied force engaged in a massive air war against Iraq's military and civil infrastructure, encountering little effective resistance from the Iraqi air force. Iraqi ground forces were also helpless during this stage of the war, and Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein's only significant retaliatory measure was the launching of SCUD missile attacks against Israel and Saudi Arabia. Saddam hoped that the missile attacks would provoke Israel, and thus other Arab nations, to enter the conflict; however, at the request of the United States, Israel remained out of the war.

On 24 FEB, a massive coalition ground offensive began, and Iraq's outdated and poorly supplied armed forces were rapidly overwhelmed. By the end of the day, the Iraqi army had effectively folded, 10,000 of its troops were held as prisoners, and a U.S. air base had been established deep inside Iraq. After less than four days, Kuwait was liberated, and a majority of Iraq's armed forces had either been destroyed or had surrendered or retreated to Iraq. On 28 FEB, U.S. President George Bush declared a cease-fire, and Iraq pledged to honor future coalition and U.N. peace terms. One hundred and twenty-five American soldiers were killed in the Persian Gulf War, with another 21 regarded as missing in action.

- **Feb 24 2016 – Terrorism:** Suicide bombers attempted to drive explosive-packed cars into the world's largest oil processing facility in Saudi Arabia, but were foiled by guards who opened fire, detonating both vehicles; al-Qaida claimed responsibility

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- **Feb 25 1779 - American Revolution:** British Surrender Fort Sackville » The fort is surrendered, marking the beginning of the end of British domination in America's western frontier. Eighteen days earlier, George Rogers Clark departed Kaskaskia on the Mississippi River with a force of approximately 170 men, including Kentucky militia and French volunteers. The party traveled over 200 miles of land covered by deep and icy flood water until they reached Fort Sackville at Vincennes (Indiana) on February 23, 1779. After brutally killing five captive British-allied Indians within view of the fort, Clark secured the surrender of the British garrison under Lieutenant-Governor Henry Hamilton at 10 a.m. on 25 FEB.



Clark & Hamilton

Upon their arrival in Vincennes, French settlers, who had allied themselves with Hamilton when he took the fort in December, welcomed and provisioned Clark's forces. Inside Fort Sackville, Hamilton had only 40 British soldiers and an equal number of mixed French volunteers—French settlers fought on both sides of the American Revolution—and militia from Detroit. The French portion of Hamilton's force was reluctant to fight once they realized their compatriots had allied themselves with Clark.

Clark managed to make his 170 men seem more like 500 by unfurling flags suitable to a larger number of troops. The able woodsmen filling Clark's ranks were able to fire at a rapid rate that reinforced Hamilton's sense that he was surrounded by a substantial army. Meanwhile, Clark began tunneling under the fort with the intent of exploding the gunpowder stores within it. When an Indian raiding party attempted to return to the fort from the Ohio Valley, Clark's men killed or captured all of

them. The public tomahawk executions served upon five of the captives frightened the British as to their fate in Clark's hands. Their subsequent surrender revealed British weakness to the area's Indians, who realized they could no longer rely on the British to protect them from the Patriots.

- **Feb 25 1862 – Civil War: Legal Tender Act Passed** » The U.S. Congress passes the Legal Tender Act, authorizing the use of paper notes to pay the government's bills. This ended the long-standing policy of using only gold or silver in transactions, and it allowed the government to finance the enormously costly Civil War long after its gold and silver reserves were depleted.



Soon after the war began, the federal government began to run low on specie. Several proposals involving the use of bonds were suggested. Finally, Congress began printing money, which the Confederate government had been doing since the beginning of the war. The Legal Tender Act allowed the government to print \$150 million in paper money that was not backed by a similar amount of gold and silver. Many bankers and financial experts predicted doom for the economy, as they believed there would be little confidence in the scheme. There were also misgivings in Congress, as many legislators worried about a complete collapse of the nation's financial infrastructure.

The paper notes, called greenbacks, worked much better than expected. The government was able to pay its bills and, by increasing the money in circulation, the wheels of Northern commerce were greased. The greenbacks were legal tender, which meant that creditors had to accept them at face value. In 1862, Congress also passed an income tax and steep excise taxes, both of which cooled the inflationary pressures created by the greenbacks.

Another legal tender act passed in 1863, and by war's end nearly a half-billion dollars in greenbacks had been issued. The Legal Tender Act laid the foundation for the creation of a permanent currency in the decades after the Civil War.

- **Feb 25 1875 – Native Americans: Kiowa Indians Under Lone Wolf (Guipago) Surrender** » In 1873 Guipago's son and nephew were killed near Fort Clark by a troop of 4th Cavalry while coming back from Mexico with a raiding party which went after horses taken by a big horse-stealing of white thieves. Tau-ankia was the only son of Guipago and was considered a favored by his family. Guitan, a boy of 15 tried, to save Tau-ankia but both were killed. Long Horn Returned to hide the bodies secretly. News of the deaths reached the Kiowa camps January 13, 1874. The tribe mourned the loss of the two popular young men. Guitan was the son of Red Otter, and Guipago's favorite nephew. In May 1874

Guipago and his brother Aupia-goodle (Red Otter) went to rescue their sons' bodies, but a cavalry troop from Fort Concho forced them to abandon the corpses.

During 1873, Guipago became again feared throughout the Southern Plains; he joined Quanah Parker and his Comanche in their attack on Anglo buffalo hunters at Adobe Walls and fought the Army to a standstill at the Anadarko Agency on August 22, 1874. He fought the Texas Rangers at Lost Valley, and the U.S. Cavalry at Palo Duro Canyon. With the buffalo gone, he and his people surrendered in February 1875. Upon surrendering at Ft. Sill with his band, Guipago was among a group of 27 Kiowa singled out by Tene-angopte on order of the U.S. Army for incarceration at Fort Marion in St. Augustine, Florida, where he would remain until 1879.

He was found guilty of rebellion and sentenced to confinement in the dungeons of old Fort Marion at St. Augustine, Florida, and vulnerable to malaria and measles. Guipago contracted malaria during his imprisonment at Fort Marion and was sent home in 1879 to live out his days. He died in July 1879. Guipago's demise as the leading warrior in the words of ethnologist James Mooney, "is the end of the war history of the Kiowa." About the same time other Kiowa war leaders also died crippling the leadership at a crucial time in Kiowa history.

- **Feb 25 1916 – Russia:** *Molotov is born* » Vlacheslav Mikhaylovich Skryabin, foreign minister for the Soviet Union who took the revolutionary name Molotov, is born in Kurkaka, Russia.



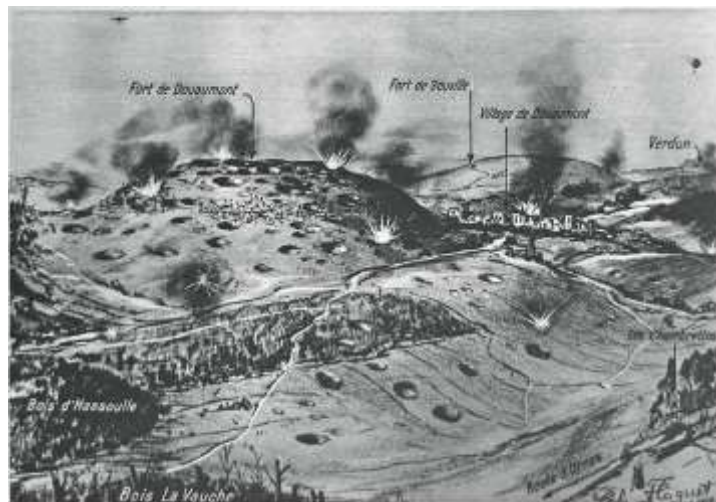
Molotov was an enthusiastic advocate of Marxist revolution in Russia from its earliest days. He was an organizer of the Bolshevik Party in 1906 and suffered arrest in 1909 and 1915 under the czarist government for his subversive political activities. In 1921, after the coup d'état that brought Vladimir Lenin to power and overthrew the old czarist regime, he became secretary of the revolutionary government's Central Committee. After Lenin's death in 1924, Molotov supported Joseph Stalin as Lenin's successor; when Stalin did assume power, Molotov was rewarded with full membership in the Soviet Politburo, the executive policy-making body.

In 1930, he was made chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, a position roughly the equivalent of prime minister. On the eve of World War II, Molotov was also made Soviet commissar of foreign affairs—that is, the foreign minister for the USSR. It was in this position that he negotiated the infamous Molotov-Ribbentrop Nonaggression Pact (August 1939) with Nazi Germany, in which the antifascist Soviet Union and anti-Marxist Germany agreed to respect each other's spheres of influence (an agreement that angered and stunned the world, and that only lasted a short time).

When Germany invaded the Soviet Union, Molotov became a member of the State Defense Committee, a war cabinet post, and negotiated alliances with the United States and Great Britain, arguing for a “second front” that would draw the Germans westward and away from the USSR. He won a reputation as a hard and relentless advocate for Soviet interests (nicknamed “Stone Ass” by Roosevelt), and did little to hide his contempt for the Western democracies—even as he desperately needed and relied upon them.

After the war, Molotov left the foreign ministry, but took it up once again upon the accession of Nikita Krushchev to power. Disagreements with Krushchev led to his dismissal from that post, and “anti-party”—really anti-Krushchev—involvement led to his being deposed from all government posts and denounced as a “henchman” of Stalin. He was then relegated to various low-profile jobs, including ambassador to Outer Mongolia. He retired from public life in 1962 and died in 1986. Though he held many notable posts in the Soviet government, many remember him for another reason—during the war, Molotov advocated the use of throwing bottles filled with flammable liquid and stuffed with a lit rag at the enemy, and the famous “Molotov cocktail” was born.

- **Feb 25 1916 – WWI Era:** *German Troops Capture Fort Douaumont (Verdun)* » Fort Douaumont, the most formidable of the forts guarding the walled city of Verdun, France, is seized by German troops four days after launching their initial attack. The Battle of Verdun will become the longest and bloodiest conflict of World War I, lasting 10 months and resulting in over 700,000 total casualties.



In February 1916, the walls of Verdun were defended by some 500,000 men stationed in two principal fortresses, Fort Douaumont and Fort Vaux. The Germans, commanded by Chief of Staff Erich von Falkenhayn, sent 1 million men against the city, hoping for a decisive victory on the Western Front that would push the Allies towards an armistice. The first shot was fired on the morning of 21 FEB. By the end of that first day, the Germans had captured only the front-line trenches, much less progress than they had hoped to make. They pushed on, however, and by 23 FEB had advanced two miles and captured 3,000 French soldiers with the help of a lethal new weapon, the flammenwerfer, or flamethrower. By 24 FEB, the Germans had overrun the second line of French trenches and taken another 10,000 prisoners, forcing the French defenders to within eight kilometers of the city itself. Forts Douaumont and Vaux, however, had managed to hold out.

Douaumont was a massive structure, protected by two layers of concrete over a meter thick, and surrounded by a seven-meter-deep moat and 30 meters of barbed wire. When it fell on 25 FEB to the German 24th Brandenburg Infantry Regiment with the Kaiser on hand to deliver his personal congratulations, German jubilation was matched only by the French army's shock and sadness.

From that point on, Verdun became a cause the French command could not abandon: public sentiment demanded the recapture of the symbolic stronghold. If the German army under Falkenhayn was committed to "bleed the French white," with little thought to minimizing its own losses, the French army, under Phillipe Petain, was equally determined that the enemy would not pass at Verdun.

The battle stretched on and on, with devastating casualties on both sides. As German resources were diverted to fight the British at the Battle of the Somme and the Russians on the Eastern Front, French forces gradually regained much of the ground they had lost. Fort Douaumont was recaptured on October 24, 1916; Fort Vaux on November 2. Barely six weeks later, on 18 DEC, German commander Paul von Hindenburg (who had replaced Falkenhayn in July) finally called a halt to the German attacks, ending the Battle of Verdun after 10 months and a total of over 200,000 lives lost.

- **Feb 25 1932 – Germany:** Austrian immigrant Adolf Hitler gets German citizenship.
- **Feb 25 1933 – U.S. Navy:** USS Ranger, the first U.S. Navy ship to be built solely as an aircraft carrier, is launched.
- **Feb 25 1939 – WW2:** 1st Anderson bomb shelter in Britain erected in an Islington garden.
- **Feb 25 1944 – WW2:** US 1st Army completes invasion plan.
- **Feb 25 1945 – WW2:** Turkey declares war on Germany.
- **Feb 25 1945 – WW2:** First firebombing raid against Tokyo Japan destroyed around 643 acres of the snow-covered city.



- **Feb 25 1948 – Cold War:** Communists Take Power in Czechoslovakia » Under pressure from the Czechoslovakian Communist Party, President Eduard Benes allows a communist-dominated government to be organized. Although the Soviet Union did not physically intervene (as it would in 1968), Western observers decried the virtually bloodless communist coup as an example of Soviet expansion into Eastern Europe.



The political scene in Czechoslovakia following World War II was complex, to say the least. Eduard Benes was head of the London-based Czech government-in-exile during the war, and returned to his native land in 1945 to take control of a new national government following the Soviet withdrawal in July of that year. National elections in 1946 resulted in significant representation for leftist and communist parties in the new constituent assembly. Benes formed a coalition with these parties in his administration.

Although Czechoslovakia was not formally within the Soviet orbit, American officials were concerned with the Soviet communist influence in the nation. They were particularly upset when Benes' government strongly opposed any plans for the political rehabilitation and possible rearmament of Germany (the U.S. was beginning to view a rearmed Germany as a good line of defense against Soviet incursions into Western Europe). In response, the United States terminated a large loan to Czechoslovakia. Moderate and conservative parties in Czechoslovakia were outraged, and declared that the U.S. action was driving their nation into the clutches of the communists. Indeed, the communists made huge electoral gains in the nation, particularly as the national economy spiraled out of control.

When moderate elements in the Czech government raised the possibility of the nation's participation in the U.S. Marshall Plan (a massive economic recovery program designed to help war torn European countries rebuild), the communists organized strikes and protests, and began clamping down on opposition parties. Benes tried desperately to hold his nation together, but by February 1948 the communists had forced the other coalition parties out of the government. On 25 FEB, Benes gave in to communist demands and handed his cabinet over to the party. Rigged elections were held in May to validate the communist victory. Benes then resigned and his former foreign minister Jan Masaryk died under very suspicious circumstances. Czechoslovakia became a single-party state.

The response from the West was quick but hardly decisive. Both the United and Great Britain denounced the communist seizure of power in Czechoslovakia, but neither took any direct action. Perhaps having put too much faith in Czechoslovakia's democratic traditions, or possibly fearful of a Soviet reaction, neither nation offered anything beyond verbal support to the Benes government. The Communist Party, with support and aid from the Soviet Union, dominated Czechoslovakian politics until the so-called "Velvet Revolution" of 1989 brought a non-communist government to power.

- **Feb 25 1968 - Vietnam War:** 135 unarmed citizens of Hà My village in South Vietnam's Qu'ng Nam Province are killed and buried en masse by South Korean troops in what would come to be known as the Hà My massacre.

- **Feb 25 1969 – Terrorism:** West Germany gives \$5 million to an Arab terrorist as ransom for the passengers and crew of a hijacked jumbo jet.
- **Feb 25 1969 – Space Travel:** Mariner 6 launched for fly-by of Mars.
- **Feb 25 1971 – Vietnam War:** *Congress Moves To Block Widening Of The War* » In both houses of Congress, legislation is initiated to forbid U.S. military support of any South Vietnamese invasion of North Vietnam without congressional approval. This legislation was a result of the controversy that arose after the invasion of Laos by South Vietnamese forces in Operation Lam Son 719. On 8 FEB South Vietnamese forces had launched a major cross-border operation into Laos to interdict the Ho Chi Minh Trail and destroy the North Vietnamese supply dumps in the area.



Senator J. William Fulbright

Although the only direct U.S. support permitted was long-range cross-border artillery fire from firebases in South Vietnam, fixed-wing air strikes, and 2,600 helicopters to airlift Saigon troops and supplies, President Richard Nixon's critics condemned the invasion. Foreign Relations Committee chairman Senator J. William Fulbright (D-Arkansas) declared the Laotian invasion illegal under the terms of the repeal of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which allowed the president only the mandate to end the war.

- **Feb 25 1972 – Vietnam War:** *U.S. Troops Fight Biggest Battle In Nearly A Year* » U.S. troops clash with North Vietnamese forces in a major battle 42 miles east of Saigon, the biggest single U.S. engagement with an enemy force in nearly a year. The five-hour action around a communist bunker line resulted in four dead and 47 wounded, almost half the U.S. weekly casualties.
- **Feb 25 1972 – Cold War:** US performs nuclear test at Nevada Test Site.
- **Feb 25 1986 – U.S.*Philippines:** *Marcos Flees the Philippines* » In the face of mass demonstrations against his rule, Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos and his entourage are airlifted from the presidential palace in Manila by U.S. helicopters.



Elected in 1966, Marcos declared martial law in 1972 in response to leftist violence. In the next year, he assumed dictatorial powers. Backed by the United States, his regime was marked by misuse of foreign support, repression, and political murders. In 1986, Marcos defrauded the electorate in a presidential election, declaring himself the victor over Corazon Aquino, the wife of an assassinated rival. Aquino also declared herself the rightful winner, and the public rallied behind her. Deserted by his former supporters, Marcos and his wife, Imelda, fled to Hawaii in exile, where they faced investigation on embezzlement charges. He died in 1989.

- **Feb 25 1986 – Iran*Iraq War:** Iran conquers Iraqi Fao peninsula
- **Feb 25 1991 – Gulf War:** An Iraqi scud missile hits an American military barracks in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia killing 28 U.S. Army Reservists from Pennsylvania.

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- **Feb 26 1784 – American Revolution:** In a letter to his daughter, Benjamin Franklin expressed unhappiness over the choice of the eagle as the symbol of America, and stated his own preference: the turkey
- **Feb 26 1862– Civil War:** *In Camp with Elisha Hunt Rhodes* » Union soldier Elisha Hunt Rhodes visits Washington, D.C. during a typical week in winter quarters. Although combat was the main job of a soldier, most men serving in the Civil War spent very few days each year in actual combat. Rhodes kept a diary during his four years in the Union Army, and his notes reveal the monotony of the winter months for the Army of the Potomac. A member of the 2nd Rhode Island, Rhodes fought in every campaign from First Bull Run to Appomattox, and rose from private to colonel in four years.



The winter months were usually quiet for the soldiers. The wet, cold weather made movement difficult, and there were few major battles fought during this time. Days were spent drilling, and Rhodes wrote that other days were spent sleeping and smoking. Many troops gambled among themselves, and others drank or visited the prostitutes that plied their trade near the camps. Picket duty could be a welcome respite to the boredom, and Rhodes' unit built a road during one winter encampment. On another winter occasion, he wrote: "One day is much like another at headquarters."

Rhodes spent most of his winter months in or near Washington, and the capital city provided many more diversions than those available to soldiers in more remote locations. On February 26, 1862, Rhodes went to hear Senator Henry Wilson from Massachusetts speak on expelling disloyal members

of Congress. After listening to the speech, Rhodes and his friend Isaac Cooper attended a fair at a Methodist church and met two young women, who the soldiers escorted home.

Like other soldiers, Rhodes welcomed the departure from winter quarters and an end to the monotony. “Our turn has come,” he wrote when his unit began moving south to Richmond, Virginia in 1864.

- **Feb 26 1916 – WWI:** *Germans Sink French Transport Ship* » The ship was taken over by the French government to become the French Navy's Provence II, an armed merchant cruiser that was converted to a troopship in order to support the Gallipoli Campaign and Macedonian campaign in World War I. It was transporting troops from France to Salonika when she was sunk by the German U-boat U-35 commanded by Lothar von Arnauld de la Perière south of Cape Matapan. The ship listed so quickly that many of the lifeboats could not be used. There were 742 survivors. Nearly 1,000 people were killed in the sinking.
- **Feb 26 1935 – Germany:** *Hitler Organizes Luftwaffe* » Nazi leader Adolf Hitler signs a secret decree authorizing the founding of the Reich Luftwaffe as a third German military service to join the Reich army and navy. In the same decree, Hitler appointed Hermann Goering, a German air hero from World War I and high-ranking Nazi, as commander in chief of the new German air force.

The Versailles Treaty that ended World War I prohibited military aviation in Germany, but a German civilian airline—Lufthansa—was founded in 1926 and provided flight training for the men who would later become Luftwaffe pilots. After coming to power in 1933, Nazi leader Adolf Hitler began to secretly develop a state-of-the-art military air force and appointed Goering as German air minister. (During World War I, Goering commanded the celebrated air squadron in which the great German ace Manfred von Richthofen—“The Red Baron”—served.) In February 1935, Hitler formally organized the Luftwaffe as a major step in his program of German rearmament.



The Luftwaffe was to be uncamouflaged step-by-step so as not to alarm foreign governments, and the size and composition of Luftwaffe units were to remain secret as before. However, in March 1935, Britain announced it was strengthening its Royal Air Force (RAF), and Hitler, not to be outdone, revealed his Luftwaffe, which was rapidly growing into a formidable air force.

As German rearmament moved forward at an alarming rate, Britain and France protested but failed to keep up with German war production. The German air fleet grew dramatically, and the new German fighter—the Me-109—was far more sophisticated than its counterparts in Britain, France, or Russia. The Me-109 was bloodied during the Spanish Civil War; Luftwaffe pilots received combat training as they tried out new aerial attack formations on Spanish towns such as Guernica, which suffered more than 1,000 killed during a brutal bombing by the Luftwaffe in April 1937.

The Luftwaffe was configured to serve as a crucial part of the German blitzkrieg, or “lightning war”—the deadly military strategy developed by General Heinz Guderian. As German panzer divisions burst deep into enemy territory, lethal Luftwaffe dive-bombers would decimate the enemy’s supply and communication lines and cause panic. By the outbreak of World War II in September 1939, the Luftwaffe had an operational force of 1,000 fighters and 1,050 bombers.

First Poland and then Denmark, Norway, Holland, Belgium, and France fell to the blitzkrieg. After the surrender of France, Germany turned the Luftwaffe against Britain, hoping to destroy the RAF in preparation for a proposed German landing. However, in the epic air battle known as the Battle of Britain, the outnumbered RAF fliers successfully resisted the Luftwaffe, relying on radar technology, their new, highly maneuverable Spitfire aircraft, bravery, and luck. For every British plane shot down, two German warplanes were destroyed. In the face of British resistance, Hitler changed strategy in the Battle of Britain, abandoning his invasion plans and attempting to bomb London into submission. However, in this campaign, the Luftwaffe was hampered by its lack of strategic, long-range bombers, and in early 1941 the Battle of Britain ended in failure.

Britain had handed the Luftwaffe its first defeat. Later that year, Hitler ordered an invasion of the USSR, which after initial triumphs turned into an unqualified disaster. As Hitler stubbornly fought to overcome Russia’s bitter resistance, the depleted Luftwaffe steadily lost air superiority over Europe in the face of increasing British and American air attacks. By the time of the D-Day invasion of Normandy in June 1944, the Luftwaffe air fleet was a skeleton of its former self.

- **Feb 26 1936 – Japan:** *February 26th Incident* » This was an attempted coup d’état in the Empire of Japan organized by a group of young Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) officers with the goal of purging the government and military leadership of their factional rivals and ideological opponents. Although the rebels succeeded in assassinating several leading officials (including two former prime ministers) and in occupying the government center of Tokyo, they failed to assassinate Prime Minister Keisuke Okada or secure control of the Imperial Palace. Their supporters in the army made attempts to capitalize on their actions, but divisions within the military, combined with Imperial anger at the coup, meant they were unable to achieve a change of government. Facing overwhelming opposition as the army moved against them, the rebels surrendered on 29 FEB.



1st Lt. Yoshitada Niu and his company on February 26, 1936

Unlike earlier examples of political violence by young officers, the coup attempt had severe consequences. After a series of closed trials, 19 of the uprising’s leaders were executed for mutiny and another 40 imprisoned. The radical Kōdō-ha faction lost its influence within the army, the period of

"government by assassination" came to a close, and the military increased its control over the civilian government

- **Feb 26 1943 – WW2:** U.S. Flying Fortresses and Liberators pound German docks and U-boat lairs at Wilhelmshaven.
- **Feb 26 1945 – WW2:** U.S. Troops Recapture Corregidor » In May 1942, Corregidor, a small rock island at the mouth of Manila Bay, remained one of the last Allied strongholds in the Philippines after the Japanese victory at Bataan. Constant artillery shelling and aerial bombardment attacks ate away at the American and Filipino defenders. Although still managing to sink many Japanese barges as they approached the northern shores of the island, the Allied troops could not hold the invader off any longer. Gen. Jonathan Wainwright, commander of the U.S. armed forces in the Philippines, offered to surrender Corregidor to Japanese Gen. Masaharu Homma, but Homma wanted the complete, unconditional capitulation of all American forces throughout the Philippines. Wainwright had little choice given the odds against him and the poor physical condition of his troops—he had already lost 800 men. He surrendered at midnight. All 11,500 surviving Allied troops were evacuated to a prison stockade in Manila.

But the Americans returned to the Philippines in full strength in October 1944, beginning with the recapture of Leyte, the Philippines' central island. One week into the Allied battle for Luzon, U.S. airborne troops parachuted onto Corregidor to take out the Japanese garrison there, which was believed to be 1,000 strong, but was actually closer to 5,000. Fierce fighting resulted in the deaths of most of the Japanese soldiers, with the survivors left huddling in the Malinta Tunnel for safety. Ironically, the tunnel, 1,400 feet long and dug deep in the heart of Corregidor, had served as MacArthur's headquarters and a U.S. supply depot before the American defeat there. MacArthur feared the Japanese soldiers could sit there for months. The garrison had no such intention, though, and ignited a nearby ammunition dump—an act of defiance, and possibly of mass suicide.

Most of the Japanese were killed in the explosion, along with 52 Americans. Those Japanese who survived the blast were forced out into the open and decimated by the Americans. Corregidor was officially in American hands by early March. It took 67 days to subdue Leyte, with the loss of more than 55,000 Japanese soldiers during the two months of battle, and approximately another 25,000 mopping up pockets of resistance in early 1945. The U.S. forces lost about 3,500.

- **Feb 26 1952 – Cold War:** Winston Churchill Announces Britain Has Its Own Atomic Bomb » It is conveniently forgotten by contemporary British and American politicians, in public at least, that the Quebec Pact to share nuclear technology which facilitated the building of the atom bomb at Los Alamos was subsequently torn up by the American allies. Britain had provided 50 or more scientists to the Manhattan Project, including the man who later led their own A-Bomb development, Dr William Penney, but the McMahon Act passed by Congress in 1946 disregarded the previous accord, forcing Clement Attlee to institute an independent nuclear weapons program in Britain.

On this date Winston Churchill announced to Parliament and the world that Britain had its own bomb, though the first actual testing of the device only took place in October of that year (on islands off the Northwest coast of Australia). It was still a period of enormous political instability after the ending of WWII, with Stalin's USSR having in effect annexed Eastern Europe, and no guarantee that

further territorial gains were excluded. What effect the British bomb actually had on our history – and what might have happened without it - is far from clear. But whatever the morality of nuclear weapons, it is easy to understand the perceived need for them by British governments both Labour and Conservative in that era.

- **Feb 26 1965 – Vietnam War:** *First South Korean Troops Arrive* » The first contingent of South Korean troops arrives in Saigon. Although assigned to non-combat duties, they came under fire on April 3. The South Korean contingent was part of the Free World Military Forces, an effort by President Lyndon B. Johnson to enlist allies for the United States and South Vietnam. By securing support from other nations, Johnson hoped to build an international consensus behind his policies in Vietnam. The effort was also known as the “many flags” program. By the close of 1969, there were over 47,800 Korean soldiers actively involved in combat operations in South Vietnam. Seoul began to withdraw its troops in February 1972.
- **Feb 26 1966 – Vietnam War:** The ROK Capital Division of the South Korean Army massacres 380 unarmed civilians in South Vietnam.
- **Feb 26 1968 – Vietnam War:** *Mass Graves Discovered in Hue* » Allied troops who had recaptured the imperial capital of Hue from the North Vietnamese during the Tet Offensive discover the first mass graves in Hue.

It was discovered that communist troops who had held the city for 25 days had massacred about 2,800 civilians whom they had identified as sympathizers with the government in Saigon. One authority estimated that communists might have killed as many as 5,700 people in Hue.



The Tet Offensive had begun at dawn on the first day of the Tet holiday truce (January 30), when Viet Cong forces, supported by large numbers of North Vietnamese troops, launched the largest and best coordinated offensive of the war. During the attack, they drove into the center of South Vietnam's seven largest cities and attacked 30 provincial capitals ranging from the Delta to the DMZ. Among the cities taken during the first four days of the offensive were Hue, Dalat, Kontum, and Quang Tri; in the north, all five provincial capitals were overrun. At the same time, enemy forces shelled numerous allied airfields and bases. By 10 FEB, the offensive was largely crushed, but resulted in heavy casualties on both sides.

- **Feb 26 1984 – U.S.*Lebanon:** *Last U.S. Marines Leave Beirut* » The last U.S. Marines sent to Lebanon as part of a multinational peacekeeping force leave Beirut, the war-torn Lebanese capital

where some 250 of the original 800 Marines lost their lives during the problem-plagued 18-month mission.

In 1975, a bloody civil war erupted in Lebanon, with Palestinian and leftist Muslim guerrillas battling militias of the Christian Phalange Party, the Maronite Christian community, and other groups. During the next few years, Syrian, Israeli, and United Nations interventions failed to resolve the factional fighting, and on August 20, 1982, a multinational force including 800 U.S. Marines was ordered to Beirut to help coordinate the Palestinian withdrawal.

The Marines left Lebanese territory on September 10 but returned in strengthened numbers on September 29, following the massacre of Palestinian refugees by a Christian militia. The next day, the first U.S. Marine to die during the mission was killed while defusing a bomb. Other Marines fell prey to snipers. On April 18, 1983, a suicide bomber driving a van devastated the U.S. embassy in Beirut, killing 63 people, including 17 Americans. Then, on October 23, a Lebanese terrorist drove a truck packed with explosives into the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut, killing 241 U.S. military personnel. That same morning, 58 French soldiers were killed in their barracks two miles away in a separate suicide terrorist attack. The identities of the embassy and barracks bombers were not determined, but they were suspected to be Shiite terrorists associated with Iran.

After the barracks bombing, many questioned whether President Ronald Reagan had a solid policy aim in Lebanon. Serious questions also arose over the quality of security in the American sector of war-torn Beirut. The U.S. peacekeeping force occupied an exposed area near the airport, but for political reasons the Marine commander had not been allowed to maintain a completely secure perimeter before the barracks attack. In a national address on the night of October 23, President Reagan vowed to keep the Marines in Lebanon, but just four months later he announced the end of the American role in the peacekeeping force. On February 26, 1984, the main force of Marines left Lebanon, leaving just a small contingent to guard the U.S. embassy in Beirut.

- **Feb 26 1990 – Cold War:** *Sandinistas Are Defeated in Nicaraguan Elections* » A year after agreeing to free elections, Nicaragua's leftist Sandinista government loses at the polls. The elections brought an end to more than a decade of U.S. efforts to unseat the Sandinista government.



Ortega & Chamorro

The Sandinistas came to power when they overthrew long-time dictator Anastasio Somoza in 1979. From the outset, U.S. officials opposed the new regime, claiming that it was Marxist in its orientation. In the face of this opposition, the Sandinistas turned to the communist bloc for economic and military

assistance. In 1981, President Ronald Reagan gave his approval for covert U.S. support of the so-called Contras—anti-Sandinista rebels based mostly in Honduras and Costa Rica. This support continued for most of the Reagan administration, until disapproval from the American public and reports of Contra abuses pushed Congress to cut off funding.

In 1989, Nicaraguan president Daniel Ortega met with the presidents of El Salvador, Costa Rica, Honduras, and Guatemala to hammer out a peace plan for his nation. In exchange for promises from the other nations to close down Contra bases within their borders, Ortega agreed to free elections within a year. These were held on February 26, 1990. Ortega and the Sandinistas suffered a stunning defeat when Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, widow of a newspaper editor assassinated during the Somoza years, polled over 55 percent of the presidential vote. The opposition also captured the National Assembly.

Chamorro's election was a repudiation of over 10 years of Sandinista rule that had been characterized by a destructive war with the Contras and a failing economic system. The United States saw Chamorro's victory as validation of its long-time support of the Contras, and many analysts likened the electoral defeat of the Sandinistas to the crumbling of communist regimes in Eastern Europe during the same period. Critics of the U.S. policy toward Nicaragua retorted that negotiations among the Central American presidents had brought free elections to Nicaragua—which nearly 10 years of American support of armed conflict had been unable to accomplish.

In the wake of the election, the administration of President George Bush immediately announced an end to the U.S. embargo against Nicaragua and pledged new economic assistance. Though rumors flew that the Sandinista-controlled army and security forces would not accept Chamorro, she was inaugurated without incident. The Sandinistas, however, continued to play a role in Nicaraguan politics and still actively campaign for, and occasionally win, political office.

- **Feb 26 1991 – Gulf War:** On Baghdad Radio Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein announces the withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait. Coalition planes bomb retreating Iraqi forces killing hundreds and creating the so-called 'Highway of Death'
- **Feb 26 1991 – Gulf War:** *Battle of Al Busayyah* » A pre-dawn tank battle between armored forces of the United States Army and those of the Iraqi Army. The battle is named after the Iraqi town of Al Busayyah, which sat at a critical crossroads and was an Iraqi Army stronghold. The town consisted of forty to fifty buildings, most located along one main north-south road. It was defended by a battalion-sized Iraqi infantry unit reinforced by T-55 tanks, armored personnel carriers, and elements of an Iraqi commando battalion. The town was heavily fortified with machine gun nests and fighting positions. Twelve Iraqi tanks and twelve other armored vehicles were dug-in deeply at strategic positions in, and around, the town. Trenchlines stretched fifteen hundred meters south of town, radiating out to perimeter strong points. Many Iraqi soldiers surrendered almost immediately as Task Force (TF) 2-70 forces approached and rapidly overtook the position.
- **Feb 26 1993 – Terrorism:** *1st World Trade Center Bombing* » At 12:18 p.m., a terrorist bomb explodes in a parking garage of the World Trade Center in New York City, leaving a crater 60 feet wide and causing the collapse of several steel-reinforced concrete floors in the vicinity of the blast. Although the terrorist bomb failed to critically damage the main structure of the skyscrapers, six people were killed and more than 1,000 were injured in what was the deadliest act of terrorism perpetrated on US

soil at the time. The World Trade Center itself suffered more than \$500 million in damage. After the attack, authorities evacuated 50,000 people from the buildings, hundreds of whom were suffering from smoke inhalation. The evacuation lasted the whole afternoon.



City authorities and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) undertook a massive manhunt for suspects, and within days several radical Islamic fundamentalists were arrested. In March 1994, Mohammed Salameh, Ahmad Ajaj, Nidal Ayyad, and Mahmoud Abouhalima were convicted by a federal jury for their role in the bombing, and each was sentenced to life in prison. Salameh, a Palestinian, was arrested when he went to retrieve the \$400 deposit he had left for the Ryder rental van used in the attack. Ajaj and Ayyad, who both played a role in the construction of the bomb, were arrested soon after. Abouhalima, who helped buy and mix the explosives, fled to Saudi Arabia but was caught in Egypt two weeks later.

The mastermind of the attack—Ramzi Ahmed Yousef—remained at large until February 1995, when he was arrested in Pakistan. He had previously been in the Philippines, and in a computer he left there were found terrorist plans that included a plot to kill Pope John Paul II and a plan to bomb 15 American airliners in 48 hours. On the flight back to the United States, Yousef reportedly admitted to a Secret Service agent that he had directed the Trade Center attack from the beginning and even claimed to have set the fuse that exploded the 1,200-pound bomb. His only regret, the agent quoted Yousef saying, was that the 110-story tower did not collapse into its twin as planned—a catastrophe that would have caused thousands of deaths.

Eyad Ismoil, who drove the Ryder van into the parking garage below the World Trade Center, was captured in Jordan that year and taken back to New York. All the men implicated had ties to Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman, a radical Egyptian religious leader who operated out of Jersey City, New Jersey, located just across the Hudson River from Manhattan. In 1995, Rahman and 10 followers were convicted of conspiring to blow up the United Nations headquarters and other New York landmarks. Prosecutors argued that the World Trade Center attack was part of that conspiracy, though little clear evidence of this charge was presented.

In November 1997, Yousef and Ismoil were convicted in a courtroom only a few blocks away from the twin towers and subsequently sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole. Only one other man believed to be directly involved in the attack, Iraqi Abdul Rahman Yasin, remains at large.

After the 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, U.S. investigators began to suspect that Yousef had ties to Saudi exile Osama bin Laden, the head of the anti-U.S. al Qaeda terrorist network. Whether bin Laden was in fact involved in the 1993 twin tower attacks has not been determined, but on September 11, 2001, two groups of al Qaeda terrorists finished the job begun by Yousef, crashing two hijacked airliners into the north and south tower of the World Trade Center. The structural steel of the skyscrapers could not withstand the tremendous heat generated by the burning jet fuel, and both collapsed within two hours of being struck. Close to 3,000 people died in the World

Trade Center and its vicinity, including a staggering 343 firefighters and 23 policemen who were struggling to complete the evacuation and save the office workers trapped on higher floors. Only six people in the World Trade Center towers at the time of their collapse survived. Almost 10,000 other people were treated for injuries, many severe.



- **Feb 27 1776 – American Revolution:** Commander Richard Caswell leads 1,000 Patriot troops in the successful Battle of Moores Creek in North Carolina over 1,600 British Loyalists militia. It would go down in history as the first American victory in the first organized campaign of the Revolutionary War. Casualties and losses: Patriots 2 – Loyalists 3- to 50 KIA or wounded, 850 captured.
- **Feb 27 1782 – American Revolution:** The House of Commons of Great Britain votes against further war in America.
- **Feb 27 1836 – Texas Revolution:** *Battle of San Patricio* » Fought between Mexican troops and Texians, rebellious settlers in the Mexican province of Texas. The battle marked the start of the Goliad Campaign, the Mexican offensive to retake the Texas Gulf Coast. By the end of 1835, all Mexican troops had been driven from Texas. Frank W. Johnson, the commander of the volunteer army in Texas, gathered volunteers for a planned invasion of the Mexican port town of Matamoros. After spending several weeks gathering horses, in late February Johnson and about 40 men led the herd to San Patricio. He assigned some of his troops to a ranch outside town to guard the horses. Unbeknownst to the Texians, on 18 FEB Mexican General José de Urrea had led a large contingent of troops from Matamoros into Texas. Urrea's men easily followed the trail left by the horses, and surprised the sleeping Texians in San Patricio. After a fifteen-minute battle, all but six Texians had been killed or imprisoned.
- **Feb 27 1864 – Civil War:** *Federal Prisoners Begin Arriving at Andersonville* » The first Union inmates begin arriving at Andersonville prison, which was still under construction in southern Georgia. Andersonville became synonymous with death as nearly a quarter of its inmates died in captivity. Henry Wirz, who ran Andersonville, was executed after the war for the brutality and mistreatment committed under his command.

The prison, officially called Camp Sumter, became necessary after the prisoner exchange system between North and South collapsed in 1863 over disagreements about the handling of black soldiers. The stockade at Andersonville was hastily constructed using slave labor, and was located in the Georgia woods near a railroad but safely away from the front lines. Enclosing 16 acres of land, the prison was supposed to include wooden barracks but the inflated price of lumber delayed construction, and the Yankee soldiers imprisoned there lived under open skies, protected only by makeshift shanties called “shebangs,” constructed from scraps of wood and blankets. A stream initially provided fresh water, but within a few months human waste had contaminated the creek.



At one time, Andersonville held 33,000 Union prisoners.

Andersonville was built to hold 10,000 men, but within six months more than three times that number were incarcerated there. The creek banks eroded to create a swamp, which occupied a significant portion of the compound. Rations were inadequate, and at times half of the population was reported ill. Some guards brutalized the inmates and there was violence between factions of prisoners.

Andersonville was the worst among many terrible Civil War prisons, both Union and Confederate. Wirz paid the price for the inhumanity of Andersonville; he was executed in the aftermath of the Civil War.

- **Feb 27 1864 – Civil War: *First Battle of Dalton, GA Ends*** » This was a series of American Civil War skirmishes that took place between February 22 and February 27. At the suggestion of Union Major General Ulysses S. Grant, Major General George H. Thomas, decided to probe General Joseph E. Johnston's strength to determine if the loss of two full divisions to reinforce Confederate forces elsewhere had made the Confederate Army of Tennessee vulnerable to Union attack. On 22 FEB Thomas began the reconnaissance movement, which consisted of three columns of Union troops. After several days of intense skirmishing, Thomas's army retreated, since it was obvious that Johnston was still capable of repelling a major Union assault. Thomas's force had lost 300 officers and men killed or wounded, against 140 men for the Confederates.
- **Feb 27 1897 – U.S.*Great Britain: *Britain Recognizes U.S. Authority Over Western Hemisphere*** » Great Britain agrees to U.S. arbitration in a border dispute between Venezuela and British Guiana, defusing a dangerous U.S.-British diplomatic crisis.

In 1841, gold was discovered in eastern British Guiana, intensifying a long-standing boundary dispute between Britain and Venezuela. In 1887, Venezuela accused Britain of pushing settlements farther into the contested area and cut diplomatic ties with Great Britain. In 1895, Britain refused to submit the quarrel to U.S. arbitration, which provoked a belligerent reaction from U.S. President Grover Cleveland's administration.



British Guiana | Guyana Then and Now

In July 1895, Secretary of State Richard Olney, invoking a new and broader interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine, demanded U.S. arbitration on the basis that any quarrel in the Western Hemisphere directly affected American interests and thus the United States had a right to intercede. The Marquis of Salisbury, the British prime minister, rebuffed Olney, prompting President Cleveland to appeal to the U.S. Congress in December 1895 to denounce British authority over the disputed zone. Congress, in support of the president, created a committee to settle the boundary, and there was talk of war in both the Capitol and the British Parliament.

Britain, however, was suffering from European troubles and increasing difficulties in South Africa, and on February 27, 1897, Prime Minister Salisbury sent a conciliatory note to the United States recognizing Cleveland's broad interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine and agreeing to U.S. arbitration. A U.S. commission was appointed, and in 1899 a border was decided on that largely upheld Britain's original claims.

- **Feb 27 1917 – WWI:** After completing their conquest of Serbia and Montenegro, the Austro-Hungarian army turns its attentions toward Albania, occupying the coastal city of Durazzo on the Adriatic Sea.
- **Feb 27 1933 – Germany:** *The Reichstag Fire* » An arson attack is made on the Reichstag building, home of the German parliament in Berlin, precisely four weeks after Adolf Hitler was sworn in as Chancellor of Germany. Hitler's government stated that Marinus van der Lubbe, a Dutch council communist, was the culprit, and they attributed the fire to communist agitators in general—though a German court decided later that year that Van der Lubbe had acted alone, as he claimed. After the fire, the Reichstag Fire Decree was passed. The Nazi Party used the fire as a pretext to claim that communists were plotting against the German government, and the event is considered pivotal in the establishment of Nazi Germany. The term "Reichstag fire" has come to refer to false flag actions facilitated by an

authority to promote their own interests through popular approval of retribution or retraction of civil rights.



The fire (left), fireman surveying the damage (center,) and Adolf Hitler declaring war against the United States at the modified Kroll Opera House Reichstag, 11 December 1941 (right)

The first report of the fire came shortly after 21:00, when a Berlin fire station received an alarm call. By the time that police and firefighters arrived, the main Chamber of Deputies was engulfed in flames. The police conducted a thorough search inside the building and accused Van der Lubbe. He was arrested, as were four communist leaders soon after. Hitler urged President Paul von Hindenburg to pass an emergency decree to suspend civil liberties and pursue a "ruthless confrontation" with the Communist Party of Germany. After passing the decree, the government instituted mass arrests of communists, including all of the Communist Party parliamentary delegates. With their bitter rival communists gone and their seats empty, the Nazi Party went from being a plurality party to the majority, thus enabling Hitler to consolidate his power.

In February 1933, Bulgarians Georgi Dimitrov, Vasil Tanev, and Blagoy Popov were arrested, and they played pivotal roles during the Leipzig Trial, known also as the "Reichstag Fire Trial". They were known to the Prussian police as senior Comintern operatives, but the police had no idea how senior they were; Dimitrov was head of all Comintern operations in Western Europe. The responsibility for the Reichstag fire remains a topic of debate and research. The Nazis accused the Comintern of the act. However, some historians believe, based on archive evidence, that the arson was planned and ordered by the Nazis as a false flag operation.

The actual Reichstag building was unusable after the Reichstag fire, so the Kroll Opera House was modified into a legislative chamber and served as the location of all parliamentary sessions during the Third Reich. It was chosen both for its convenient location facing the Reichstag building and for its seating capacity. The Kroll Opera House was devastated by Allied bombing on November 12, 1943. It was then essentially destroyed in the Battle of Berlin in 1945.

The Reichstag building remained in its fire-damaged state until it was partially repaired from 1961 to 1964, then completely restored from 1995 to 1999. In 2008, Germany posthumously pardoned Van der Lubbe under a law introduced in 1998 to lift unjust verdicts dating from the Nazi era.

- **Feb 27 1942 – WW2:** 1st transport of French Jews to Nazi-Germany
- **Feb 27 1942 – WW2:** *Battle of the Java Sea* » An allied strike force is defeated by a Japanese task force in the Java Sea in the Dutch East Indies. 13 US warships sunk and 2 Japanese.

The Japanese amphibious forces gathered to strike at Java, and on 27 FEB the main Allied naval force sailed northeast from Surabaya to intercept a convoy of the Eastern Invasion Force approaching from the Makassar Strait. The Eastern Strike Force, as it was known, consisted of two heavy cruisers, three light cruisers, and nine destroyers. The Japanese task force protecting the convoy consisted of two heavy and two light cruisers and 14 destroyers including the 4th Destroyer Squadron. The Japanese heavy cruisers were much more powerful, armed with ten 8-inch (203 mm) guns each, and superb torpedoes. By comparison, HMS Exeter was armed only with six 8-inch guns and only six of USS Houston's nine 8-inch guns remained operable after her aft turret had been knocked out in an earlier air attack.

The Allied force engaged the Japanese in the Java Sea, and the battle raged intermittently from mid-afternoon to midnight as the Allies tried to reach and attack the troop transports of the Java invasion fleet, but they were repulsed by superior firepower. The Allies had local air superiority during the daylight hours, because Japanese air power could not reach the fleet in the bad weather. The weather also hindered communications, making cooperation between the many Allied parties involved—in reconnaissance, air cover and fleet headquarters—even worse than it already was. The Japanese also jammed the radio frequencies. HMS Exeter was the only ship in the battle equipped with radar, an emerging technology at the time.

The battle consisted of a series of attempts over a seven-hour period by the allied Combined Striking Force to reach and attack the invasion convoy; each was rebuffed by the Japanese escort force with heavy losses being inflicted on the Allies. The fleets sighted each other at about 16:00 on 27 February and closed to firing range, opening fire at 16:16. Both sides exhibited poor gunnery and torpedo skills during this phase of the battle. Despite her recent refit (with the addition of modern Type 284 gunnery control radar), HMS Exeter's shells did not come close to the Japanese ships, while USS Houston only managed to achieve a straddle on one of the opposing cruisers. The only notable result of the initial gunnery exchange was HMS Exeter being critically damaged by a hit in the boiler room from an 8-inch shell. The ship then limped away to Surabaya.

The Japanese launched two huge torpedo salvos, consisting of 92 torpedoes in all, but scored only one hit, on destroyer HNLMS Kortenaer. She was struck by a Long Lance, broke in two and sank rapidly after the hit. Destroyer HMS Electra—covering Exeter—engaged in a duel with Japanese light cruiser Jintsū and destroyer Asagumo, scoring several hits but suffering severe damage to her superstructure. After a serious fire started on Electra and her remaining turret ran out of ammunition, abandon ship was ordered. On the Japanese side, only Asagumo was forced to retire because of damage.

The Allied fleet broke off and turned away around 18:00, covered by a smoke screen laid by the four destroyers of U.S Destroyer Division 58. They also launched a torpedo attack but at too long a range to be effective. They then turned south toward the Java coast, then west and north as night fell in an attempt to evade the Japanese escort group and fall on the convoy. It was at this point the ships of DesDiv 58—their torpedoes expended—left on their own initiative to return to Surabaya. Shortly after, at 21:25, HMS Jupiter ran onto a mine and was sunk, while about 20 minutes later, the fleet passed where Kortenaer had sunk earlier, and HMS Encounter was detached to pick up survivors.

The Allied command, now reduced to four cruisers, again encountered the Japanese escort group at 23:00; both columns exchanged fire in the darkness at long range, until HNLMS De Ruyter and Java were sunk by one devastating torpedo salvo. The Strike force Commander and most of his crew went

down with De Ruyter; only 111 were saved from both ships. Only the light and heavy cruisers HMAS Perth and USS Houston remained; low on fuel and ammunition, and following last instructions, the two ships retired, arriving at Tanjung Priok on 28 FEB. Although the Allied fleet did not reach the invasion fleet, the battle did give the defenders of Java a one-day respite.

- **Feb 27 1942 – WW2: U.S. Aircraft Carrier Langley Is Sunk** » The U.S. Navy's first aircraft carrier, the Langley (CV-1), is sunk by Japanese warplanes (with a little help from U.S. destroyers), and all of its 32 aircraft are lost.



The Langley was launched in 1912 as the naval collier (coal transport ship) Jupiter. After World War I, the Jupiter was converted into the Navy's first aircraft carrier and rechristened the Langley, after aviation pioneer Samuel Pierpoint Langley. It was also the Navy's first electrically propelled ship, capable of speeds of 15 knots. On October 17, 1922, Lt. Virgil C. Griffin piloted the first plane, a VE-7-SF, launched from the Langley's decks. Although planes had taken off from ships before, it was nevertheless a historic moment. After 1937, the Langley lost the forward 40 percent of her flight deck as part of a conversion to seaplane tender, a mobile base for squadrons of patrol bombers.

On December 8, 1941, the Langley was part of the Asiatic Fleet in the Philippines when the Japanese attacked. She immediately set sail for Australia, arriving on New Year's Day, 1942. On 22 FEB, commanded by Robert P. McConnell, the Langley, carrying 32 Warhawk fighters, left as part of a convoy to aid the Allies in their battle against the Japanese in the Dutch East Indies.

On 27 FEB, the Langley parted company from the convoy and headed straight for the port at Tjilatjap, Java. About 74 miles south of Java, the carrier met up with two U.S. escort destroyers when nine Japanese twin-engine bombers attacked. Although the Langley had requested a fighter escort from Java for cover, none could be spared. The first two Japanese bomber runs missed their target, as they were flying too high, but the Langley's luck ran out the third time around and it was hit three times, setting the planes on her flight deck aflame. The carrier began to list. Commander McConnell lost his ability to navigate the ship. McConnell ordered the Langley abandoned, and the escort destroyers were able to take his crew to safety. Of the 300 crewmen, only 16 were lost. The destroyers then sank the Langley before the Japanese were able to capture it.

- **Feb 27 1944 – WW2: USS Grayback (SS-208) missing.** Most likely succumbed to damage inflicted by land-based Japanese naval aircraft suffered the day before in the East China Sea. 80 killed.
- **Feb 27 1962 – Vietnam War: Diem Survives Coup Attempt** » South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem survives another coup attempt when Republic of Vietnam Air Force pilots Lieutenants Pham Phu Quoc and Nguyen Van Cu try to kill him and his brother Ngo Dinh Nhu by bombing and strafing the presidential palace.

Lieutenant Quoc was arrested after his fighter-bomber crash-landed near Saigon. Lieutenant Cu fled to Cambodia, where he remained until November 1963. The attack confirmed Diem's conviction that his main adversaries were domestic. As a result, he retreated deeper into himself, delegating more authority to his brother Nhu, who set about eradicating dissidents—dozens of Diem political opponents disappeared, and thousands more were sent to prison camps. Diem and his brother were killed during a coup in November 1963.

- **Feb 27 1965 – Vietnam War:** *United States Assails North Vietnamese "Aggression"* » The U.S. State Department releases a 14,000-word report entitled "Aggression from the North—The Record of North Vietnam's Campaign to Conquer South Vietnam." Citing "massive evidence," including testimony of North Vietnamese soldiers who had defected or been captured in South Vietnam, the document claimed that nearly 20,000 Viet Cong military and technical personnel had entered South Vietnam through the "infiltration pipeline" from the North. The report maintained that the infiltrators remained under military command from Hanoi. The Johnson administration was making the case that the war in Vietnam was not an internal insurgency, but rather an invasion of South Vietnam by North Vietnamese forces. This approach was a calculated ploy by President Lyndon Johnson, who realized that he would have a hard time convincing the American public that the United States should get involved in a civil war—acting to stop the spread of communism by invading North Vietnamese would provide a much better justification for increased U.S. involvement in the conflict.
- **Feb 27 1968 – Vietnam War:** *Cronkite's Vietnam Commentary* » CBS news anchor Walter Cronkite delivers a scathing editorial that changed America's perception of the Vietnam War:

"Tonight, back in more familiar surroundings in New York, we'd like to sum up our findings in Vietnam, an analysis that must be speculative, personal, subjective. Who won and who lost in the great Tet Offensive against the cities? I'm not sure. The Vietcong did not win by a knockout but neither did we.

Then, with as much restraint as I could, I turned to our own leaders whose idea of negotiation seemed frozen in memories of General McArthur's encounter with the Japanese aboard the Battleship Missouri. We've been too often disappointed by the optimism of the American leaders... Both in Vietnam and Washington to have faith any longer in the silver linings they find in the darkest clouds. For it seems now more certain than ever, that the bloody experience of Vietnam is to end in a stalemate.

To say that we are closer to victory today is to believe in the face of the evidence, the optimists who have been wrong in the past. To say that we are mired in stalemate seems the only realistic, if unsatisfactory conclusion. On the off chance that military and political analysts are right, in the next few months we must test the enemy's intentions, in case this is indeed his last big gasp before negotiations. But it is increasingly clear to this reporter that the only rational way out then will be to negotiate, not as victors, but as an honorable people who lived up to their pledge to defend democracy, and did the best they could.

This is Walter Cronkite. Good night."

- **Feb 27 1969 – Vietnam War:** *Communist Offensive Continues* » Communist forces shell 30 military installations and nine towns in South Vietnam, in what becomes known as the “Post-Tet Offensive.” U.S. sources in Saigon put American losses in this latest offensive at between 250 and 300, compared with enemy casualties totaling 5,300. South Vietnamese officials report 200 civilians killed and 12,700 made homeless.
- **Feb 27 1972 – Cold War:** *“Shanghai Communique” Issued* » As the concluding act of President Richard Nixon’s historic visit to communist China, the president and Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai issue a joint statement summarizing their agreements (and disagreements) of the past week. The “Shanghai Communique” set into motion the slow process of the normalization of relations between the two former Cold War enemies.



President Nixon arrived in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) on 21 FEB, the first time an American president had ever set foot in China. The visit was immensely significant for other reasons, as well. Following communist leader Mao Zedong’s successful 1949 revolution, the United States had refused to establish diplomatic ties with the PRC. Relations between the two nations were extremely chilly, and the U.S. and PRC troops had clashed during the Korean War from 1950 to 1953.

During the 1950s and 1960s, China was one of the main suppliers of aid to Ho Chi Minh’s communist regime in North Vietnam. Nixon had been one of the harshest critics of the PRC during this time. When the United States came to the assistance of South Vietnam, and eventually committed combat troops to quell the communist insurgency in that nation in 1965, relations between the U.S. and China became even more strained.

The situation had changed dramatically by the early-1970s. Relations between the PRC and the Soviet Union had grown tense and angry. The United States was embroiled in an unpopular and fruitless battle in Vietnam. Nixon and his foreign policy advisors saw a unique opportunity in these circumstances. Establishing closer relations with the PRC might further divide the two great communist powers and make the Soviets more malleable concerning several issues—including their support of North Vietnam. And the PRC might conceivably put pressure on its North Vietnamese ally to agree to a peace settlement in Vietnam in order to curry more favor with the United States.

The Shanghai Communique summarized the areas of agreement and disagreement between the United States and the PRC at the end of Nixon’s visit. In one section of the document, their differences concerning events in Asia were apparent. The PRC restated its support for North Vietnam, while the United States steadfastly supported South Vietnam. On Korea, the Chinese stressed the need for “unification,” while the United States pressed for a “relaxation” of diplomatic tensions between North and South Korea.

However, the two nations also stressed their sense of unity on a number of general themes, including the need for peaceful coexistence between the East and West. Much of the statement concerned the

Nationalist Chinese government on Taiwan. This was a point of tremendous importance, for the PRC declared that it would not begin diplomatic relations with the United States until the latter cut its diplomatic ties to Taiwan. In the statement, Nixon promised to slowly reduce the American military presence on Taiwan. Finally, the statement noted that both China and the U.S. would encourage greater contact through increased trade and travel by each nation's citizens.

The Shanghai Communique set the stage for a dramatic reversal in the U.S. policy toward China. Since 1949, the United States had recognized the Nationalist regime on Taiwan as the government of China. It had consistently refused efforts to have the PRC government represented in the United Nations. After 1972, relations between the United States and the PRC began to warm. By the end of the administration of Jimmy Carter (1977-1981), the United States had—in one of the most surprising twists of the Cold War—severed diplomatic relations with Taiwan and formally extended diplomatic recognition of the PRC.

- **Feb 27 1989 – Post WW2: German War Criminals Freed** » The German war criminals Ferdinand aus der Funten and Franz Fischer were released from prison in the Netherlands and deported to Germany after spending 39 years in prison. Two other war criminals, Willy Lages and Joseph Johann Kotalla were also imprisoned with them but Lages was released in 1966 after suffering a serious illness, while Kotalla died in prison.

Funten was an SS captain and head of the Central Office for Jewish Emigration in Amsterdam during the Second World War, making him responsible for the deportation of Jews from the Netherlands to concentration camps. Among those deported were sick and insane Jews from Amsterdam and Apeldoorn. For Jews who had married non-Jews, he threatened them with deportation in order to force their sterilization. Shortly after his release from prison, he died on 19 APR.

Franz Fischer was involved in the deportation of Jews and detection of Jewish people. His specialty was the U-Boat spiel in which victims were kept in a bathtub and spent prolonged amounts of time underwater, to extract confessions. Due to his fanatical pursuit of Jews, he obtained the nickname Jude Fischer, or Jews Fisherman. After his release from prison, Fischer also died in the same year, on 19 SEP.

- **Feb 27 1991 – Native Americans: AIM Occupation Of Wounded Knee Begins** » On the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, some 200 Sioux Native Americans, led by members of the American Indian Movement (AIM), occupy Wounded Knee, the site of the infamous 1890 massacre of 300 Sioux by the U.S. Seventh Cavalry. The AIM members, some of them armed, took 11 residents of the historic Oglala Sioux settlement hostage as local authorities and federal agents descended on the reservation.

AIM was founded in 1968 by Russell Means, Dennis Banks, and other Native leaders as a militant political and civil rights organization. From November 1969 to June 1971, AIM members occupied Alcatraz Island off San Francisco, saying they had the right to it under a treaty provision granting them unused federal land. In November 1972, AIM members briefly occupied the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Washington, D.C., to protest programs controlling reservation development. Then, in early 1973, AIM prepared for its dramatic occupation of Wounded Knee. In addition to its historical significance, Wounded Knee was one of the poorest communities in the United States and shared with the other Pine Ridge settlements some of the country's lowest rates of life expectancy.

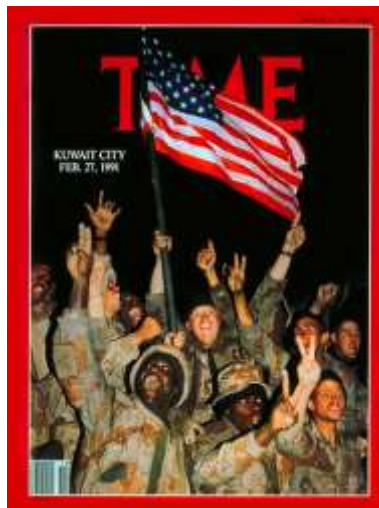
The day after the Wounded Knee occupation began, AIM members traded gunfire with the federal marshals surrounding the settlement and fired on automobiles and low-flying planes that dared come within rifle range. Russell Means began negotiations for the release of the hostages, demanding that the U.S. Senate launch an investigation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and all Sioux reservations in South Dakota, and that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee hold hearings on the scores of Indian treaties broken by the U.S. government.

The Wounded Knee occupation lasted for a total of 71 days, during which time two Sioux men were shot to death by federal agents and several more were wounded. On 8 MAY, the AIM leaders and their supporters surrendered after officials promised to investigate their complaints. Russell Means and Dennis Banks were arrested, but on September 16, 1973, the charges against them were dismissed by a federal judge because of the U.S. government's unlawful handling of witnesses and evidence.

Violence continued on the Pine Ridge Reservation throughout the rest of the 1970s, with several more AIM members and supporters losing their lives in confrontations with the U.S. government. In 1975, two FBI agents and a Native man were killed in a shoot-out between federal agents and AIM members and local residents. In the trial that followed, AIM member Leonard Peltier was found guilty of first-degree murder and sentenced to two consecutive life terms. With many of its leaders in prison, AIM disbanded in 1978. Local AIM groups continued to function, however, and in 1981 one group occupied part of the Black Hills in South Dakota.

Congress took no steps to honor broken Indian treaties, but in the courts some tribes won major settlements from federal and state governments in cases involving tribal land claims. Russell Means continued to advocate for Native rights at Pine Ridge and elsewhere and in 1988 was a presidential candidate for the Libertarian Party. In 2001, Means attempted to run for the governorship of New Mexico, but his candidacy was disallowed because procedure had not been followed. Beginning in 1992, Means appeared in several films, including *Last of the Mohicans*. He also had a guest spot on HBO's *Curb Your Enthusiasm*. His autobiography, *Where White Men Fear to Tread*, was published in 1997. Means died on October 12, 2012, at age 72.

- **Feb 27 1991 – Gulf War:** U.S. President George H. W. Bush announces that "Kuwait is liberated".



- **Feb 27 2004 – Terrorism: SuperFerry 14 Bombing** » In the Philippines' deadliest terrorist attack the ferry SuperFerry 14 is sunk. Eventually, 63 bodies would be recovered while another 53 would remain missing, presumed dead, six children less than five years old, and nine children between six and 16 years of age were among the dead or missing, including six students on a championship team sent by schools in northern Mindanao to compete in a journalism contest.

It was believed that the Abu Sayyaf Group bombed Superferry 14 because the company that owned it, WG&A, did not comply with a letter demanding \$1 million in protection money. Ruben Omar Pestano Lavilla, Jr., a listed terrorist of U.S. State Department, and founder of Philippine terror group Rajah Sulaiman Movement, was arrested in Bahrain on July 24, 2008. Anti-Terrorism Council Chairman Eduardo Ermita announced Lavilla, the alleged mastermind of the bombing, was deported from Bahrain to the Philippines on 30 AUG. Included in the sanctioned list of the United Nations Security Council, the RSM leader is also implicated in the February 14, 2005 bombings at Glorietta shopping complex in Makari, and has pending murder case before the Makati City Regional Trial Court for the bombings.

- **Feb 27 2019 – U.S.*North Korea: Hanoi Summit (27-28 FEB)** » A two-day summit meeting between North Korean Chairman Kim Jong-un and U.S. President Donald Trump, is held at the Metropole Hotel in Hanoi, Vietnam. This was the second meeting between the leaders of the DPRK and the United States, following their first meeting in Singapore the previous year. On 28 FEB the White House announced that the summit was cut short and that no agreement was reached. Trump later clarified that it was due to North Korea's request to end to all sanctions.

During the press conference after the summit, Trump discussed American student Otto Warmbier, who was imprisoned for 17 months by North Korea for conviction of subversion, and who died shortly after being returned comatose to the U.S. Trump said he believed Kim's word that Kim did not personally know about Warmbier's alleged poor treatment when Warmbier was in North Korean custody. Trump also stated that it was not to Kim's benefit to allow Warmbier to be treated poorly.

Hours later, in a rare move, North Korean officials called a news conference. North Korean foreign minister Ri Yong-ho offered a different account of his country's position compared to Trump;

- That North Korea had proposed only a partial lifting of sanctions. Five out of a total of key 11 United Nations sanctions, Ri stated that North Korea wanted 5 sanctions originally imposed in 2016 and 2017 lifted. In exchange, Ri said that North Korea offered to "permanently and completely" dismantle its primary nuclear facility in Yongbyon, and that American experts would be allowed to observe.
- Ri also quoted North Korea as proposing to put in writing that the country would end all nuclear tests and long-range missile tests. Ri continued that the North Koreans saw that no agreement could be made after the United States demanded one further measure in addition to destroying the Yongbyon nuclear facility.
- Lastly, Ri concluded that North Korea's proposal would not be changed. According to NK News, Vice Foreign Minister Choe Son-hui made the proposal to dismantle Yongbyon just before the talks collapsed, but the U.S. team walked out when Choe was unable to give details.

One month after the summit ended, Reuters reported that on the second day of the summit Trump passed Kim a note that bluntly called for North Korea to surrender all its nuclear weapons and fuel, in

similar fashion to the “Libya model,” a proposal the North Koreans had repeatedly rejected. The scheduled ceremonial luncheon was then abruptly canceled and the summit ended.

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- **Feb 28 1844 – U.S. Navy:** *Tyler Narrowly Escapes Death On The USS Princeton* » President John Tyler cruises the Potomac with 400 others aboard the U.S. Navy’s new steam frigate USS Princeton, not realizing that his life will soon be in danger. In attendance that day were political dignitaries and their guests, which included the wealthy New Yorker David Gardiner and his two daughters. The 54-year-old Tyler, a recent widower, had fallen for Gardiner’s youngest, the lovely 20-year-old Julia, to whom he had proposed marriage. She had not yet responded.



The Princeton carried a brand new 12-inch, 27,000-pound cannon called the Peacemaker. The gun’s co-designer, John Ericsson, argued with the ship’s captain, who wanted to demonstrate the new weapon, over whether it was safe to discharge because he feared it had not been sufficiently tested. Days before the cruise, Captain Robert Stockton had boasted about the Navy’s new ship and armament, which he had helped design, to congressmen and reporters. He and the crew were eager to show off the cannon’s ferocity, and despite Ericsson’s warnings, Stockton insisted on firing the cannon during the Potomac cruise. The first two successful and ear-splitting volleys sent the crowd into wild applause.

Halfway through the cruise, President Tyler, below deck, proposed a toast to the three great guns: the Princeton, her Commander and the Peacemaker. Then the secretary of war asked for a third firing toward Mount Vernon in honor of George Washington. Stockton may have recalled Ericsson’s concerns or thought it best not to push their luck with the new cannon, because he initially refused the secretary’s request. In the end, though, he bowed to his superior’s wishes and gave the order to fire.

The third round proved deadly. In the worst peacetime disaster of its time, the cannon exploded, killing several aboard, including Julia’s father and two members of Tyler’s cabinet. Tyler was halfway up the ladder to the upper deck when the explosion occurred. Julia Gardiner fainted when she heard of her father’s death and, after the ship docked, Tyler whisked her off to safety in his arms. Julia’s admiration for Tyler deepened into love and they were married later that year.

- **Feb 28 1847 – Mexican American War:** In the battle of Sacramento River American forces numbering less than 1,000 men defeated a superior Mexican army of over 4,000 troops and 16 guns which led to the occupation of Chihuahua.
- **Feb 28 1861 – Civil War:** *Confederate Army Established* » The Provisional Confederate Congress established a provisional volunteer army and gave control over military operations and authority for

mustering state forces and volunteers to the newly chosen Confederate president, Jefferson Davis. Davis was a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy, and colonel of a volunteer regiment during the Mexican–American War. He had also been a United States Senator from Mississippi and U.S. Secretary of War under President Franklin Pierce. On 1 MAR, on behalf of the Confederate government, Davis assumed control of the military situation at Charleston, South Carolina, where South Carolina state militia besieged Fort Sumter in Charleston harbor, held by a small U.S. Army garrison. By March 1861, the Provisional Confederate Congress expanded the provisional forces and established a more permanent Confederate States Army.

An accurate count of the total number of individuals who served in the Confederate Army is not possible due to incomplete and destroyed Confederate records; estimates of the number of individual Confederate soldiers are between 750,000 and 1,000,000 men. This does not include an unknown number of slaves who were pressed into performing various tasks for the army, such as construction of fortifications and defenses or driving wagons. Since these figures include estimates of the total number of individual soldiers who served at any time during the war, they do not represent the size of the army at any given date. These numbers do not include men who served in Confederate States Navy.

Although most of the soldiers who fought in the American Civil War were volunteers, both sides by 1862 resorted to conscription, primarily as a means to force men to register and to volunteer. In the absence of exact records, estimates of the percentage of Confederate soldiers who were draftees are about double the 6 percent of United States soldiers who were conscripts. Confederate casualty figures also are incomplete and unreliable. The best estimates of the number of deaths of Confederate soldiers are about 94,000 killed or mortally wounded in battle, 164,000 deaths from disease and between 26,000 and 31,000 deaths in United States prison camps. One estimate of the Confederate wounded, which is considered incomplete, is 194,026. These numbers do not include men who died from other causes such as accidents, which would add several thousand to the death toll.

- **Feb 28 1863 – Civil War:** The Confederate ship Nashville was destroyed by the Union ironclad vessel USS Montauk on the Ogeechee River in Georgia near Fort McAllister.
- **Feb 28 1864 – Civil War:** *Kilpatrick-Dahlgren Raid Begins* » A major Union cavalry raid begins when General Hugh Judson Kilpatrick leads 3,500 troopers south from Stevensburg, Virginia. Aimed at Richmond, the raid sought to free Federal prisoners and spread word of President Abraham Lincoln's Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction in hopes of convincing Confederates to lay down their arms.



Kilpatrick, Dahlgren, Sedgwick, and Custer

The president's proclamation of December 1863 offered a pardon and restoration of property (except slaves, who were freed by the Emancipation Proclamation) to all Confederates. Kilpatrick took with him Colonel Ulrich Dahlgren to conduct the prisoner release while Kilpatrick covered him with the main force. To distract attention, Union infantry under General John Sedgwick and another cavalry detachment under General George Custer would feign an attack towards western Virginia.

The forces split after crossing the Rappahannock River. Kilpatrick began tearing up the Virginia Central Railroad while Dahlgren approached Richmond from the west. They were to rendezvous on the outskirts of the city. Kilpatrick arrived there on March 1 with Confederate General Wade Hampton's cavalry in hot pursuit. Dahlgren was delayed when a guide led him to a deep section of the James River. Finding no possibility to cross, Dahlgren hanged the guide on the spot. Kilpatrick had to leave for the North before Dahlgren's arrival, so Dahlgren and his men were cut off. The colonel and about 100 of his men were ambushed as they tried to rejoin Kilpatrick. Dahlgren was killed, and his body fell into Confederate hands. He was allegedly carrying papers that included instructions to burn Richmond and kill Confederate President Jefferson Davis and his cabinet. The papers were published in the Richmond Daily Examiner, but it is not clear where the orders had come from or if they were even authentic. Some historians have suggested that they were forged by the Confederates to stir morale in Virginia.

Kilpatrick suffered about 335 men killed, captured, or wounded. The raid accomplished little for the Union and the Confederate victory lifted Southern morale.

- **Feb 28 1893 – U.S. Navy:** The USS Indiana (BB-1), the lead ship of her class and the first battleship in the United States Navy comparable to foreign battleships of the time, is launched. Authorized in 1890 and commissioned five years later, she was a small battleship, though with heavy armor and ordnance. The ship also pioneered the use of an intermediate battery. She was designed for coastal defense and as a result, her decks were not safe from high waves on the open ocean.



- **Feb 28 1915 – WWI:** After the French try to drive the Germans forces back into the Champagne region, they gain a few hundred yards - at the cost of 50,000 casualties
- **Feb 28 1916 – WWI:** Beginning of the battle of Verdun, in France, which lasted ten months.
- **Feb 28 1916 – WWI:** German Cameroons Surrenders to Allied forces » Allied forces complete their conquest of the Cameroons, a German protectorate on the coast of western Africa.

Drawn by the rich trade of slaves, ivory and rubber established in the 17th century, German and British settlers began to explore inland Africa beginning around 1860. In 1884, Germany established a protectorate over the Douala region; Britain did not dispute the claim. By the early 20th century,

Germany had built roads, begun the construction of a railroad and cultivated large plantations of cacao, palm and rubber in the region. They had also built a city, Douala, on the Atlantic coast, which by 1914 served as the principal port and wireless station in the Cameroons.

The British launched their campaign in the German Cameroons in late summer 1914, just after the outbreak of World War I; it would last 18 months. The British failed to anticipate the German strategy: knowing the formidable strength of the British navy, the Germans decided not to concentrate on defending the coast, but instead to withdraw inland and use the rough interior of the continent to fortify their resistance. Thus, although British forces earned quick successes—they secured Douala by September 27, 1914, without firing a shot—they were not able to fully take control of the Cameroons until the following February.



The West African Frontier Force, fully committed in the Cameroons until March 1916, was one of two sets of “local” troops that the British turned to in Africa; the other was the South African Defense Force, which concentrated on the campaign in German Southwest Africa (now Namibia). African soldiers in World War I were generally compelled to enlist or were mercenaries. Some served on both sides during the war.

In 1919, during the Versailles peace conference, Britain was given a mandate over one-fifth of the former German Cameroons; the rest was assigned to France. A mandate was a commission granted by the newly created League of Nations allowing member states of the League to establish their own governments in former German territories. Both the British and French Cameroons were made trust territories of the United Nations after World War II. The French Cameroons gained their independence in 1960 as the Republic of Cameroon. The following year, after a U.N. plebiscite was conducted in the British Cameroons, the southern half of the territory joined the Republic of Cameroon, while the Northern Cameroons became part of Nigeria.

- **Feb 28 1942 – WWII:** The heavy cruiser USS Houston (CA-30) is sunk in the Battle of Sunda Strait with 693 crew members killed, along with HMAS Perth (D29) which lost 375 men.



USS Houston off San Diego, California, October 1935 & HMAS Perth in 1940

- **Feb 28 1944 – WW2:** Test Pilot Pitches Suicide Squad to Hitler » Hanna Reitsch, the first female test pilot in the world, suggests the creation of the Nazi equivalent of a kamikaze squad of suicide bombers while visiting Adolf Hitler in Berchtesgaden. Hitler was less than enthusiastic about the idea.

Reitsch was born in 1912 in Hirschberg, Germany. She left medical school (she had wanted to be a missionary doctor) to take up flying full time, and became an expert glider pilot—gliders were motorless planes that the Germans developed to evade strict rules about building “war planes” after WWI. In addition to gaining experience with gliders, Reitsch also did stunt flying for the movies. In 1934, she broke the world’s altitude record for women (9,184 feet). An ardent Nazi and admirer of Hitler, she was made an honorary flight captain by the Fuhrer, the first woman to receive such an honor. In 1937, the Luftwaffe, the German air force, put her to work as a test pilot. Reitsch embraced this opportunity to fly as part of what she called Germany’s “guardians of the portals of peace.” Among her signal achievements was the testing of a proto-helicopter in 1939.



Hanna Reitsch in 1940s (left) and being awarded the Iron Cross 2nd Class

Reitsch came closer than any other woman to seeing actual combat during World War II, depositing German troops along the Maginot Line in France during the Germans’ 1940 invasion by glider plane. She won an Iron Cross, Second Class, for risking her life trying to cut British barrage-balloon cables (the balloons were unmanned blimps, tethered in one place, from which steel cables dangled so as to foul the wings and propellers of enemy aircraft). Among the warplanes she tested was the Messerschmitt 163, a rocket-power interceptor that she flew 500 mph. While testing the ME 163 a fifth time, she spun out of control and crash-landed (even though she was injured during the crash, she nevertheless managed to write down exactly what happened before she passed out from her injuries). For this, Hitler awarded her an Iron Cross, First Class.

It was while receiving this second Iron Cross from Hitler in Berchtesgaden in 1944 that she pitched the idea of a Luftwaffe suicide squad of pilots who would fly specially designed versions of the V-1.

Hitler was initially put off by the idea, only because he did not think it an effective or efficient use of resources. But Reitsch's commitment persuaded him to investigate the prospect of designing such planes, at which point she put together a Suicide Group and was the first to take the following pledge: "I hereby...voluntarily apply to be enrolled in the suicide group as a pilot of a human glider-bomb. I fully understand that employment in this capacity will entail my own death." The squad was never deployed.

Reitsch was one of the last people to see Hitler alive. On April 26, 1945, she flew to Berlin with Gen. Ritter von Greim, who was to be given command of the Luftwaffe. Greim was wounded when Reitsch's plane was hit by Soviet antiaircraft fire. After saying farewell to the Fuhrer, tucked away in his bunker, she flew Greim back out of Berlin. After the war, Reitsch was captured and interned by the U.S. Army. She testified to the "disintegration" of Hitler's personality that she claimed to have witnessed during the last days of the war. When released, Reitsch continued to set records, including becoming the first woman to fly a glider over the Alps. In 1951, she published her autobiography, *Flying Is My Life*, and from 1962 to 1966 she was director of the national school of gliding in Ghana. She died in 1979, only one year after setting a new women's glider distance record. In her career, she set more than 40 world records for flying powered and motorless planes.

- **Feb 28 1945 – WW2:** U.S. tanks break the natural defense line west of the Rhine and cross the Erft River.
- **Feb 28 1968 – Vietnam War:** *Gen. Wheeler Says Westmoreland Will Need More Troops* » Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Earle Wheeler returns from his recent round of talks with Gen. William Westmoreland in Saigon and immediately delivers a written report to President Lyndon B. Johnson.



Wheeler stated that despite the heavy casualties incurred during the Tet Offensive, North Vietnam and Viet Cong forces had the initiative and were "operating with relative freedom in the countryside." The communists had pushed South Vietnamese forces back into a "defensive posture around towns and cities," seriously undermined the pacification program in many areas, and forced General Westmoreland to place half of his battalions in the still imperiled northernmost provinces, thus "stripping the rest of the country of adequate reserves" and depriving the U.S. command of "an offensive capability." To meet the new enemy threat and regain the initiative, according to Wheeler, Westmoreland would need more men: "The add-on requested totals 206,756 spaces for a new proposed ceiling of 731,756."

It was a major turning point in the war. To deny the request was to concede that the United States could impose no military solution in the conflict, but to meet it would require a call-up of reserves and vastly increased expenditures. Rather than making an immediate decision, President Johnson asked Defense Secretary Clark Clifford to conduct a thorough, high-level review of U.S. policy in Vietnam.

A disgruntled staff member in the Johnson White House leaked the Wheeler-Westmoreland proposal for additional troops. The story broke in the New York Times on March 10, 1968. With the images of the besieged U.S. Embassy in Saigon during the Tet Offensive still fresh in their minds, the press and the public immediately concluded that the extra troops must be needed because the U.S. and South Vietnamese had suffered a massive defeat.

Secretary of State Dean Rusk was subjected to 11 hours of hearings before a hostile Congress on March 11 and 12. A week later, 139 members of the House voted for a resolution that called for a complete review of Johnson's Vietnam policy. Discontent in Congress mirrored the general sentiment in the country. In March, a poll revealed that 78 percent of Americans expressed disapproval with Johnson's handling of the war.

On 22 MAR, President Johnson scaled down Westmoreland's request and authorized 13,500 reinforcements. Shortly after, Johnson announced that Westmoreland would be brought home to be Army Chief of Staff. He was to be replaced by Gen. Creighton Abrams.

- **Feb 28 1987 – Cold War:** *Gorbachev Calls for Nuclear Weapons Treaty* » In a surprising announcement, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev indicates that his nation is ready to sign “without delay” a treaty designed to eliminate U.S. and Soviet medium-range nuclear missiles from Europe. Gorbachev's offer led to a breakthrough in negotiations and, eventually, to the signing of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty in December 1987.



Gorbachev and President Ronald Reagan had been wrestling with the issue of nuclear arms reduction in Europe since 1985, when they first met face-to-face to discuss the matter. A subsequent meeting in 1986 started with high hopes for an agreement, but the discussions broke down when Gorbachev linked the issue of the elimination of U.S. and Soviet INF in Europe to U.S. termination of its development of the Strategic Defense Initiative (the so-called “Star Wars” anti-missile defense system). However, both Reagan and Gorbachev faced pressures to reach a settlement. Reagan was under assault by “no-nuke” forces both in the United States and in Western Europe. By late 1986 and early 1987, he was also faced with the fallout from the Iran-Contra scandal, when his administration had become involved in illegal arms dealings with both Iran and the Contra forces in Central America. Gorbachev wanted to achieve

a cut in nuclear armaments, both to bolster his prestige on the world stage and to provide some much-needed relief for a Soviet economy sagging under the burden of massive military expenditures.

In February 1987, Gorbachev announced that the Soviet Union was willing to proceed with negotiations on the INF Treaty. This time, he suggested that “the problem of medium-range missiles in Europe be singled out from the package of issues and that a separate agreement on it be concluded, and without delay.” In other words, he was dropping his insistence on including SDI in the negotiations. The timing of Gorbachev’s offer was interesting to many observers in the United States. Some suggested that it was not coincidental that his statement was released just days after a high-level presidential review board had issued a stinging report critical of the Reagan administration’s involvement in the Iran-Contra scandal. Perhaps, they concluded, Gorbachev felt that Reagan would be anxious for a settlement. The two men met in December 1987 and signed the INF Treaty, by which the Soviets eliminated about 1,500 medium-range missiles from Europe and the United States removed nearly half that number.

- **Feb 28 1991 – Gulf Wars:** The first Gulf War ends after Iraq accepts a ceasefire following their retreat from Kuwait.
- **Feb 28 1994 – Kosovo War:** *First NATO Military Action* » In the first military action in the 45-year history of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), U.S. fighter planes shoot down four Serbian warplanes engaged in a bombing mission in violation of Bosnia’s no-fly zone.

The United States, 10 European countries, and Canada founded NATO in 1949 as a safeguard against Soviet aggression. With the end of the Cold War, NATO members approved the use of its military forces for peacekeeping missions in countries outside the alliance and in 1994 agreed to enforce U.N. resolutions enacted to bring about an end to the bloody conflict in the former Yugoslavia. In 1994 and 1995, NATO planes enforced the no-fly zone over Bosnia-Herzegovina and struck at Bosnian Serb military positions and airfields on a number of occasions.

On December 20, 1995, NATO began the mass deployment of 60,000 troops to enforce the Dayton peace accords, signed in Paris by the leaders of the former Yugoslavia on 14 DEC. The NATO troops took over from a U.N. peacekeeping force that had failed to end the fighting since its deployment in early 1992, although the U.N. troops had proved crucial in the distribution of humanitarian aid to the impoverished population of Bosnia. The NATO force, with its U.S. support and focused aim of enforcing the Dayton agreement, proved more successful in maintaining the peace in the war-torn region.

- **Feb 28 1998 – Kosovo War:** Serbian police begin the offensive against the Kosovo Liberation Army in Kosovo.
- **Feb 28 1998 – U.S. Air Force:** The Air Force flew the RQ-4 Global Hawk, the first unmanned aerial vehicle certified to fly on its own flight plans and fly regularly in civilian air space. The UAV provides a broad overview and systematic surveillance using high-resolution synthetic aperture radar (SAR) and long-range electro-optical/infrared (EO/IR) sensors with long loiter times over target areas. It can survey as much as 40,000 square miles of terrain a day.



- **Feb 28 2007 – Terrorism:** A federal judge in Miami ruled that suspected al-Qaida operative Jose Padilla was competent to stand trial on terrorism support charges, rejecting arguments that he was severely damaged by 3 1/2 years of interrogation and isolation in a military brig.

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- **Feb 29 1704 – Queen Anne's War: *Raid on Deerfield Massachusetts*** » French and Native American forces under the command of Jean-Baptiste Hertel de Rouville attacked the English frontier settlement at Deerfield, Massachusetts, just before dawn. They burned part of the town and killed 47 villagers. The raiders left with 112 settlers as captives, whom they took overland the nearly 300 miles to Montreal. Some died along the way, and 60 were later redeemed (ransomed by family and community). Others were adopted by Mohawk families and became assimilated into the tribe. In this period, the English and their Indian allies were involved in similar raids against French villages along the northern area between the spheres of influence.

Typical of the small-scale frontier conflict in Queen Anne's War, the French-led raid relied on a coalition of French soldiers and a variety of about 300 Indian warriors, mostly Abenaki but including a number of Pocumtuc who had once lived in the Deerfield area. Given the diversity of personnel, motivations, and material objectives, the raiders did not achieve full surprise when they entered the palisaded village. The defenders of some fortified houses in the village successfully held off the raiders until arriving reinforcements prompted their retreat. However, the raid was a clear victory for the French coalition that aimed to take captives and unsettle English colonial frontier society. More than 100 captives were taken, and about 40 percent of the village houses were destroyed.

Although predicted because of existing tensions during the war, the raid shocked New England colonists. Conflict increased with the French and their Native American allies. Frontier settlements took actions to fortify their towns and prepare for war. The raid has been immortalized as a part of the early American frontier story, principally due to the published account by a prominent captive, the Rev. John Williams. He and much of his family were taken on the long overland journey to Canada. His young daughter Eunice was adopted by a Mohawk family; she became assimilated and married a Mohawk man. Williams' account, *The Redeemed Captive*, was published in 1707 and was widely popular in the colonies. With the signing of the Peace of Utrecht in 1714, peace returned to the frontier. Thirty years later, it would be broken by the War of Austrian Succession, the third of the French and Indian Wars.

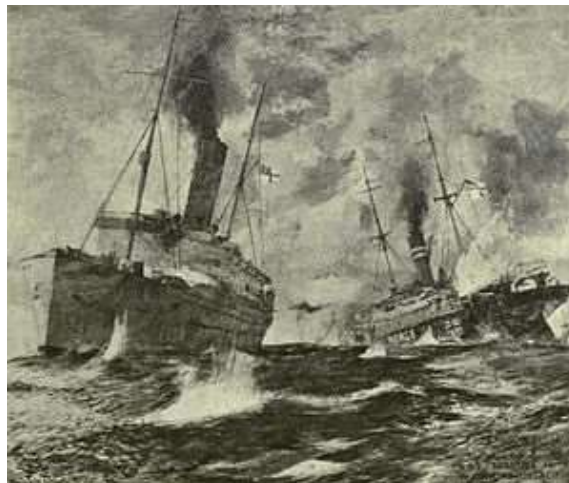
- **Feb 29 1864 – American Civil War: *Kilpatrick-Dahlgren Raid Splits*** » Union General Hugh Judson Kilpatrick's cavalry raiders split into two wings on their way south to Richmond. Colonel Ulrich

Dahlgren and 500 troopers swung out further west as Kilpatrick and 3,000 men rode on to the outskirts of Richmond. The raid stalled there, and Dahlgren was killed in an ambush. The raid was part of a plan to free 15,000 Union soldiers held near Richmond and spread word of President Lincoln's Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction, which allowed a pardon and restoration of property for Confederates willing to cease the rebellion.

Kilpatrick left the main Union army at Stevensburg, Virginia, on 28 FEB and crossed the Rappahannock River. On 29 FEB, Kilpatrick split with the 21-year-old Dahlgren, one of the youngest colonels in the Union army. The weather turned bad as the detachments separated. Rain turned to sleet, and the riders had to battle icy branches and cold, inky blackness as night fell. Dahlgren rode west and picked up a guide, a black youth named Martin Robinson. Robinson professed to know of a crossing of the James River west of Richmond. When they arrived at the spot, there was no way across the swollen river. Dahlgren flew into a rage and ordered Robinson hanged.

On 1 MAR, Dahlgren and 200 men were ambushed and the young colonel was killed. The Kilpatrick-Dahlgren raid was a failure for the Union. Some 340 men and 1,000 horses were lost, few Confederates paid attention to the copies of the amnesty proclamation that were left by the cavalry, and no Union prisoners were freed. The raid was the last fighting until General Ulysses S. Grant began his epic campaign in May.

- **Feb 29 1916 –WWI:** *Two Ships Sink In North Sea Battle* » Both the British armed merchant ship Alcantara and the German raider Grief sink after engaging each other in a close-range battle on the North Sea.



Alcantara (left) & Grief (right)

The German raider Grief was in disguise, flying under the Norwegian flag and with Norwegian colors displayed on its sides, when it attempted to run a British blockade. The Alcantara, still under the impression that the Grief was a Norwegian shipping vessel, was sent to investigate. The Grief did not respond to repeated attempts at communication from Captain Thomas E. Wardle of the Alcantara and continued heading northeast. When Captain Wardle ordered the ship to stop in order to be inspected, the crew of the Grief quickly lowered the Norwegian colors and raised the German flag before it opened fire on the surprised crew of the Alcantara, who quickly returned fire.

The battle raged for 12 agonizing minutes at close range. The Alcantara lost 74 men in the battle; the Grief lost nearly 200. By the time a second British armed merchant ship, the Andes, arrived on the scene, both ships had been badly damaged. On fire and sinking quickly, the desperate Grief fired one final torpedo, striking the Alcantara. Both ships eventually sank. The crew of the Andes picked up the survivors of both ships, taking more than 120 German prisoners.

- **Feb 29 1944 – WW2:** The Admiralty Islands are invaded in Operation Brewer led by American General Douglas MacArthur.
- **Feb 29 1944 – WW2:** USS Trout (SS-202) missing. Most likely sunk by Japanese destroyer Asashimo in Philippine Sea. 81 killed.
- **Feb 29 1952 – Cold War:** *Lattimore Admits Inaccuracies In Previous Testimony* » Owen Lattimore, one of the more famous figures of the “Red Scare” in the United States during the 1950s, testifies before a Senate subcommittee that he might have been inaccurate in some of his previous testimony. Lattimore’s admissions resulted in his being charged with perjury and years of legal wrangling.

Lattimore was a well-known scholar of Chinese history and politics during the 1930s. He taught at Johns Hopkins University and also worked with the Institute of Pacific Relations, a research institute dedicated to the study of Asia and U.S.-Asian relations. During World War II, he served as an advisor to the Roosevelt administration on Chinese affairs. His research led him to conclude that the Nationalist leader in China, Chiang Kai-Shek, headed a corrupt and undemocratic government. He publicly aired these views in 1945 when he published his book, *Solution in Asia*, in which he called on Chiang to institute a major reform program in China.

In the highly charged Cold War atmosphere of the postwar period, anticommunist crusaders in the United States, such as Senator Joseph McCarthy, quickly construed Lattimore’s criticisms of the Chiang government as support for Mao Zedong’s communist revolution in China. McCarthy charged in 1950 that Lattimore was a “chief Soviet espionage agent,” and took testimony from two former U.S. Communist Party officials to that effect.

A bipartisan congressional committee held hearings on the matter and cleared Lattimore of all charges, but this did not end the persecution of Lattimore. In 1951-1952, the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee reopened the case against the scholar. The subcommittee hearings focused on Lattimore’s work with the Institute of Pacific Relations, which had been identified by the FBI as a subversive organization. Zeroing in on minor inconsistencies in his 1950 testimony (such as whether he had ever “handled” another person’s mail during his time at the Institute), the subcommittee quickly decided that Lattimore had perjured himself and he was indicted by a grand jury. For the next few years, Lattimore fought a long and costly legal battle to clear himself of the charges. Eventually, all charges were dropped due to a lack of evidence and the waning of McCarthy’s power and public interest in his witchhunts.

Lattimore’s case was just one of many during the 1950s in which individuals were hounded and harassed because their views sometimes diverged from the Cold War consensus then taking shape. Other scholars, and a number of State Department officials, were persecuted merely for voicing criticism of the Chiang regime in China. Particularly after the fall of the Chiang government to Mao’s

communist revolution in 1949, individuals such as Lattimore became handy scapegoats for people looking to place blame for the “loss” of China.

- **Feb 29 1972 – Vietnam War: *South Korean Troops Withdrawn*** » South Korea pulls 11,000 troops out of Vietnam as part of its program to withdraw all of its 48,000 troops from the country.

The South Korean contingent had begun arriving in country on February 26, 1965, as part of the Free World Military Forces, an effort by President Lyndon B. Johnson to enlist allies for the United States and South Vietnam. By securing support from other nations, Johnson hoped to build an international consensus behind his policies in Vietnam. The effort was also known as the “many flags” program. At the height of the Korean commitment in 1969, there were over 47,800 Korean soldiers actively involved in combat operations in South Vietnam.

The South Korean troop withdrawal reflected the trend among other Free World Military Force participants, who had already withdrawn or were beginning to withdraw their troops, following the lead of the United States as it drastically reduced its troops commitment in South Vietnam.

[Source: www.history.com/this-day-in-history, www.history.navy.mil/today-in-history/february-15.html, <https://www.historycentral.com>, & <https://www.historyanswers.co.uk/history-of-war/day> | February 2021
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